A PRELIMINARY ESSAY ON THE THEORY OF LITERARY HISTORY

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I

For convenience' sake I want to divide literary criticisms into two types: one is that of poets' criticisms and the other is scientists'. The one had once overwhelming influence upon literary scholars. T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, W.H. Auden and many others once made tremendous, if not disastrous, attacks on traditional philological studies. 'New Criticism', though it has already become conventional, has got a dominant place in literary study in America. At first glance, 'New Criticism' may appear scientific and it is true that the founders and the leading figures are not poets in the narrowest sense of the word: W. Empson was a mathematician, I.A. Richards a linguist and T.E. Hulme was perhaps a metaphisical philosopher who went a little astray. But most of them were critical poets or poetical critics of a sort. In addition to Empson's *The Gathering Storm*, Hulme's several poems in *Ripostes*, R.P. Warren, A.Y. Winters and many others, they were, most of them, of a basically *poetic* sensibility, in the sense that they read literary works as independent entities divorced from their historical, biographical and social contexts. It is true that poets have a keen need to express themselves or their experiences in poetical forms, and this need surpasses or rather disregards their social and historical environments. But let me pass by these poetic criticisms, quoting a passage from Anatole France's *Le Jardin d'Epicure.*

> Les poetes sont heureux: une part de leur force est dans leur ignorance même. Seulement, il ne faut pas qu'ils disputent trop vivement des lois de leur art: ils y perdent leur grâce avec leur innocence et, comme les poissons tirés hors de l'eau, ils se débattent vainment dans les regions arides de la théorie.[1]

I do not intend to underestimate poets' criticisms in the present essay. Perhaps they are true to their inner desire to the degree of dispensing with the facts with which they have grown up. But at any rate they are not scientific, although they use many pseudo-scientific terms. While they are subjective, synthetic and accidental, scientists must be objective, analytic and rational.

The other, scientific, type of literary criticisms can be divided into three kinds: psychological, philological and historical. The first has developed, as is well known, under the influence of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. In this field of criticisms, N. Frye and Maud Bodkin gave brilliant and successful contributions to literary study. Their concern is in the depth of human nature and therefore it lies somewhere beyond history.

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[1] Anatole France, *Le Jardin d'Epicure*, Paris, 1894, 1921, etc., p. 59

They have shown, for example, that 'Beauty' as in Keats's poems, is the expression of the desire deep-rooted in the subconscious. But they failed to show the development of 'Beauty' in literary history and the characteristic features peculiar to each poem. Thus Euripides' Oedipus, Shakespeare's Lear and Milton's Samson, for example, are treated in one category, as men of blindness, darkness, defeat and despair. The particular Shakespearean and Miltonic characteristics, as well as the respective historical backgrounds do not concern them. Euripides died about two thousand years before Shakespeare's time, while the latter was only two generations before Milton. Psychoanalysts can, nevertheless, find no noticeable differences among them. Human beings might perhaps never change in their essential phase, and their minds, their subconscious mentality, may be as timeless as their physical nature. So far as human universality is concerned, this kind of criticism has its own validity. It will clarify in detail the essential qualities of artistic activities. But any one who is interested in historical changes, not to say historical progress, of literature cannot be satisfied by this kind of criticism, though our unconscious descendants of Freud's pessimism may deny even the existence of any significant historical changes.

The second kind of scientific criticism, philological, includes many traditional and linguistic studies of literature. As it consists of almost all philological studies ever made since the nineteenth century, I need not survey its historical development. Its contributions made since Coleridge up to our time are immeasurable. Those criticisms as written by I.A. Richards and Cleanth Brooks, who are both brilliant and profound in their methods, may be also included in this category. Documentary and biographical studies, as Masson's *The Life of John Milton*, also belong to this kind of criticism.

