The title of this essay needs some explanation. It assumes that none of the existing histories of literary criticism is sufficient for our needs and that we are still developing a history of literary criticism. Such an assumption might indeed be called unfair given the accomplishments of international literary criticism. Also, the term “prolegomena” might seem inappropriate when one looks at René Wellek’s five-volume history of modern literary criticism soon to be completed. This extraordinarily learned work presents the high points of European literary criticism, and it is highly unlikely that a more encompassing work than Wellek’s will be produced within the next ten to twenty years. Of course, things are not as promising in the history of German literary criticism. For methodological reasons the important contribution of Anni Carlsson cannot fill the gap. Moreover, the various anthologies containing selected documents from the history of criticism are not adequate substitutes for a general survey.

Could this be merely an insufficiency peculiar to Germanistik? Could it be that Germany must simply catch up with what has already been accomplished in other European countries? This possibility should not be taken lightly. Because of a more limited concept of literature (poetry or Dichtung) which includes nonfic-

Translated by Jeannine Blackwell.

1 Anni Carlsson, Die deutsche Buchkritik von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart (Bern, 1969).
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tion only in part, literary criticism (in the sense of contemporary book reviews) long led a shadowy existence in academia. Only within the last few years have there been investigations that consider the form and function of literary reviews (Literaturkritik) as an object of scholarly research. In addition to the previously mentioned work by Carlsson, we might cite Glotz's polemical Buchkritik in deutschen Zeitungen (1968), the volume Kritik von wem/für wen/wie (1969) edited by Hamm, the essays collected from the Loccum Conference Kritik der Literaturkritik (1973), and finally various essays by Dieter Wellershoff (if he can be relegated to critique universitaire at all).² Although the self-analysis of West German Germanistics containing critiques of ideology has made significant contributions to a critical history of German literary analysis (Literaturwissenschaft),³ the same strong impulses have long been missing in the area of criticism (Literaturkritik). Hence, we are still in the prestage of a polemical discussion that must precede a historical elaboration of this problematic.⁴

In order to explain the obvious tension between scholarly literary analysis and literary criticism, it is necessary to investigate the special historical conditions in Germany which have prevented mutual acknowledgment of the two fields. It can be assumed that the fundamental difficulties of a historical evaluation of literary criticism are not limited to Germany. These difficulties are more likely related to the fact that our concept of literary history has altered so much in the last ten years that previous investigations (or those begun before that time) can no longer fully meet our needs. It is not so much an insufficient knowledge of the material which keeps us from a suitable history of literary criticism (although there are still countless shady areas), but rather the problematic of the assumed premises. On the basis of the specialized investigations to date, a research team could probably produce a summation of German literary criticism within a few years; however, the unsolved problems that plague present studies would of necessity be carried over into such a work. At present, the history of literary criticism is still

²Wellershoff, Literatur und Veränderung (Cologne, 1969), and Literatur und Lustprinzip (Cologne, 1972).
⁴Cf. my book Literatur und Öffentlichkeit (Munich, 1974).
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behind the more advanced level of scholarly literary analysis. This gap can be reduced only if the fundamental premises concerning the conditions for the feasibility of literary history are applied to the area of literary criticism.

The long overdue prolegomena must address two problems: first, there is the structural position of literary criticism as opposed to, or within, the totality of literature which must be critically questioned. Traditional literary histories and surveys have paid notably little attention to the participation and significance of literary criticism in literary life. To put it positively: a future history of literary criticism should be conceptually integrated into the history of literature, and its functional value should be established. What must be overcome is the present specialization, which, by tracing concepts, ideas, or persons, explains the history of literary criticism as a history comprehensible only through itself. This reintegration of criticism into the history of literature is the first step. It can be expanded by the elaboration of the historical-theoretical discussion of the last ten to fifteen years. One is reminded of Roland Barthes’ polemical accusations against an academic literary history, which, in his words, “consists of a series of monographs,” and which therefore deserves more the name chronicle than that of history. In differentiating between creation/work on the one hand and genre/tradition on the other, Barthes is able to separate the historical process from the psychological one. Literary history, for Barthes, in the period around 1960, is the history of the literary institution and not that of its works, which continue to be subjected to psychological or aesthetic methods. Under the historical aspect—and here he speaks to our topic—problems of the author’s environment, audience, the level of education, and of rhetoric are included. Here the object of history (in the double meaning of event and representation) is the self-transforming system of literary production, distribution, and consumption together with its subsystems. Criticism belongs to these subsystems to the extent that it can be classified with the mechanisms that both stabilize and alter the total system.

