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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TOWARD A FULFILLMENT OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROMISE: BLENDING C. WRIGHT MILLS AND TOM WOLFE

BY

ILAN MAGAT 

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1990

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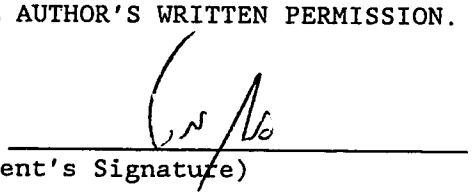

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"You had to be a crank to insist on being right. Being right was largely a matter of explanations. Intellectual man had become an explaining creature. Father to children, wives to husbands, lecturers to listeners, experts to layman, colleagues to colleagues, doctors to patients, man to his soul, explained. The roots of this the causes of the other, the sources of events, the history, the structure, the reason why. For the most part, in one ear out the other. the soul wanted what it wanted. It had its own natural knowledge. It sat unhappily on superstructures of explanation, poor bird, not knowing which way to fly".

From "Mr. Sammler's Planet", by Saul Bellow.

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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FOR JENI

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the Agenda and Writing of Sociology.

The author focuses on the sociological agenda which tends to omit individuals in their everyday lives due to a growing focus on constructs and the use of generalization rather than the concrete.

In terms of sociological writing, the author argues that it is not necessary to write in an impersonal manner in order to convey sociological insight. Two effective writing styles are identified, symbolized by the figures of the Prophet and the Jester.

The Thesis suggests a framework which combines sociology with New Journalism techniques in order to facilitate readable sociology while remaining true to the other aspects of the Sociological Promise. This framework is based on the work and ideas of C. Wright Mills and Tom Wolfe. Several books are analyzed in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the framework.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Mike Gillespie, a master of the fine art of supervision.

Thanks also to Dr. Saram and Dr. Pannu, who knew when and how to question my thesis and have me question myself.

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INTRODUCTION

Sociologists, like other scientists, sometimes use the analogy which compares their work to construction (Becker, 1970). The bricks are small, they admit, but the end result is impressive. Some like to think of the process as building the pyramids.

Taking the metaphor a little further, I claim that for a long time now, the bricks have indeed remained small, but instead of creating something of beauty sociologists are creating a Wall. This Wall separates them from the general public (1), whom they should regard as their natural constituency according to the "Sociological Promise" which was stated by C. Wright Mills (1959).

My goal in this study is not to demolish this Wall, but rather to create a ladder for the public to climb over it. I attempt to do this by offering sociologists what I believe to be valuable tools for making sociology more readable and interesting.

C. Wright Mills (1959) started his book The Sociological Imagination with the statement: "Nowadays, most men feel their private lives are series of traps". Mills has a tendency to overstate (as we shall see in chapter five); however, the essence of what he says is true. When asked about the problem of getting sociology across to the layman, Mills' protege, Irving Horowitz (1963), said in an interview with Time magazine:

> There are built-in advantages of sociology with respect to laymen. The aim of the field is of vital interest to the everyday life of ordinary people... How much time does a person spend on formal politics? Damned little. How much time does a person spend thinking about exact science? Even less probably. Most of the day, people are concerned with problems of family, child rearing, deviant behavior, trends in criminal violence, problems of minority groups. In other words, people spend most of their time "sociologically", when they are not involved with economics, that is, problems of making a living.
>
> The opportunity of connecting sociology to the general public has always been present (continues Horowitz). The trick (he argues), "is to combine in a single strategy intellectual sophistication, technical competence, and being very direct about the way we speak and the way we write... It is the purpose of Transaction [a magazine, now entitled Society] to prove that it can be done.

Horowitz, like Mills, is correct. So why is it that the lay people still do not turn to sociology for answers? Horowitz himself admits that in terms of readership Transaction enjoyed only modest success. This author is not aware of any other sociological publication that enjoys broad readership in the manner that Psychology Today functions as a popular magazine. People, I believe, tend not to think of themselves "sociologically", that is, in the context of larger social and historical frameworks. Their tendency is to attribute their positions and actions chiefly to psychological and cultural factors. Mills was aware of this tendency and later in this work we shall examine what he had to say about it.

The focus of my thesis is a set of guidelines which can help sociologists fulfill the "Sociological Promise" as stated by C. Wright Mills in his book The Sociological Imagination. I believe that my suggestions can make Sociology more popular and readable, without losing sociological insight. In essence, I suggest that Sociologists start to write for the general public, in a manner that the public can understand and identify with. I am arguing for a shift in sociological agenda, for bringing individuals and biographies back into the profession and the restoration of what might be labeled "sociology of everyday life". Furthermore, I propose that sociologists might be assisted by literary techniques widely used in the form of "The New Journalism". My point is that it's not necessary to write in a tedious style to be a credible Sociologist. It is possible to be interesting, absorbing, and still fulfill The Sociological Promise.