The last kind of scientific criticism, historical study, is the chief concern of the present essay. Before we begin to examine the various methods of historical study, it will be of some use to consider its relation to other kinds of criticisms. Psychoanalytical study will show what is literature in reality, in other words, from where does artistic energy spring and to what part of our mentality does it give satisfaction. In short, it makes clear the 'timeless phase of literature'. Philological study tries to explain individual poet's or poem's characteristics from linguistic, social and biographical points of view. It is the study to interpret the poet's personal intentions, if any, and his obligations together with their limitations. It is personal in the sense that it regards each literary work as created in a particular time of history, by a particular poet and in a particular social environment. A poet's originality is most highly estimated there. This may be called a study of the 'personal phase of literature'. On the other hand, historical study is concerned, first of all, with the relations among literary masterpieces, or the 'relative phase of literature'. It tries to get at a convincing objective possibility, Mäglichkeit according to Max Weber's terminology, of such relationships among many literary works: in other words, it tries to find the hidden rules or laws which govern historical processes or changes of literary climates. To take the example mentioned above, Oedipus, Lear and Samson, all of them die blind and their deaths make up almost the whole contents of the tragedies; but Oedipus' death is brought about solely by a Destiny far stronger than any human being; Lear by his treacherous daughters or rather by his own wrong choice of judgement; Samson by his own free will to fulfil God's intention or Providence. Historical criticism aims at explaining not only the origin of the differences, but also how they develop in their historical environments. Thus in historical study, we must distinguish the characteristics unique to a certain

poet, from those which belong to the manners and styles of a particular period. Compare Milton's *Samson Agonistes* with Euripides' *Oedipus the Tyrant*, and you will notice at least the following characteristics as Milton's own. (i) Blank verse. (ii) Struggle between Providence and humanity. (iii) Expectation of human salvation through the 'vulgar' or the coming revolutionary working class.[2] Then compare these characteristics with Shakespeare's, and one will certainly find that (i) and (ii) are common to both poets, leaving (iii) perhaps as peculiarly Milton. Thus Oedipus, Lear and Samson, though they have many characteristics in common, may be classified into two groups; one is *Oedipus the Tyrant* and the other *Samson Agonistes* and *King Lear*. It is true that many classical Greek tragedies are deeply conscious of providence, but their themes are, in almost all cases, the 'escape' from providence: they have no intention to struggle or fight against it. On the contrary, any slight negligence of reverence to the gods brings severe punishments on men, as is shown in *Bacchae*. There may be many other things to be discussed (some of which will be considered later in this essay) before we reach any conclusions concerning the classification of these three dramas. At any rate, from this kind of comparative analysis of literary works, we are able to recognize those characteristics that are particular to a certain historical age, distinct both from those pertaining to individual poets and from those timeless features of literature. I do not mean to say that the historical characteristics (of an age) are most important in literary study, but that, if we can recognize such characteristics at all, historical study has its own validity.

II

The three-fold division of scientific criticism and the function and definition of historical study, which I have just given in the preceding chapter, are not yet generally accepted, nor without any delicate problems. But if we admit the temporary division and function which I proposed, I think we can solve most of the critical problems which literary history has met since Taine and Bruntière.

Hyppolyte Taine was perhaps the pioneer in the field of literary history and established it as a 'science'. After he published the famous thesis, 'Histoire, son Présent et son Avenir' in *Revue Germanique* (1863), literary historians ceased to be amateurs and were obliged to be professional scientists. But his historical and environmental determinism has been sometimes misunderstood. It is true that he insisted on a kind of determinism. According to his thesis, every historical fact could be explained from three fundamental faculties or powers (les facultés maitresses): the race or tribe (la race), the circumstance (le milieu) and the moment or period of history (le moment). He imagined that if he could calculate and know accurately the quality and quantity of these powers, he could acquire, through rational deductions, a sort of prophetical insight into the future human civilization. To him, every culture, every literary work or even every poet seemed to be a product of the combination of the three faculties. His famous, or rather notorious, *English History* (*Histoire de la Litterature Anglaise*, 1863–4) was written on this principle. As is well known, there sprung up a number of criticisms and objections to his theory: Human beings are more complicated: No art can be produced merely by circumstances, but it is the creation

[2] Cf. Christopher Hill, 'Milton the Radical', *The Time's Literary Supplement*, Nov. 29, 1974

by men of genius: Human faculties of literary imagination are immeasurable. Especially C.A. Sainte-Beuve and Edmond Scherer attacked him severely. According to them, Taine's history is not the history of literature, but the 'histoire de la race et de la civilisation .... par la litterature'.

But Taine's sincere intention was nothing but to understand the past as the activities of *living* men and women. Social, political and even literary *events* did not satisfy him. He wanted to know the spiritual history of human beings. Through the examination of physical and factual men (l'homme extérieur), he tried to understand invisible and inner human activity (l'homme invisible et interieur). He was not satisfied with 'la collection des faits', and began his study à 'la recherche des causes'. He supposed temporarily that 'le vice et la vertu sont les produits comme le vitriol et le sucre'. Thus his yearnings to know the past not as a collection of dead facts but as a series of activities of living men and women, brought forth the chracteristic laws of human vegetation (les régles de la végétation humaine), though it seemed to many scholars to be so mechanical that it would be unable to interpret the whole human cultural activities. Everyone who is not satisfied with a detailed chronological table of literary events must have the same yearnings as Taine's to explore below the visible surface.