This notion of a history of literary criticism as an integral part of the literary system has been further developed through the

5Roland Barthes, Literatur oder Geschichte (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), p. 12.
aesthetics of reception and also in the critical debate with structuralism. Clearly this was brought about by the thorough critique of the historical-theoretical presuppositions of literary history. Hans Robert Jauss summarizes it in his most recent commentary: “The work does not exist without its effect. Its effect presupposes its reception. The judgment of the audience conditions, in turn, the production of the authors. The history of literature is, from this point on, a process in which the reader, as an active subject (despite its collectivity) confronts the single producing author. This subject as the mediating stage in the history of literature can no longer be ignored.” It is impossible to sketch even briefly the recent discussions about the theory of reception. Let us confine ourselves to those aspects which apply to our topic. The status of literary criticism is altered by the concept of literary history in the aesthetics of reception, since if the historicity of literature is considered in Jauss as a dialectical process in which the recipient and the producer equally participate, then criticism, to the extent that it is a form of reception, proves to be an essential component of literature. Literary criticism has a vital function for the historical presentation of literary processes at the point where the historical existence of a work of art is understood as the relationship between text structure and concretization. Within the framework of this premise the examination of literary criticism is carried out on several levels. A first step would be the investigation of the review, the essay, the polemic, etc., as interpretations of a certain work—that is, as time-bound concretizations in comparison to others. On the second and higher level, the poetological and aesthetic norms which entered the text of criticism must be reconstructed in the sense of the Jaussian horizon of expectation. A third level of the analysis deals with the very concept of literature on which all texts are based. In each case, a historically indissoluble bond exists between the critical text and the work of art it addresses.


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Literary criticism becomes an integral component of literary history, an element that is indispensable for the reconstruction of past significance as well as for the explication of contemporary evaluation.

I

A critical look at the more recent studies reveals the extent to which reception theory created a new situation for the history of literary criticism. The questionable aspects of present histories of literary criticism are essentially related to the various ways in which they neglect the integral connection between literary criticism and the general reception of literature itself and thus underestimate the significance of the topic. From a methodological point of view, this deficit results from a conception of history which stresses the genesis of the work. In such a situation, criticism seems to be an opinion derived from hindsight, one which no longer influences the actual work of art. Furthermore, traditional literary scholarship handicaps and stigmatizes literary criticism for being unscholarly. Because of these presuppositions, three main types of criticism have developed: (1) history of taste and judgment; (2) conceptual history or the history of theory; and (3) the biographical approach which centers on the significant critic.

One example of a critic who defines his task as a history of judgment and taste is George Saintsbury, as evidenced in his History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe (1900–1904). He states in the introduction that “the criticism which will be dealt with here is that function of the judgment which busies itself with the goodness or badness, the success or ill-success, of literature from the purely literary point of view. . . . We shall meddle little with the more transcendent Aesthetics, with those ambitious theories of Beauty, and of artistic Pleasure in general which, fascinating and noble as they appear, have too often proved cloud-Junos.”9 This definition is to be qualified in two ways: it limits the task of the historian strictly to the area of literature, thus consciously omitting the complications of cultural back-