On a personal note, I worked as a newspaper correspondent for six years and realized that while journalists are able to produce powerful and compelling accounts, they usually confine themselves (or are confined by the nature of their profession), to describing people and immediate events. What Mills calls "meaning", in other words the larger context, was missing. When I started my professional training as a sociologist, I discovered that while sociologists have the "meaning" and context, they rarely produce interesting reading material. In this work I attempt to combine the two. I suggest that the meaningful can be communicated in an entertaining way.

Let me now elaborate on "The Sociological Imagination", "The Sociological Promise" and "The New Journalism".

> The Sociological Imagination (writes Mills, 1959) enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals...(it) enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise.

The Sociological Promise, if fulfilled, will enable people to "...grasp what is going on in the world, and understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society". Laurel Richardson (1988) claims that the Promise is "Sociology <u>of</u> and <u>for</u> the people"(2). There are, then, two interrelated elements to the Promise - the communication of "The Sociological Imagination" to the lay person.

Of Mills' attitude toward the issue of communicating research findings to the general public Goldsen (1964) writes:

> Mills told the profession: Because the sociologist's product can be utilized in the manipulation of human beings, every sociologist has the obligation of interpreting his work and communicating his findings to the public. We must endeavor to make sociological knowledge as inescapable for men on the street as are the doings of Li'l Abner or the virtues of the latest detergent(3).

I will elaborate on the issue of the promise and its importance to Sociology and Sociologists in chapter two of this work. At this stage I will summarize by saying that the promise has not been kept. Sociology as a discipline, and practicing sociologists as its emissaries are, in general, not sufficiently focused on its fulfillment. As Erikson (1989) concludes

after reading The Handbook of Sociology, sociology seems more concerned with epistemological issues than with human society and human problems and sociologists tend to occupy themselves with "local matters... that are usually discussed only within the closed compass of the field".

The "New Journalism" is a special combination of facts and literature. New Journalists write stories about actual people and events. In doing so, they use four specific literary techniques that will be explicated later. These techniques, or devices, help to make their account powerful and absorbing (Wolfe 1973).

"Sociologists have but rarely utilized works of literature in their investigations" wrote Lewis Coser (1963). Yet, it was obvious to him that a novelist or a poet may provide a rich source of social insight. The main problem for using literary work as a source of social insight is that the novelist is not always interested in facts. His plots, for the most part, are imaginary. The "New Journalism" overcomes this barrier for facts are the base of the story.

In his introduction to Wolfe's collection "The Purple Decade", Joe David Bellamy (1982) suggests that the "New Journalism" marries the aesthetics and methodology of the eighteenth and nineteenth century novel (e.g., Fielding, Austen, Dickens, Melville) to the modus operandi of the big-city, police-beat reporter. Van Maanen (1988) claims that the genre is hardly new, and good, early examples (before the term was coined by Wolfe in the early 1970s) include Mark Twain's Innocent Abroad (1869), George Orwells' Down and Out in Paris and London (1933), and John Herseys' Hiroshima (1946). More recent examples include Hunter Thompson's The Hell's Angels (1966);

Wolfe's The Right Stuff (1979), Mark Kramer's Invasive Procedures (1983), and Tracy Kidder's Soul of the Machine (1981). The writers of the above works concern themselves with manners and morals, (as did Dickens or Balzac) and based their stories on actual people and events. We shall return to the "New Journalism" later. At this point I will discuss Kai Erikson's (1976) Everything In Its Path. The book and the discussion demonstrate and clarify several issues raised in the context of this work.

Everything In Its Path follows the destruction of a rural Appalachian community by a terrible flood. The winner of the 1977 Sorokin Award for an outstanding contribution to the progress of Sociology, it is a book written with compassion about people who experienced a devastating tragedy. Both factors, the powerful drama and the author's compassion(4), make the work impressive. From the reviews cited on the book's cover, I learned that critics did not condemn Erikson for his stance. On the contrary, they consider the book to be "tender" (The New Republic), "warm" (Scientific American), "a moving human document" (Peter Berger) and "a triumph of contemporary understanding" (The New York Times Book Review).

Ironically, the author himself almost apologizes for abandoning the "objective" pose and writing a compelling and warm, a "humanistic" account. In the introductory chapter Erickson falls just short of stating that events took over, overwhelmed and almost forced him to write an interesting book.

> There was an urgency to this research, quite unlike anything sociologists normally encounter in the course of their work, and it affected both the temper of the study to follow and the methodological cast it came to assume. If the study had been organized along more conventional sociological lines, it might have been quite different... Yet I suspect that I would have had difficulty pursuing this study in the cool and measured way most

> sociological research is done even if the circumstances had been less pressing, partly because the event I was trying to understand seemed so much larger than the professional lens through which I was looking, and partly because the traditional methods of sociology do not really equip one to study discrete moments in the flow of human experience (emphasis mine).
>
> I think an argument can be made that sociologists should do this kind of work more often anyway. The search for generalization has become so intense in our professional ranks that most of the important events of our day have passed without comment in the sociological literature. The aim of any science, I agree, must be to move from particular observations to general findings, but there are times when the need for generalizations must yield to the urgency of passing events, times when the event must tell its own story. Moreover, once one comes to know and respect a community of people, it becomes increasingly difficult to think of them as examples of a larger sociological propositions-all the more so if they are suffering in some sharp and private way. One of the first persons I met on buffalo Creek said in a letter: 'I feel as I'm sure a prisoner must feel who has been sentenced to prison for a crime he didn't commit'. People like that have been the been the victims of so many different forces outside their control that one hesitates to imprison them once again between the cold parentheses of a theory. Much of what follows is theoretical, of course, since that is part of what a sociologist can contribute to human understanding, but I have tried to let the theory fall between the natural segments of the story rather than making it the main theme, the organizing principle, of the report (Page.11, emphasis mine).