I will consider about the validity of Taine's theory later in this essay, but one point of view which his theory lacks had better be mentioned here. It is the cause of historical transition, in other words, the question of how to explain the successive changes that appear in literary history. It is true that he wanted to find 'les régles de la végétation humaine', but he failed to get to them, perhaps because he failed to detect the 'régles' working in his three factors which produce literary works. Anyway, one of the solutions of this problem was proposed by Ferdinand Bruntière in 'L'Evolution des Genres dans l'Histoire de la Littérature' (1889). Following Taine in regard to the three faculties as the bases of his theory, he paid close attention to the forms and styles (les genres) of literature, and formulated his theory according to Darwin's theory of evolution; the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. But his theory is also not without serious problems. What does 'existence' or 'fittest' mean in literature? Or why does epic form best fit or suit the French climate and not that of India for example? I do not think that to make use of biological analogies in literary studies is unreasonable. But two things must be remembered here. Darwinist theory treats the evolution of species in at least thousands of years, and it will be dangerous to adapt it to literature which has only three thousand years' history as a whole. Moreover, literature is nothing but the product of human, linguistic, and therefore, conscious activity, in other words, the product of 'free will', while natural history is an involuntary, necessary process to preserve itself under limited conditions: Men can make history, but animals cannot. The second thing to be remembered is the fact that natural sciences have developed today further than Darwin imagined in the nineteenth century. Almost all biologists do not support the classical theory of evolution. For example, the specialization of species, which Darwin thought to be one of the results of evolution, is now regarded as a symptom of the imminent end of the species. We cannot, therefore, follow his theory without many modifications and corrections, though Bruntière's intention to set up rules in literary history was doubtless a noble one and we are obliged to admit that his theory is very suggestive.

The later generation after Bruntière did not develop his theory. As is well known, the

following history of historical study of literature went astray. Apart from some social criticisms, such as by R.D. Charques, Brander Matthews and others, almost all critics were inclined to make more and more aesthetic criticisms. The controversy fought among J.E. Spingarn, Daniel Mornet, Bernard Faÿ in *The Romanic Review* foretold the tendency. And it was not without reason. However objective one may try to be, any historical approach to the past must be, in the end, an interpretation of the past from a certain present point of view. One sees the past in the mirror of one's own present. One's *Weltanschauung* interprets the past. The past, with its every triviality, is an infinite mass of facts, and it is doubtless impossible to describe all the facts that had happened in the past. From among them one must select some *important* facts. What are called 'posivitists' may call for aid to assemble every fact, but they will soon realize that it is impossible. And the impossibility to assemble and describe all the past facts obliges us to take some definite points of view. Every positivist, however objective he may try to be, will admit, even if unwillingly, the fact that he also has a certain point of view, or an *interest*.[3] The next question is what should be the interest or the point of view, by which one makes the selection: on what basis we can select *historical facts*. Here again, positivists must give way to the following radical statement.

> The most learned and historically-minded scholar cannot physically become an Elizabethan; he cannot create the Globe or visualize the original production.[4]

Therefore, we cannot understand what a literary work really meant to its contemporary readers when it was written. What we can grasp at best is what it means now to present-day readers. Of course it is true that we must endeavour to appreciate the *real* meaning through incessant industrious philological studies of the age when it was written. And eminent philologists succeeded not only in deciphering grammatical and lexical complexities of every stage of history, but also in bringing to light the social and biographical circumstances of literary works by means of unremitting industry, immeasurable and even inconceivable for any poet-critics. Their efforts ought to be highly evaluated, and it is through their efforts that we can now have glimpses of those literary worlds which ceased to be long years ago. But yet there remains the fact that we cannot be quite sure that we can appreciate the original, say Elizabethan, literary mind, at least if we are honest enough to feel the distance of time. Besides, for example, I, a Japanese in the Japanese environment, living in the latter half of the twentieth century, being a Buddhist in sensibility and a materialist in philosophy——how can such a man as I *really* arrive at the same appreciation of Shakespeare's works as Elizabethans once entertained four hundred years ago? This is the negative reason why we cannot find our point of view, i.e. the basis of our 'selection', in the past ages; especially not in the English past. Moreover we have also a positive reason for it. We study history, because we believe that our ancestors lived their lives as earnestly as we do now. We have the faith that each literary work was created by