9History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe (London, 1900), 1:3.
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ground, and it sets itself apart from the history of general aesthetics and literary theory. Saintsbury sees literary criticism as a specialized discipline, the development of which manifests itself as an expanded history of rhetoric. Its subjects are the ideas, norms, and methods with which critics have approached literary works. “In other words,” Saintsbury notes on this topic, “the Criticism or modified Rhetoric, of which this book attempts to give a history, is pretty much the same thing as the reasoned exercise of Literary Taste.”¹⁰ It is noteworthy that what for Saintsbury was still totally unproblematic has become the central question for contemporary literary scholars—the presentation of history. Having protected himself from the demands of aesthetics and textual criticism, Saintsbury’s method of organization is basically chronological. Critics are arranged according to a timetable; here the same organizational principles prevail as in positivistic literary history. History is reduced to a compilation of facts that does not elucidate the historical process. If we investigate the historical consciousness found in Saintsbury’s study, we find “an objectivism which compensates for the lack of historical consciousness through an increase in historical knowledge.”¹¹ Saintsbury also defends himself emphatically against interpreting the past from the point of view of the present and seeks a standpoint “which may enable him to see each period sub specie aeternitatis.”¹²

Positivistic history of judgment, as it is exemplified in Saintsbury, distorts history of criticism by (a) narrowing criticism to a specialized history, that is, excluding the respective literary as well as sociocultural connections and therefore (b) merely registering changes in opinions without making the historical significance of these changes apparent. The historicity of criticism is not taken into consideration because it is tacitly assumed that literary-critical judgments are all constituted in the same manner and can therefore be treated as variations of an identical basic model.

New Criticism’s polemics against Positivism are well known and

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.
¹²Saintsbury, p. 8.
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needs no further elucidation. Wellek's monumental History of Modern Criticism (1956) suggests that the New Critical reservations about positivistic objectivism were not capable of solving the deeper problems of the history of criticism. Although Wellek criticizes the objectivism of the positivistic method, which is interpreted as relativism, and thereby takes up the problem of approach, the historicity of literary criticism is only partially problematized. The presentation of material in a more or less chronological way is then legitimatized through an understanding of history which is grounded in the history of ideas. “We should first recognize,” says Wellek in the introduction directed against the causal-mechanical explanatory attempts of Positivism, “that there is an inner logic in the evolution of ideas—a dialectic of concepts. An idea is easily pushed to its extreme or converted into its opposite. Reaction against the preceding or prevailing critical system is the most common driving force of the history of ideas.” Through this attempt at justification, however, the immanent literary reduction of the presentation is not eliminated, but actually emphasized, in spite of certain concessions to the sociohistorical aspects of theories. Wellek is thus of the opinion that the specific influence of general social and historical phenomena on criticism is difficult to understand and to determine. Like literature, criticism has its own worth, which should not be diminished by a causal treatment. The price Wellek must pay for maintaining such a critical standpoint vis-à-vis the past is nevertheless considerable. Not only does he banish historicism but ultimately even history itself. Of course, Wellek’s study contains a wealth of insights about critics, critical theories, and connections between aesthetics and critical book reviews, etc. The insoluble problem for Wellek is of a theoretical-methodological nature. In order to avoid relativism, Wellek imposes an external set of criteria on his subject. The views under investigation are judged in the last analysis by their agreement with New Criticism. The dogmatic character of this position avoids critical self-reflection, since for Wellek literary criticism attained its historical goal in reaching the level of New Criticism from which

it can be judged. To that extent, Wellek saw himself in the tradition of teleological historical writing. The direct result was a realization of the past in contemporary terms (the present-day problems of literary criticism in the past). Later, in the essay "The Fall of Literary History" (1970)\textsuperscript{15} it became a position of resignation which relinquished the possibility and value of literary-historical research altogether. Here Wellek concludes that a convincing model for the evolution cannot be found and therefore its history can only be understood as a continuing discourse about fixed fundamental problems. It is not by coincidence that Wellek’s presentation verges on being a closed essay dealing with one important critic because in that way the curtailment of the historical premises can be formally minimized.