My interpretation of this paragraph is as follows: Erikson suggests that sociology is usually somewhat remote and non-human. He is implying that sociologists are allowed, or even required, to write in an non-human manner about people who do not suffer, and that suffering is almost a due people are required to pay if they want sociologists to describe them in a decent and human manner. I agree with Erickson that there is too much generalization in sociology today. I believe that the Wall's existence can be attributed at least partially to the fact that people, when they appear at all in sociological writing (sometimes sociologists choose to abandon people altogether, as we shall see in a moment), usually lack character, good or

bad. Instead, we get an impression of societies inhabited by one-dimensional cartoon figures who function mainly as grist for the author's ideological, theoretical, or methodological mill. In the preface to their classic work "The Polish Peasant In Europe and America", Thomas and Znaniecki (1958) note:

> The present study is, in fact, not undertaken exclusively or even primarily as an expression of interest in the Polish peasant... The Polish peasant was selected rather as a convenient object for the exemplification of a standpoint and method ... of the present volume.

Back to Erikson: I disagree with his tacit assumption that the kind of research he conducted or the way he reported it are appropriate for disasters only. Sociologists do not have to wait for a flood or an earthquake to write human documents. It can be used for everyday events, and for ordinary (not only devastated) people. I attempt to equip sociologists with the tools that will enable them to produce powerful sociology whenever they go out into the field. They will not have to wait for circumstances to force them to write in a certain way: they will use their tools regardless of circumstances. Furthermore, I believe that my suggestions can, in Erikson words, better "equip (them) to study discrete moments in the flow of human experience". It requires, however, a change of focus on their part.

A good illustration of the shift sociology underwent, a shift that resulted in what I perceive as the triumph of structures over individuals, is provided by Theda Skocpol's acclaimed work States and Social Revolutions (1979). Furthermore, Skocplo's book helps to substantiate and support another claim of this thesis; namely- that contemporary Sociology and Sociologists are not focused on the fulfillment of the sociological promise.

Skocpol's work is mainstream contemporary sociology. Its nature-comparative history is by no means marginal in the profession(5). The work was initiated and executed at Harvard University under the supervision of prominent members of the discipline (6), and was warmly accepted by professional critiques(7).

A note before I continue: I am not determining whether Skocpol possesses the intellectual capacity or the writing skills for the fulfillment of the Promise. I merely claim that, for various reasons, she does not use the Sociological Imagination and the Promise is not her <u>focus</u>.

Skocpol's aim is to examine the sources of and the conditions under which social revolutions occur. Furthermore, she constructs a causal model.

She compares three social revolutions: the French, Russian and Chinese. In her comparison - and in order to construct the causal model - she implements three major principles of analysis, which I shall mention here briefly. For elaboration see footnote(8).

The first principle is the adoption of a "Structural Perspective". The second is analysis of international and world-historical contexts. The third is the potential autonomy of the state.

Skocpol's first principle is the one which baffles me. For when she advocates "Structural Perspective" or "Non-Voluntaristic Explanation", Skocpol declares that she <u>has no use for people.</u> She has no interest in their realities, ideas, motives or perceptions of life and history. She does not believe that people make a dent in history's locomotive (9). Robespierre

and Mara', Lenin and Trotsky, Mao Tse Tung and Ayatollah Khomeini are, according to Skocpol, insignificant to the occurrence of revolutions and their outcomes. "What is the moral and intellectual warrant for a perspective that makes men into mere by-products of their circumstances?" asks Reinhard Bendix (1980), who wonders, legitimately in my view, "why (the author) has such a strong interest in revolutions". Would Mills agree with Skocpol's views about men?

As a result of the author's conviction, there are no people to be found in her book. People are an "out" concept; constructs are "in". Skocpol, in Veblen's words, is dreaming of a "highly-sterilized, germ-proof system of knowledge, kept in a cool dry place". In this case, the reader is left with a unique creature: Social Science without people. I suspect that Skocpol perceives people who use words such as "Promise" and "Imagination" to be unprofessional. Would Mills approve of the outcome? How did Skocpol pass the nomination stage for an award which carries C. Wright Mills' name? (she was granted THE C. WRIGHT MILLS AWARD FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS, 1979). Were the referees aware of the existence of "The Sociological Imagination" (where Mills states clearly that the Sociological Imagination is the interplay between biography, social structure and history), when they granted the award to a writer who ignores and denies a whole third of the package?(10). Before we leave Skocpol (we shall return to her work in the concluding chapter and "States and Social Revolutions" is analyzed in the summary table), one last comment, concerning the readership. According to Mills, the sociologist should write for the general public. The readership ought to be broad. This is an important precondition for the fulfillment of

the Promise. Here, again, Skocpol falls short of the Promise, for her book definitely does not address the general public, but a small and selected crowd of academics.