[3] 'Generally speaking, this positivism is held by those who have already projected their own Weltanschauungen in the world of facts, and who, being unconscious of the fact, misunderstand that objective facts have also the same structure as their own Weltanschauungen.' Terushiro Sera, *Rekishi-gaku Hohoron no Shomondai*, 2nd ed., 1970, p. 9

[4] Robert Weimann, 'Past Significance and Present Meaning in Literary History', in Ralph Cohen ed., *New Direction in Literary History*, 1974, p. 58

a poet's utmost exertion of his imagination; in other words, he lived in his age as honestly and earnestly as we are living in ours. Nowhere is the evidence to prove this supposition. But if we could not have such a faith in the past human activities, our historical study should come to have no validity and significance for our present lives. And if we forget or ignore the meaning of our present lives, or if we do not live our lives as earnestly and honestly as our ancestors did, we cannot have faith in the past, as faith itself breeds contradictions within itself, and therefore becomes meaningless to us. This is the positive reason that obliges us not to have the point of view in the past. Perhaps it is our duty to keep or endure to the end the tension between the past and the present, between *there and then* and *here and now*. Thus both of these reasons, negative and positive, oblige us to have the point of view nowhere but in the present, in the age in which we now live. It is the deductive conclusion not only from our own interest in our lives but also from the necessity of historical study itself. And from this necessity emerge two different attitudes towards literary study.

One of the two attitudes ventures to suppose a *unity* between the past and the present, as Arnold Kettle once remarked.

> The best way to emphasize the value of Shakespeare in *our* changing world is to see him in *his*, recognizing that the two worlds, though very different, are at the same time a unity.[5]

Kettle seems to think that *unity* to be the eternal and universal humanity which never changes in the core of every individual's mentality. But for many other critics, the *unity* has been an aesthetic one, the goddess of beauty omnipresent in every literary masterpiece. This is perhaps the reason for the current aesthetic tendency in literary criticism, which I mentioned above. The assumption of the *unity*, whether humanistic or aesthetic, is fascinating. Perhaps every critic has not been free from temptations of admitting it. Nobody but cynical pessimists will be able to deny an inner inclination to suppose such a *unity* between the past literary view and ours. Even H.G. Gadamer, who casts doubts upon the simple 'timeless truth' of a work (zeitlos wahre Sinn einer Dichtung), wants to elevate 'the concept of the classical to the prototype of all historical contact (Prototyp aller geschichtlichen Vermittlung) between past and present'.[6] Jaus comments on Gadamer's theory of 'prototype' as follows.

> To think of the "classical" as overcoming by itself the historical distance between the past and the present is to hypostatize tradition. Gadamer does not take into account the fact that classical art at the time of its creation did not yet appear classical, but may rather have once opened new ways of seeing things and may have formed new experiences, which only in historical perspective (historische Distanz)——in recognition of what is now familiar (im Wiedererkennen des nunmehr Bekannten)——give the appearance that the work contains a timeless truth.[7]

Jaus then puts forward a proposal to take into account the 'reader' or 'an aesthetics of

[5] Arnold Kettle, *Shakespeare in a Changing World*, 1964, p. 10; cited by Weiman, op. cit., p. 60

[6] H.G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 1960; referred to by Hans Robert Jaus in his *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, 1970, p. 186; partially repr. in Cohen ed. op. cit. tr. by Elizabeth Benzinger, p. 24

[7] Jaus, op. cit. p. 188; Cohen ed., op. cit. p. 27

reception (die rezeptionsästhetische Fundierung)' of literary works. This seems to open a new field for our literary studies. Surely by the study from the point of view of 'aesthetic reception', prototype or 'classic' will be able to find an objective foundation. The people who receive or read a certain work are the people who compose the contemporary society and are more directly influenced than the creator who sometimes pretends to be an outsider of his society. Readers' sensibility may be more naïve and spontaneous both to a literary work and to the society that surrounds them. Therefore by the examination of them we will come to be less troubled by poets' pretended detatchment from society. Jaus's theory is perhaps briefly summarized in a brief sentence as follows: not only poets' geniuses but also readers' sensibilities engage in the processes of literary creations. Thus according to him;