Wellek’s *History of Modern Criticism* assumes a typological position between a theoretical-historical and a biographical-individualistic approach. In order to be fair to the individual critic, Wellek must intentionally refrain from a purely idea-oriented historical construct. The loss in methodological consistency is counteracted by the pragmatic gain in this compromise (clarity and readability). The historicizing of theorems is not really accomplished. The model of a thorough functionalistic view in which the given perspectives and systems are radically examined for historical significance appears in the works of Hans Blumenberg. His premise is differentiated from the older intellectual history (to which Wellek is still bound in many ways) in that he is not satisfied with the descriptive reconstruction of ideas and theories. Instead he problematizes the conditions under which they might be valid. Consequently, he dismisses the idea that the theories described are valid *per se*. History of criticism is presented in this model neither as a mere reporting of opinion nor as the description of theories and concepts, but more as the opening up of questions to which the formulated literary-critical positions provide answers. Historical presentation does not limit itself to the ordering of perspectives and attitudes that have prevailed in the past and to the examination of their background. Rather, its goal is the reconstruction of

those human needs manifested in the question that aesthetic and critical theorems attempt to answer. Using the example of imitation of nature, Blumenberg shows that identically worded postulates have totally different meanings in antiquity and in the modern era,\(^{16}\) and thus a method of inquiry which holds abstractly to identical formulations (imitation concepts of both Aristotle and of modern poetics) entirely misses the cognitive-theoretical sense as well as the practical sense of these statements. Blumenberg states: “We will have to free ourselves from the notion that there is an established canon of ‘great questions’ which have moved constantly through history and have stimulated human thirst for knowledge and the human claim for world and self-definition in such a way that the alternating systems of mythologies, theologies, and philosophies could be explained from their congruency with this canon.”\(^{17}\) In place of this canon, the history of criticism would present itself as the relationship of problems and possible solutions that take shape against the background of positions that have grown dubious. Methodologically, it follows that the historian analyzes the formal system of a period’s criticism “in the structure of which changes can be localized—changes that constitute the process nature of history up to the radicality of the historical turning point.”\(^{18}\)


\(^{17}\)Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), pp. 42–43.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 43.

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must be understood as a *social institution* and particularly as an
institution which, in a specific way, participates in several
spheres. In regard to presentation, it is obviously a part of litera-
ture; in regard to communicative activity, it is, however, a part of
the public sphere as forum in which literary-critical deliberation
(*Räsonnement*) takes place. What Bürger notes about literary his-
tory in developing some ideas of Benjamin can also be applied to
the history of literary criticism: “the periodization of the de-
velopments in art are to be sought in the realm of art . . . and not
in the changes evidenced by the subject matter of individual
works.”¹⁹ This position assures inclusion of that sociohistorical
context in a consequent historization which is sketched out by
Blumenberg and omitted by the history of taste and the history
of concepts or theories. It would be the task of such a history of
the institution to show how literary criticism (as a subsystem of
the institution art) changes not only in its manifestations (at-
titudes, judgments) but also in its basic conditions (organization,
social arrangement, nature of the public sphere)—and to show it
in connection with the changing conditions of production and
the societal needs they affect.

The first step is to define more precisely the institutional
character of art and art criticism. The systematic-normative and
the sociohistorical aspects must be differentiated. As Felix V.
Vodička has pointed out,²⁰ we can understand literature as a
complex which encompasses works as well as literary (and other)
evaluations—that is, norms. With respect to their significance
for the historical evolution of literature, these two components
stand in a dialectical relationship to each other: through artistic
innovation, norms are changed, and, vice versa. Through the
(possible) anticipation of norms, a change in the canon is made
possible. If this relationship were absolutely self-regulating, the
literary system would seem to produce its own evolution. Vo-
dička is, of course, aware that this literary evolution must have a
foundation in order to avoid the irrational hypothesis of an
independent literary dynamic. For Vodička, the system of litera-
ture is embedded in its reception (aesthetic perception) and