We return now to the "New Journalism". I believe that when they address the general public, when they write about actual people and events and in their search for a useful tool to study discrete moments in the flow of human experience, sociologists can gain, substantially, from using the writing techniques of "The New Journalism". Van Maanen, who labels this form of presentation as "Literary Tales", also recognizes its possibilities and attractiveness. In "Tales of the Field" (1988), he writes: "(The) hyper formality and lack of experimentation in academic writing is unfortunate and dulls both the representation and the mind".

I shall now turn to the suggested framework. However, before I do so, I want to make one thing perfectly clear: by "Independent" and "Dependent" variables, no direct causality is implied. These terms are just convenient devices.

First, the "Independent" variables: I intend to show that three elements can be effectively combined: Participant Observation (when possible and adequate), the ability to Shift between Concrete and Abstract and presentation in Literary Style. When these elements are present, the result can be the fulfillment of the Sociological Promise. The independent variables address the issue of style, in other words: how should sociologists communicate their findings.

C. Wright Mills provides what I consider to be the "Dependent" variables"of the proposed framework: how close does a sociological work come to fulfilling "The Sociological Promise" as reviewed earlier (11). The dependent variables are the essence and substance of Sociology, namely what sociologists should focus on and write about. According to Mills (1959:6) the sociologist should ask three sorts of questions:

> 1. What is the structure of this particular (the studied) society as a whole? What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another? How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change?
>
> 2. Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period- what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making?
>
> 3. What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of 'human nature' are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning of 'human nature' of each and every feature of the society we are examining?

None of the suggested variables are new; The constellation, however, is original. The gathering of journalism, literature and the fulfillment of the sociological promise into one framework is something this author did not encounter in his literature survey. Furthermore, suggested here is the beginning of an analytical framework. The dependent variables gleaned from Mills, provide a set of criteria based upon a landmark in sociological writing. This makes sociologists more accountable, since their work can be

measured against something most of them claim is important (The Sociological Imagination is a commonly quoted book). As mentioned before, this work is concerned with both substance and style. Its essence, however, is presentation, or sociological writing, not theory or method, although these issues may surface from time to time. I am not suggesting a new methodology but rather a shift in the sociologist's focus and a set of techniques that should be available to anyone who cares to use them. Actually, this work advocates an "anti-methodology" approach. We already have enough methodologies. As Erikson (1989) points out: "... Sociologists (would) seem to have a deep sensitivity to the epistemological underpinnings of their work, an almost compulsive concern with 'literatures', 'methods', and the rest of the theoretical and conceptual apparatus of the discipline". I believe that theory and methodology, for the most part, are mystifications and when a sociologist claims to be a "structuralist" or a "hermeneuticist", he lays another brick in the Wall. What I am trying to do is to de-mystify the process by which sociological insights are produced or, at least, communicated. A related issue, one that is of profound interest to me, is the writer's voice; to be precise, the writer's "pose". This issue will be examined in chapter five, titled "The Prophet and the Jester".

In order to establish my points I have chosen several books, from the fields of Sociology, Anthropology and Journalism and applied the suggested framework in analyzing them. I will demonstrate how certain books written by journalists fulfill the Promise. Furthermore, I will show how "classics" in the field of sociology, including ones that do match the criteria (Mills himself, for one), could have benefitted from adopting the suggested devices.

The books to be analyzed are:

From the field of "Sociology":

1. The Hobo

   Nels Anderson describes the lives of casual workers in Chicago of the 1920'.

2. Street Corner Society

   William F. Whyte describes and analyzes the social structure of an Italian Slum.

3. The Power Elite

   C. Wright Mills argues this elite actually exists and describes its emergence in America after the Second World War.

4. Everything in its Path"

   Kai Erikson follows the destruction of community in the Buffalo Creek flood.

5. The Hippie Trip

   Lewis Yablonsky records the American Youth Movement of the 1960'.

From the fields of "Anthropology", "Journalism" and "New Journalism":

1. Tally's Corner

   Elliot Liebow studies the world of black street corner men.

2. Working

   Studs Terkel records what Americans say about what they do all day and about how they feel about what they do.

3. From Bauhaus to Our House

   Tom Wolfe follows and mourns American infatuation with European architecture.

4. The Yellow Wind

   David Grossman writes about life in the Israeli occupied West Bank.

5. The Reckoning

   David Halberstam follows the ascendence of Japanese and the descendence of American Auto Industry.

Some of the books were selected in order to demonstrate the logic and reasoning behind the guidelines I previously described - for example Terkels' book demonstrates the need for a certain level of abstraction (which it lacks).