> The chasm between literature and history, between aesthetic and historical knowledge, can be bridged if literary history . . . . . discovers in the course of "literary evolution" that truly socially formative function (gesellschaftsbildende Funktion) which belongs to literature.[8]

The process by which a certain work becomes a classic, how people retrieve the past work from its retirement, can be thus clarified in a scientific way. But what is the 'social formative function' in reality? From his thesis we cannot be sure whether it is the function which is operating in the society to make up literature, or that which effects readers' 'social actions', changing the society itself from within in the long run. In the former case, whether his theory is different from Taine's 'social determinism' or not and, if it is, what is the difference, should be explained in detail. In the latter case, we must ask again the question, where is the energy of literary creation. Jaus might answer that it includes both functions. But then, how can the 'chasm' be bridged?

To consider the question takes us back to the other attitude toward literary study: an attitude both skeptical and optimistic about universal humanity: i.e. though supposing the *unity* ultimately, to leave it out of consideration temporarily. I mean that the dialectical evolution of literature could perhaps be studied objectively even if we put aside the concept of 'historical unity' temporarily. *Unity* or 'universal humanity', as well as aesthetic genius or medieval 'God's will' or Greek 'Deus ex Machina', sometimes explains all literary works in a moment, leaving nothing else to be examined further by scientific study. Everything, every characteristic, is sometimes declared to be the expression of humanity. It is true that, if we deny this last resort, we will be lost in the maze of an enormous number of historical facts. But at any rate it must be the *last* resort. It does not serve our immediate need. Thus the second attitude suspends it for the present. Of course it is *not* to deny the existence of 'human unity', nor that of aesthetic value, as is often misunderstood. On the contrary it stands on the basis of profound piety to both of these values. Only the necessity of objective analysis demands us to free ourselves from these values. And freeing us from them enables us, though paradoxically, to open a new horizen in literary history. Once we put aside all universal values, we realize that only one value is remaining as a clue to our study: 'typical value'. Admitting 'typicalness' as a historical category, I, from this second attitude, propose to try to reconstruct literary history, not of prototypes or classics, but of typical works, *Idealtypus* according to Weber's terminology.

[8] Jaus, *ibid.*, p. 207; Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 41

From this point of view, *Hamlet* is a great drama, not because it has a great aesthetic value nor is full of humanity that appeals to the modern readers, but because it is a *typical* 'revenge tragedy' among others which were popular in the Elizabethan period. This method evaluates *Hamlet* not simply because it is a drama of Oedipus-complex, but because it represents a typical, particularly Elizabethan expression of Oedipus-complex. Only in this manner it becomes possible to observe the differences objectively and from the purely historical point of view; i.e. the differences between the mode of typical Greek expression of a certain unconsciousness (ex. *Oedipus the Tyrant*) and that of the typical Elizabethan expression (ex. *Hamlet*).[9]

III

Our next task is to ask from where the differences came and why. Before we go on to answer the question, it will be convenient to make the differences between the two plays a little more definite. (1) In Euripides' drama, ghosts or supernatural witches, which have great significance in some of Shakespeare's dramas, do not appear. (2) Prince Hamlet regards the marriage between Claudius and Gertrude as incest, which might have been an ordinary affair in classical Greek. (3) In the Greek drama, Destiny is dominant, while, in Shakespeare's, each character, especially the prince himself, determines his final action according to his own free will, and therefore assumes the responsibility of doing it. (4) In the Greek tragedy the king or the tyrant must have some meritorious virtues other than lineage, but in Elizabethan England royal blood was enough to make a king. According to the same principle, on the contrary, Macbeth, Richard III and even Shylock are doomed to fall, because they are not legitimate descendants of kings.[10] There may be many other differences between them, but these are sufficient for us to consider the basic difference. The difference (1) seems to be the result of Greek rationalism and Elizabethan mysticism. Of course, generally speaking, rationalism and mysticism have been everywhere in all the stages of history. But in Euripides' time, ghosts never appeared to ordinary men and women: they understood their own daily lives completely rationally. Mysticism, if there were, was outside of their dailiness, i.e. in the world of gods and demi-gods. Sometimes their lives were doomed by destiny, which they interpreted to be a mere caprice of Deus. They were, in a word, scientific, or rather materialistic. They could organize and manage their own lives, because they were, all of them, managers of their own *families* which were the units of society, and which consisted of managers, their heirs and their slaves. They were the masters in the families, the managers in the husbandries, the captains in the wars and the citizens in the city-states. Only two things were beyond their understanding: Death or destiny and, later, Drunkenness. These two they attributed to the other world