elaboration by the reading audience: "Just as it is the task of
literary history to encompass the plethora of relationships which
result from the polarity of work and reality, so must the dynamic
which is determined by the polarity of work and reading audi­
ence become the object of historical description."21 This state­
ment clearly indicates that the institution of literature not only
consists of the complex of works and norms, but has a social
aspect as well which, for Vodička, is expressed through the read­
ing audience. The difficulty, of cour­se, is in exposing the special
relationship between these two aspects—that is, revealing the
nature of the mediation because the concept of audience is too
narrow and too vague to be brought into direct connection with
the system of literature (works, norms, values). If one starts with
the assumption that the norms as well as the artistic products are
directly determined by the audience (as the empirically verifi­
able recipients), the system of literature necessarily falls into just
as many parts as the society has social groups. This is precisely
what happens with Levin L. Schücking, who transforms the
function of literary history into a history of types arbitrating
taste.22 The needs of specific social groups manifest themselves
for Schücking as preferences in taste which, in turn, effect the
production of works answering these preferences. In the de­
velopment of such a causality, the unity and relative independ­
dence of the literary system which should be analytically main­
tained get lost. For no matter how certainly social groups and
classes ultimately influence literary production, it is still not di­
rectly dependent on them because previously available works as
well as the predominant literary and politicoreligious norms de­
termine production by limiting the possibilities and alternatives
in each concrete historical situation. Moreover, there are un­
avoidable stages of mediation in the social sphere between the
institution of literature and the literary system in a more limited
sense. The category of taste, on which Schücking centers his
argument, is constituted not ad hoc by social groups, but by
specific organizations (salons, clubs, societies) which themselves

21 Ibid., p. 73.
22 Levin L. Schücking, Soziologie der literarischen Geschmacks-Bildung, 3d ed. (Bern,
1961).
are oriented toward a more comprehensive institution, namely the public sphere. An essential category of mediation emerges between the audience and the system of literature, and this is the public sphere, which is only casually mentioned by Vodička and above all is not conceptually distinguished from the audience. However, the public sphere cannot be defined and explained by socioempirical data. Rather, it is a construct whose function is to make the dynamic processes between the spheres of society, state, and culture describable. Its more specific significance for scholarly literary analysis is that it brings the relationships between social and literary activity (which for a positivistic sociology of literature can only be considered separately) closer to a nonmechanical interpretation. The structure of the public sphere determines the type of literary discourse, initially influencing its form (means and organization of communication), but also its content, in themes treated or avoided. Since the structure of the public sphere is relatively stable, it reinforces the system of literature. By referring to public opinion (Räsonnement), the literary system becomes anchored in the entire societal process. Class character expresses itself indirectly, of course, in that the dominant class can impose its preferences (ideologies) with the help of the organizations serving the public sphere (the press, academies, clubs, etc.).

A sketch of such an institutional history of literary criticism was presented in 1953 by the American literary sociologist Hugh D. Duncan. He argued that statements and texts, which can be formally considered literary criticism, can have a very differentiated function, and he came to the following methodological conclusion: "In the kind of analysis undertaken here, it is very important to discover who is assigned the right to criticize; what institutions assume the guardianship of criticism; how these institutions defend their guardianship in competition with other institutions; how those who are to criticize are selected,

trained, and supported; to whom the criticism may be communicated; and on what occasions criticism is required.” This catalogue of problems relates (1) to the social role of the critic, (2) to the social organization of criticism (the press, associations, academies), (3) to the connections of these organizations to the institutions of the whole society (state, church, court, parties), and (4) to the significance and function of literary criticism in the system of the whole society (whether required for its functioning or not). Duncan rightly stresses that the forms of literary criticism familiar to us have a place only in a relatively differentiated social structure and in a highly developed public sphere: “For it is precisely when a society becomes differentiated within, as well as among, its institutions that the critic, as we know him in modern society, emerges.”