Wolfe's work demonstrates that it is possible to write meaningful sociology and have fun at the same time.

Some books demonstrate how one talented person (not necessarily a sociologist by training), can provide important social insights and create an entire "mosaic" - a picture assembled from different parts, each with its own shape and color - as in the case of Grossman.

Others, like Mills and Erikson were selected because they contain all the necessary elements stated in the framework and indeed fulfill the Promise, but could benefit, in various ways from the implementation of the suggested devices, in other words the Independent Variables.

And yet others, like Halberstam and Yablonsky, were chosen because they represent the way I think sociology should be written.

Not all the books are equally important for my thesis, although each one is there for a reason. As a result, each will be used, but some will get longer and more detailed treatment.

I would like to point out that various chapters of this work are written in an "unscientific" manner. This stems from my conviction and belief that sociology does not need to be dreary in order to communicate meaningfully.

I am not intending to exclude women from the field of sociology by my use of non-inclusive language. I would appreciate it if the reader would understand that both genders are included in my use of the male pronoun.

ENDNOTES

1. The definition of the general public will be discussed in chapter four "The suggested Framework".

2. Mills and Richardson have another component to their writing: social commitment. The commitment is to support and empower the underprivileged groups of society (in Richardson's case - unmarried women engaged in relationships with married men). Mills and Richardson assume that knowledge is power, and having the knowledge is the first step in creating change.

3. A contemporary example of a popular comic strip might be Doonesbury.

4. One is tempted to say his abandonment of the academic pose and prose, two issues that will be discussed in chapter five.

5. A recent example is Gordon Laxer's book Open for business: The Roots of Foreign Ownership in Canada (1989).

6. Committee members for Skocpol's doctoral thesis (the source of the book) were Barrington Moore Jr., George Homans and Seymour Lipset.

7. "... a clear, concise and admirably well-crafted book", (Mcneill,1980). "An instant standard" (Goldfrank:1980).

8. As Skocpol notes, "three major principles of analysis" underlie "States and Social Revolutions" - first, a "nonvolunterist,

structural perspective" on the causes and processes of revolution; second, a "systematic reference to international structures and world - historical developments"; third, a conception of states "as administrative and coercive organizations ... that are potentially autonomous from (though conditioned by) socioeconomic interests and structures" (p.14). The structural perspective: in other words, a rejection of what she calls "volunterism" - the idea that the causes, process, and outcomes of revolutions can be understood wholly or primarily in terms of the values, purposes, and deliberate efforts of self-consciously revolutionary classes and organizations.

World historical developments - the path of revolution is shaped partly by the opportunities and requirements of the historical moment. The author argues that underlying all social revolutions is the "internationally uneven spread of capitalist economic development and nation - state formation" (p.19). Revolutions occur "only in countries situated in disadvantaged positions within international arenas" (p.23).

The autonomy of the political - the author objects to the view that political structures and struggles can be reduced to socioeconomic forces and conflicts or that the state is simply an arena in which social conflicts are fought. Instead, she argues, the state must be seen as an autonomous structure with its own logic and interests and the power of the state treated as a crucial independent factor in revolution.

). In a less vehement manner, Himmelstein and Kimmel (1981:1148) note that "(Skocpol argues that) "volunterist" elements are not even necessary for understanding revolutions. Consciousness and conscious social action ... are there, but she does her best to ignore them.

10. There is further critique by Elizabeth Nichols (1986), who raises valid questions about the predicting powers of the causal model. In fact, Nichols challenges Skocpol on the latter's own turf, the turf of empirical validity. Nichols refers to the model's failure to predict and explain the Iranian Revolution:

Page.181:

"... Two of the subjective elements Skocpol previously denied as causal are both present: the disruption and potential disorientation of enforced and rapid modernization, and a deliberate and apparently successful revolutionary effort to change both the state and social relations in accordance with a revolutionary ideology" (emphasis mine).

Acknowledging the part of revolutionary ideology is acknowledging that people are more than cows; it is the acknowledgment that conscious and will do play a part in human life.

Page. 182:

"In the Iranian case, Skocpol is ready to concede the potentially revolutionary content of traditional religious teachings must be taken into account. In addition, Skocpol tells us that "In Iran, uniquely, the revolution was made". In this case at least Skocpol sees the cognitive content of Shi'a teaching as directly relevant both to the political events and to the social transformation that followed".

In the Iranian case, then, people do make a difference.

Skocpol's neglect of people not only makes the book boring to read, but, according to Symbolic Interaction (and if I may, simple common sense) leads to a fundamental flaw in the author's account of revolutions. During the course of writing this thesis, Eastern Europe underwent massive social change. While I am by no mean an expert on the subject, it is quite obvious that people's consciousness and will played a major part in these changes. One example is the Romanian revolution. In a New York Times article of January 7th, 1990, a young Romanian student describes the role he and his friends played in the revolution; how upset they were after the massacre in Timisoara; how they called each other on the phone and decided to attend the demonstration called by Ceausescu. The young people stood in the back of the crowd and booed the leader. The booing went on for a very short period of time, nonetheless, the television cameras captured Ceausescu's stunned look. It was enough to convey to the Romanian people the vulnerability of their iron- fisted leader. The revolution erupted few days later. To me, this is a contemporary example of how people affect revolution.