[9] For the meaning of 'typical', see my thesis 'Possibility of the History of European Literature", *Eigo-bungaku Sekai*, iii, 8 (1968), pp. 34-7

[10] I do not mean to say that all the characters that die in Shakespeare's dramas are usurpers of the throne, nor that the usurpation is the single cause of their tragedies. Macbeth and Richard III die from their own respective causes. But if we compare their deeds with those of Hamlet or King Lear, we can understand that Shakespearean tragedies have two themes; one is the fall of heroic royal characters, cheated by villains, and the other is that of villains themselves, revenged by their own villainies. Perhaps *Othello* is a unique exception which belongs to another possible category which would include *Romeo and Juliet*.

of gods. Their rationalism, however, tried to understand even the world of gods according to the ways of their daily lives. Thus their mythologies were full of human affairs; love, strife, jealousy, pride, miserliness, etc. In short, they were classical citizens in a 'classical community', which, according to Karl Marx, comes after the 'Asiatic community'.

In Elizabethan England, we can scarcely find such a classical citizen. Most Londoners were not very different from peasants. Both playwrights and theatre-goers were not modern sophisticated artists. They were artisans, shop-keepers, house-wives, pedlars, tinkers, etc. Witches and soothsayers were everywhere. They spent everyday, doing the same tasks as, in classical Greece, the slaves had done, and they were, most of them, kept in economic bondage. Though they did not think themselves to be slaves, and, in reality, were more independent as far as their civil rights were concerned, they could not liberate themselves from their economically suppressed conditions. Feudal lords and their descendants, who were the substantial rulers, never dreamt of manhood suffrage, which even workers themselves did not claim until the middle of the seventeenth century; when they gradually realized that their political freedom could not be guaranteed until they reform the economic system of feudal society. But Shakespeare's contemporaries did not yet clearly understand their status in society. They lived, for a while, in a contradictory condition, being legally free and in economic bondage: they could not manage their own husbandries, but they supposed, or were supposed to suppose, that they were free. Out of the contradiction there sprung up the mixture of mysticism and, so to say, 'ultra-secularism', as opposed to metaphysical, clerical, moral, philosophical ways of thinking. It will take long to give a satisfactory detailed explanation of the mentality under such conditions. But we can at least guess that they were interested in whatever was *extra*-ordinary, whatever they could scarcely experience themselves. In fact they were bored by tedious, severe and unprofitable daily labours. Especially when they realized that, however hard they might work, they could have no hope to promote themselves, their weariness became unbearable. We cannot be sure whether they believed in ghosts and spirits. But certainly they were amused by the imaginary worlds of supernatural beings. As they were not managers of their own daily lives, they could not help supposing that a mere opportunity or misfortune (far different from Greek Destiny) was the supreme power dictating their lives. Therefore we were perhaps not wrong to suppose that such an Elizabethan mental atmosphere made it tolerable to enjoy the 'otherworldliness' (Ausserweltlichkeit, Zaubergarten) in the theatres.

The second difference belongs to the social customs. Not only in classical communities, but also in almost all pre-capitalistic societies, it was not unusual to marry one's brother's widow. Even today in many capitalistic society, it is not considered as incest. To regard it as incest is an especially Elizabethan custom.[11] The reason why it was prohibited as incest will be found in the customary laws of inheritance.

The third and fourth differences are the results from those between those respective mental attitudes towards humanity. As I have already mentioned, Greek rationalism demanded some convincing reason to make a king, though in reality they admitted hereditary prerogatives, but to Elizabethan aristocracy, such a rational demand seemed to be dangerous to maintain their sovereignty. Tudors and Stuarts had to maintain the feudal, or absolutist, social framework and they established Anglicanism (Anglican Church) as the spiritual basis of their order, which was, however, gradually efflorescing in its core, at least