In conjunction with these fundamental considerations, Duncan develops a typology of literary criticism that is still worthy of consideration today. The point of departure is a model of communication in which author, audience, and critic are deemed the significant factors. According to the dominant relationship in each communication situation, Duncan differentiates five different types of socially institutionalized literary criticism. Oral literature in primitive society had little need for the critic. Here the bond between author and audience is strong; on the other hand, the relation to the critic is marginal. The spiritual literature of the Middle Ages and courtly poetry of the Renaissance and Baroque belong to a type in which the bond between author and critic (censor) is strong, while the general audience remains on the periphery. The third type Duncan describes is a situation in which the producer has a strong bond to both audience and critic but in which the critic does not speak on behalf of the audience. If, as in the fourth type, the impulse originates in the audience, in whose name the author writes and the critic judges, the bonds between author and critic are undeveloped while the lines between the audience and the critic or author are starkly drawn. Duncan presents a fifth type in which all three bonds are equally developed as the ideal: it forms a harmonious balance that secures the autonomy of literature. Duncan’s preference is

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25 Ibid., p. 60.
26 Ibid., p. 64.
obviously influenced by New Criticism, which dominated the 1950s and may be the least convincing today. His method allows (in a form that is still very simple) the elaboration of models of communication with which important contributory aspects of literary criticism’s social basis can be analytically understood. Two further steps are necessary to add to the historical dimension. First, the typology must be differentiated according to its historical material so that not only epochal phases but also shorter time periods can be isolated from one another. Moreover, the evolution from one type to another is not merely to be described as a change, but the process by which it came to this change should be simultaneously reconstructed. The possibilities depicted in Duncan’s typology must be presented in their historical context so that the significant alterations are made visible.

More recently Peter Bürger has developed a historical typology of literary production and reception which underlines the aspect of historical evolution not thematized by Duncan.²⁷ Within the sphere of reception he differentiates the collective-sacral appropriation of Medieval art, the social appropriation of courtly art, and finally the individual reception of bourgeois art. The corresponding forms of literary criticism can be extrapolated easily with the help of Duncan’s model. Naturally, these broad frameworks are only of limited benefit for the history of modern literary criticism between the eighteenth century and the present, since the category of individual reception must cover very distinct types of appropriation which manifest themselves in various forms of criticism. When Bürger writes that “solitary submersion in the work is the suitable mode of appropriation of art works which have moved away from the daily life practice (Lebenspraxis) of the bourgeois,”²⁸ it must be added that this condition, generally speaking, is only possible in late bourgeois society. Early bourgeois art deals with an individual reception which is, however, brought back through public deliberation (Räsonnement) to a social type of appropriation. It is true, of course, that naive and direct daily life practice gets lost in the use of art (the loss can be traced back to the representative depletion of courtly art), but this loss is compensated by the

²⁷Peter Bürger, Theorie der Avantgarde (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), pp. 49–75.
²⁸Ibid., p. 65.
moral-aesthetic deliberation, in which art serves as a critical corrective to society.

III

The incorporation of literary criticism into the history of the institution of literature is best illustrated by the following example. Ever since the pioneering work of Lukács, the year 1848 has been rightly viewed not only as a political but also as an essential literary epochal dividing line.29 This change is most obviously seen in the field of theory, where after 1850 the norms and evaluative criteria based on the Vormärz period were replaced by the concept of realism. It can be easily shown how this theory of poetic realism developed from ideas formulated before 1848 (Hegel, Schelling) and how it then once again affected the literary production of the 1850s and 1860s.30 For instance, the most significant critics of the epoch tested out the meaning of the new criteria in exemplary reviews. As important as it is to elucidate and formulate this reciprocal relationship of altered theory and new literary production, the history of literary criticism cannot be satisfied with this discovery. The conditions determining the development of the new theory must be indicated. In other words, the connection between the formation of literary norms and political ideology must be explained. Moreover, it must be kept in mind that the function of literature has changed in a significant way. Only against this background can the proper place of literary criticism in the age of Realism be understood.