11. Adopting Mills' criteria will help to distinguish Sociology from Anthropology. The borders between the two disciplines are becoming increasingly vague, however Anthropologists remain less interested in history than Sociologists, as we shall see when Anthropology books are analyzed.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

In the beginning was the title. And the title contained the first non-scientific word: "Imagination".

Then the book is opened, and there is the second violation, "The Sociological Promise", is the title of the first chapter.

Yet, The Sociological Imagination is a landmark. A highly read and quoted work.

I suspect though, that certain batches of sociologists find the book more appealing than others. These groups being:

- Young sociologists, excited with the promise, eager to engage themselves in imaginative work, and
- Disillusioned veterans who might page through trying to remember how they felt when they entered the profession, and wonder how and when it went sour.

Most practicing sociologists however, will feel a certain uneasiness, if not embarrassment, when realizing how far from fulfillment the Promise still is. Mills showed the way and started marching. In fact, he was already marching when he wrote The Sociological Imagination. I think that had he bothered to look over his shoulder, he would have been devastated to realize how few had followed.

The young and old still read the book, above all, because they believe that this is the way Sociology should be done, and they want to be a part of

it. Furthermore, it is a book that was written with passion, by a passionate man, and after thirty years, it still generates adrenalin in the reader. The copy at the U. of A's library is almost illegible. Lines and paragraphs are emphasized by underlining and notes such as "very true" and "exactly" are scribbled in the margins. It is obvious that the book invokes some kind of emotional reaction within its readers. Talcott Parsons would have given his right arm for this kind of reaction.

On second thought, I am not sure he really cared.

The reaction is evoked by unscientific words such as "Imagination" and "Promise", two concepts on which I would like to elaborate:

Imagination is
A flaky concept
That no one can write a patent on, or
Can establish a claim for
It defies conventions
Does not render itself to matters of seniority
Is easy to identify, but
Impossible to operationalize

AND

Everyone had one at a certain stage of his life

SO

If it is not entirely defunct, it is still there, struggling for air.

And what Mills told the sociologists is that they have to revive their imagination and then start using it. His book is like an initial dose of life-restoring oxygen.

Imagination is FREEDOM

And a call for using imagination is a call for LIBERATION

While Imagination is associated with liberation, Promise implies HOPE.

It indicates that sociological work has meaning and purpose and possible future reward.

In The Sociological Imagination Mills reassures sociologists of their calling and demonstrates how it can be followed. He does it in a very compelling way, by combining hard logic with beautiful language, and on his way cooks the beef of some very tasty sacred cows.

The book adresses three major issues, THE three major issues: What is Sociology all about, who the public is, and how sociologists should communicate with the above public. The issue of how to communicate will be elaborated upon in the chapter "The Prophet and the Jester". I shall now address the two other issues.

Sociology, or the sociological imagination according to Mills is the interplay\connection\intersection between Biography, History and Social Structures. For our discussion, I choose to emphasize two points Mills makes. First, that sociological work has to be closely related to the meanings of reality for individual men and women (1959:134). Second, the sociologist should be able to make the shift between individual and general points of view whenever required.

At this point, let me cite from the book, mark key words and concepts and pose a few quick rhetorical questions.

Page 132: What social science is properly about is the human variety of all the social worlds in which men have lived, are living and might live.

Key words: human variety, social worlds.

Question: Is it conceivable that the human variety and the different social worlds can be explained meaningfully using the same language\jargon?

Page 133: The human variety includes the variety of individual human beings: there too the sociological imagination must grasp and understand.

Key concepts: individual human beings

Question: Can Sociology benefit from giving up the uniqueness, the special flavors and details in the lives of an Indian Brahmin, a pioneer farmer in Illinois, an Australian Aboriginal and a Bolivian politician (examples used by Mills), a Negro junkie or a Polish delinquent (examples used by Howard Becker)? Is it sensible to assume that a profession that's concerned with different meanings (not to mention the readers of the material) can benefit from a "flattened" and "evened" prose?

And who are these readers? Who are the constituency, or for whom should the sociologist write? Here, Mills (1959:221) adapts Lionel Trilling's suggestion:

> Assume that you have been asked to give a lecture on some subject you know well, before an audience of teachers and students from all departments of a leading university, as well as an assortment of interested people from a near--by city. Assume that such an audience is before you and that they have the right to know; assume that you want to let them know. Now write.

SOCIOLOGY, LITERATURE, JOURNALISM AND NEW JOURNALISM

> In many academic circles today anyone who tries to write in a widely intelligible way is liable to be condemned as a 'mere literary man' or, worse still, 'a mere journalist' (Mills, 1959:218).