[11] Cf. E.A. Westermarck, *A Short History of Marriage*, 1926, esp. Ch. 4

by the end of the sixteenth century. History plays, by Shakespeare and others, were the re-affirmation of British dynasty. But the fact that they needed to reaffirm the legitimacy and justice of hereditary monarchy shows that people gradually realized that Anglicanism was an expedient product that the monarchic government might compromise with Christianity. Some regarded Tudors as Norman yoke.[12] More radical attacks were made by Puritans.[13] Elizabethans demanded more and more reasonable and convincing Christian doctrines. To them, Rome's or Government's authorization was already not satisfactory enough. Following the traditional terminology, we may call the mentality 'Renaissance Humanism', if we can distinguish it from that of the south European intellectual climate which flourished within the Catholic hierarchy. At any rate there were two conflicting elements in the minds of Elizabethans: one was the traditional authority and the other was the new revolutionary yearning for the liberation of humanity. In a sense, King Lear and Prince Hamlet, two typical exponents of the traditional world, died, giving way to a new rising Weltanschauung of revolutionary citizens.[14] But it is their manner of giving way to the new generation that impresses us deeply. They are not doomed, as Euripides' plays, by Apollo's oracle. Rather, they are ruined through their own follies, through their obstinate attachment to the traditional harmony. Shakespeare, perhaps, knew that the old world was collapsing, not by the surging tide of the new world, but by the contradictions or antitheses within the old world. Edmund, Claudius and Iago are not modern utilitarians nor revolutionary democrats: they are self-centred, mercenary, greedy fellows whom the old world, which Lear and Hamlet believe in, has bred within its own bosom. Thus the dramas represent the dialectic processes of antitheses within the old world; the synthesis is yet to come, the glimpse of which we shall find in the latter half of the seventeenth century, for example in *Samson Agonistes.*

Now the difference between our two great dramatists, as I have mentioned, could be understood as the difference between the respective social frameworks, in the broadest sense of the words. I do not mean to say that all the geniuses can be thus explained, nor that all 'greatness' is the product of social, economic basis of each historical period. As everyman has his own face different from any other man's, every poet has his own talent quite unique among other talents. But it is also true that the literary works which were created in a certain historical period have certain common characteristics among them. Take, for an example, *Samson Agonistes* and compare it with *King Lear*, and you will easily realize that *Hamlet's* differences (1) (3) (4) from *Oedipus the Tyrant* can also be applied to both plays, in a slightly different manner, though (2) does not appear. (We meet a theme of (2) in *Paradise Lost.*) If we go on comparing Shakespeare's works with other Elizabethan works, we will in the end conclude that several common characteristics are chance-products of respective poets and playwrights. When they are summed up and arranged in a systematic way, we can, perhaps, understand the mentality of the age, which may have delicate relationship with its surrounding social, and economic conditions. And once we have succeeded in reconstructing temporarily the Elizabethan mentality, we will, contrariwise, be able to

[12] Cf. C. Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in J. Saville ed., *Democracy and the Labour Movement*, 1954; repr. in Hill, *Puritanism*, 1958

[13] Masao Hamabayashi, *Igirisu Minshushugi Shiso-shi* (*Intellectual History of English Democracy*), 1973

[14] Cf. S. Finkelstein, *Who Needs Shakespeare?* 1973: F. Samarin & A. Nikolyukin eds., *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union*, 1966

understand what is the originality of each poet. Some unique features of a work, which seem to the modern readers to be the expressions of a certain poet's genius, may be realized as commonplace conventions, or vice versa. Lukács summarizes the process of historical studies as follows.

> Die Einfügung in die Totalität nicht nur unser Urteil über das einzelne Phänomen entscheidend ändert, sondern dadurch die gegenständliche Struktur, die inhaltliche Beschaffenheit des Einzelphänomens——als Einzelphänomen——eine grundlegende Änderung erfährt.[15]

Lukács then quotes from Marx's *Das Kapital*: the machines were made to lighten workers' labour, and generally speaking, were to make working hours shorter, but in the historical contexts, i.e. in the capitalistic society, made the working hours longer and workers' conditions unendurable. The same thing can be said concerning literary geniuses. Shakespeare's history plays are, generally speaking, or according to poets' criticisms, nothing other than artistic accomplishments. But in Elizabethan England their function was to assist the maintenance of the Tudor monarchy. Perhaps Shakespeare was not conscious of the historical function, but whatever might have been his consciousness, the fact remains that he assisted the reorganization of the old feudal society by writing his history plays.