The structural change of the institution of literature can be discerned in several phenomena which obviously cannot be isolated from one another. Most importantly, a quantitative as well as a qualitative change in the reading public must be noted. In connection with the industrialization and urbanization of Germany, congested metropolitan areas developed in which literary communication was concentrated. For the majority of people, participating according to taste was made easier. From the 1860s onward, one can speak of a mass audience which did not absorb

but changed the educated group of Vormärz readers. Indications of this change are the family journals created in the Nachmärz period, through which belles lettres reached the general public regularly for the first time in Germany. While book production was still declining during the 1850s, new groups of readers were introduced to literature through the journals and newspapers. These groups are probably responsible for the expansion of book production in the 1870s.

The results of this change are: (1) the rise of a popular literature tailored to the needs of a wide audience; and (2) qualitative changes in the area of literary criticism. Indicative of this change is the fact that a journal such as the Gartenlaube, which definitely had a great effect on taste, dispensed with all critical deliberation. Literary criticism was offered only in the form of author portraits in which the literary as well as ideological processes were personalized. Opposed to this approach, the liberal journals like the Grenzboten and the Deutsche Museum maintained the critical dialogue about literature. In particular, the Grenzboten became the organ of the new literary theory. Thus the division of literature into avant-garde and popular literature had already begun but was still held back by the idea of realistic Volksstümlichkeit.

A history of literary criticism would have to take into account this transition from a public predicated on standards of cultural deliberation (Räsonnement) to one based on consumption—that is, a structural change in the literary public sphere. As a part of this sphere, criticism is affected, along with other areas, by the erosion of literary tradition. Where literature is primarily produced and distributed for entertainment, it is potentially threatened with elimination, and its preservation is entrusted to the media, which only reach certain areas of communication.

As the concept of the public sphere was being truncated by post-1848 liberalism (Alexander Baumgarten, August Ludwig von Rochau) and as those specific elements such as equality and social justice, on which the working masses relied, were being denied, the limitations of the new literary theory of poetic realism became increasingly visible. Between the contradictions of the liberal model of the public sphere and the theory of literary criticism...
realism, there is a relationship that was recently revealed by Helmut Kreuzer when he pointed out that poetic realism "cannot be separated from ideological-political motifs based on the historical conditions of the post-1848 epoch."\(^3\) The battlefront against the proletariat and the legitimation of the alliance between culture and capital by critics such as Emanuel Geibel, Gustav Freytag, and Julian Schmidt were the manifestations of the horizon of expectation about what "realistic" depiction had to achieve. What is intended here is the idealization of the German bourgeoisie. Poetic realism finds its boundaries where the message criticizes the compromise of the middle class, a compromise disguised as the idea of progress. Poetic realism is meant to be a balanced representation that expressly separates itself from "crude" West European realism.

The position of the literary critic must be situated within the context of these conditions. Of primary consideration would be the change in the critic's professional role in relation to the change in the literary market, particularly in relation to the rise of the mass media (family journals, mass press). The Vormärz critic became a salaried copy writer who delivered what the medium demanded. The freedom of the press enacted in the interim did not have a major effect, as Heine pointed out in *Lutetia*, since the organization of the press came increasingly under the pressure of commercialization. On the whole, an increasing dependence of the critic and a corresponding decline in his social status could most likely be found. And finally, on the level of its function in the larger society, the legitimizing use of criticism should be investigated. The reviews of the Nachmärz period refer primarily to norms and criticisms which, in the final analysis, reinforce sociopolitical processes that eventually led to the conservative foundation of the Second Empire in 1871.

Let us return to our point of departure: there are little more than beginnings for a history of the institution of criticism. What such a history could accomplish can, however, be ascertained. Its goal would be: (1) to overcome the specialization and reductiveness of premises based on judgment and the history of ideas; (2)

to end the purely chronological organization of material and instead to understand change against the background of institutional transformation; and (3) to take into account the interconnection between the literary and social processes from the beginning, so that monocausal relationships and mechanical correlations are not presumed, but so that the social factor can present itself in the institution of criticism.