The above statement is indeed valid today. But it wasn't always like that. There was a time when young sociologists were sent into the field with instructions such as "Write down only what you see, hear and know, like a newspaper reporter". The instructors were Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, and the student, Nels Anderson, came back with The Hobo. "I did have two resources that could be put to good use" recalled Anderson years later (1967) - "a capacity for interviewing and a capacity for reporting what I had seen and heard".

This happened in the 1920s, the period known as "The Golden Age of Chicago Sociology", when sociologists were participating in what Jules Henry [quoted in Becker, (1970)] labeled "Passionate Ethnography".

This chapter starts with Robert Park and Journalism, and ends with Tom Wolfe and New Journalism. As we shall see, the New Journalism makes use of literary devices. It is valuable, therefore, to examine the relationships between sociology and literature.

Robert E. Park, head of Chicago's Sociology department in those exhilarating days before the depression, did not grow up in academia. He was trained as a newspaper man and a Public Relations person. "... He came to believe", notes Hughs (1964:18) "... that the key lay in communication [without an s] and public opinion. If only the reporting of events, large

and small, were complete and the circulation of the news equally so, human progress would proceed apace". When Park changed his hat and became a sociologist, he did not change his state of mind and modus operandi. These states essentially remained those of a media person. With his colleagues, W.I. Thomas, Ernest Burgess and others, Park became the driving force of what became known as sociological fieldwork. As Van Maanen (1988) notes "Much of the early Chicago work, while not exactly scoop reporting, did carry a hard-boiled documentary thrust... There was concern for 'digging the data' so that the 'real story' could be told". Park, "who recognized no academic line fences in his choice of problems and methods... (was inclined) towards realism, towards the study of wholes. He was interested in current goings on, but never content until he could put a news story into some universal theme of human interaction" (Hughs:1964). Park's students concerned themselves with phenomena such as "The Ghetto", "The Slum" and "The Gang", and wrote books that ... "told of individual lives that were shaped by large social forces, yet were rich in cultural and individual detail" (Van Maanen, 1988). This theme, the detail and its place in the larger scheme, or picture, is a recurrent theme in this work. Both the detail and the scheme are important.

Two comments are in order now: The first is Park's view of "The Field", the second about the nature of certain scientific enterprises. Both comments are relevant to the present study.

First - Park did not consider it a must to travel far if one wants to study fascinating people and ways of life. The Field could be Chicago's Hobohemia, just around the corner. The trick was, and still is, to look at

things from a fresh perspective and a new angle. I shall return to the point of a fresh look at interesting people who live in the back yard later, when I review the emergence of the "New Journalism".

Second - Becker (1970) compares a scientific enterprize such as studying the city (as did Park) to a Mosaic: "Each piece added to a mosaic adds a little to our understanding of the total picture". Since earlier I used the image of the Wall, I want to stress that the Mosaic and the Wall are two different things. While the gray Wall is built from nondescript and insignificant bricks, the Mosaic is composed of unique and recognizable pieces each with its own shape and color, independently significant. The Mosaic image will be used later in the analysis of "The Yellow Wind".

SOCIOLOGY AND LITERATURE

As Richardson (1988) notes, there exists a Faustian agreement between Sociologists and the Devil SCIENCE. The agreement goes: We'll give you our soul, and you'll give us OBJECTIVITY.

Sociologists, and not only those obsessed with objectivity, keep their part of the agreement, i.e., they still write in a souless fashion. But don't they realize they are cutting a bad deal? Indeed, objectivity is nowhere to be seen.

Richardson says and I agree: The Faustian agreement should be broken.

While dryness is usually a signifier of scientific writing, its opposites - expressiveness and interest - are attributes of literary writing.

In the following pages, I shall examine the relationship between Sociology and Literature. What can literature offer the reader? What can literature offer Sociology? Should the two be unified? Lewis Coser (1963) answers in the affirmative. Not that he finds any real need for Sociologists to change their way of writing, but at least he acknowledges that there is something in literature that sociology can use.

Kingsley Widmer (1975) goes even further: he suggests that in some areas, literature produces a more coherent and significant body of knowledge than sociology. We'll examine Widmer's arguments and see which areas he refers to. Then we'll move to Howard Becker, my link to the New Journalism. What Becker claims he misses is a combination of facts and literary writing, which is precisely what the "New Journalism" is all about.

Literature, Coser (1963) notes, is "Social evidence and testimony... continuous commentary on manners and morals". Novelists and poets, he writes, provide their readers with an "Immense variety of richly textured commentaries on man's life in society, (and) on his involvement with his fellow- men". Literary men also have the "ability to identify with wide ranges of experience, and ... a trained capacity to articulate through (their) fantasy the existential problems of (their) contemporaries...".

It is hardly surprising then, notes Coser, that when sociologists talk about post -Napoleonic France, "They surely have in mind a picture drawn for them by Balzac's Comedie Humaine rather than by some social historian". And when they lecture on Victorian society, they are "Apt to think of the novels of Dickens or George Eliot. Few... would deny that their image of nineteenth-century Russia was formed in large part by Tolstoy or Dostoevsky...".