IV

Study of literary history aims, not at making an artistic measure or scale, by means of which we may judge the artistic value of a certain literary work, but at making a social measure, by means of which we may understand its function in a given historical context. We may call this the 'historical value' of a work, and according to this 'historical value', the 'ideal type of work' which I proposed before, will be most highly evaluated, because it is an embodiment of a typical literary sensibility among other contemporary works. 'Historical value', which is eventually the same thing as 'typical value', may stand in a delicate relationship with aesthetic value, but at any rate they are not one and the same thing.

To think about this question, it will be of some use to make a temporary definition of literature. Vázquez says as follows:

> As a human natural being, man continues to live in the realm of necessity; the more human he becomes, the greater the number of his *human* needs. These needs are either natural needs (hunger, sex, etc.) that are humanized when instincts take on a human form, or new needs, created by man himself in the course of his social development ——aesthetic needs, for example.[16]

If we admit Vázquez's view (and I can find no reason to refute it), aesthetic value is also a historical product. Let us remind ourselves of the fact that Shakespeare's popularity was due to Romantic poets, especially by Charles Lamb. Except as intellectual curiosities,

[15] Georg Lukács, 'Geschichte und Klassen Bewusstsein', in *Werke*, Neuwied u. Berlin, 1968, vol. ii, p. 335; tr. by T. Hirai, Mirai-sha, 1962, p. 153

[16] Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, *Art and Society*, 1965; tr. by Maro Riofrancos, 1973, p. 60

in the latter half of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, his works were in a dim oblivion. Defoe, Swift, Fielding and Richardson surpassed him in popularity. The truth is that aesthetic need of the eighteenth century did not want Shakespeare. The fact tells us that even aesthetic value changes in the course of history. The causes of the changes will be found again in the changes of social conditions.

Man, as a natural human being, humanizes his natural instincts; hunger or sex takes on 'a human form (ex. death or love)'. As man can become a human being only among other human beings (at least to master language and customs), learns the humanization of his instincts from the relations he has with other men. Thus, love, the humanization of sex, takes on various forms according to the various relations he has with other men. It was understood as 'agape' in the Hebrew Asiatic community, as 'eros' in the Greek classical community, as 'friendship, or friapwa' in the Gothic Germanic community.[17] Men's intimate relations with each other is projected in each of these loves. And as the relation is determined by the contemporary society, the humanization is nothing but the projection of society into artistic form. It is not a *direct* projection, as has been pointed out by many scholars, but a sophisticated, pretended and sometimes ironical projection. Let me again quote from Vázquez.

> Art is made by men who are historically conditioned, and the universality that art achieves is not the abstract and timeless universality that idealist aestheticians speak of after creating an abyss between art and ideology, or between art and society, but the human universality that is manifested *in* and *through* the particular.[18]

The 'universality' stands here for our natural 'instincts' and other human needs. Poets may have intentions to satisfy his various needs, and try to make artistic creations with all their might, making full use of whatever they have at hand. But they are 'historically conditioned', and therefore both what they have to utilize and the ways of their utilization are limited within the conditions given to the certain historical stage of historical development. Euripides, for an example again, did not understand the universal humanity of all people including slaves, because to the classical Greeks, slaves, the speaking cattle, were anything except human beings. The 'abstract and timeless universality' was 'abstracted' from within the scope of the 'free citizens'. The boundaries of their imagination were historically determined. Therefore Greek poets could not get to know the eternal pleasure and sadness, a kind of 'human universality', which country peasants felt, after the toilsome day labours in the field, in the evening, sitting beside a humble cottage, and watching the descending sun in the dusk, as Thomas Gray tells us in his *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.* After two thousand years' historical development, i.e. after the incessant struggles of innumerable men and women, we have at last got the the sensibility to understand Gray's poetic world.

Historical study of literature has been said to neglect poets' individual talents. Some critics say that great poets more or less surpass and break through the historical conditions: mere historical conditions cannot explain all the great poetic geniuses. As far as we understand the historical conditions to be an average, commonplace mentality of all the people

[17] See my thesis, 'Milton and the Tradition of Germanic Love', in M. Hirai ed., *Miluton to sono Jidai* (*Milton and his Age*), 1974

[18] Vázquez, op. cit., p. 25

who live in a certain historical stage, their affirmation has a validity to a degree. But if the historical conditions are understood to mean the most dynamic and honest attitude to free imagination which creates a new world, in order to satisfy his 'human need', we can learn from historical study the profound significance and the suggestions to know our own historical mission. When the individual talents, who dare to break through the given conditions, are understood in the context of their historical surroundings, they will come to have their own significance other than the creators of mere 'abstract humanity'.