Coser acknowledges, furthermore, that " (the literary people) trained sensibilities can provide a richer source of social insight than those of ... the impressions of untrained informants on which so much sociological research ... rests".

Like Park, Coser advocates the inclusion of both realism (details, description) and analysis. However, While I agree with Coser that one should read "Marx and Balzac, Max Weber and Proust", and that the understanding of one "will be illuminated by the understanding of the other", I feel that the "union of sociology and literature", which he advocates, is not a real union. Because while Coser holds that Literature and Sociology can profit each other 'immensely', he still wants to keep them separate. He distinguishes between "Scientific Knowledge" and "Literary Insights" and does not suggest that sociologists change their style of writing or adopt literary standards.

Kingsley Widmer (1975), for his part, holds that in some cases - gathering and communicating knowledge about total institutions for instance - literature and novelists perform better than sociologists and social science. Or, as he puts it "Equivalent intelligence and talent used in the ways of 'social science' may produce less experience and knowledge, not only that which is less valuational in the pretended neutrality and less aesthetic in the jargonized rituals but fundamentally lacking adequate human perspective and purpose".

Widmer's chosen examples for comparison, from both sides of the fence, are very well known: Erving Goffman's Asylums and Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.

Widmer claims that literature reaches a higher 'informing coherence' than science. He explains that by 'informing' he does not mean only "the felt quality of the experience of the institution, or the local insights... -- but (literature) has a shaping individual point of view", and this shaping individual response "provides more knowledge, theoretical and practical, than the science" (1).

While he agrees that 'expressive' consciousness may be erratic and peculiar, Widmer points out that the produced knowledge seems less likely to be trivial and may be more rigorous "because the metaphors and dramatizations demand greater coherence of internal consciousness - and (the reader) can more immediately spot its forcing and failure - than 'objective knowledge'".

"Given equivalent talent and intelligence" concludes Widmer, "the novelist can, and in the Kesey-Goffman comparison does, outdo the sociologist in defining for consciousness institutional function and style and role and meaning".

I suppose that not everyone agrees with Widmer. However, whenever the term "total institution" is mentioned, I find myself thinking about McMurphy and his power struggle with nurse Ratched. The image is immediate, clear, vivid and powerful. I have to work much harder when I try to remember Goffman arguments. Nothing in his account is as forceful and demonstrative. In any case, it was already noted that both description and generalization are necessary.

At this point Howard Becker is introduced to argue for the "New Journalism".

Becker, of course, does not use this term; however, his introduction to "The Jack Roller" (1970) is nothing less than a call for combining facts and literature.

> The Jack Roller" is a "Life Story" of a young delinquent of Polish descent. Pointing out the advantages of using the "Life Story" (or "Life History") method, Becker points out that although it is certainly not fiction, the best life history documents have a "sensitivity and pace, a dramatic urgency, that any novelist would be glad to achieve:
>
> The differences between these forms (literature and 'factual' writing) lie both in the perspective from which the work is undertaken and in the methods used" argues Becker." The writer of fiction is not, of course, concerned with facts at all, but rather with dramatic and emotional impact, with form and imagery, with the creation of a symbolic and artistically unified world. Fidelity to the world as it exists is only one of many problems for him, and for many authors it is of little importance (emphasis mine).

Becker is correct. The novelist usually does not care about facts. But what about a new form of writing, one which is, as Hellman (1977) notes "wholly journalistic (i.e., based on, and stays with, facts) and at the same time wholly fictional"? Which means that the skeleton, the facts, are not the creation of the writers' imaginations, and at the same time, no compromise of interest is necessary, since they are accompanied by the sensitivity and pace, the dramatic urgency that Becker argues is important.

Dickstein (1976) uses the term "New Journalism" to refer to a "... (wide) range of defections from the journalistic gospel ... writers and publications that addressed cultural developments ignored or merely exploited by the established media". He argues that the history of the 1960s' was written as much "in the Berkeley Barb as in the New York Times".

The people who created the New Journalism did not intend to become Social Scientists. According to Tom Wolfe (1973), their most eminent representative, they aspired to become novelists. They wanted to write stories. Most of them were American journalists, and the times, the sixties in America, were changing. Fast. Social Scientists (Hellman,1977) label this changing process "Fragmentation" of the society. Wolfe himself puts it: "the proles, peasants, and petty burghers (were) creating new styles ... and changing the life of the whole country...". Furthermore, and this is important: the vast land of chronicling and analyzing these changing manners and morals, the natural playground of traditional novelists, was left for the taking, since American novelists abandoned it. One of the reasons for this, according to Wolfe (1973:30), is the introduction of the theory that the novel of social realism was finished, because "... such novels were a product of the rise of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century at the height of capitalism. But now bourgeois society was breaking up, fragmenting. A novelist could no longer portray a part of that society and hope to capture the Zeitgeist; all he would be left with was one of the broken pieces". The theory was presented in 1948 by, interestingly enough, Lionel Trilling (whose suggestion regarding readership Mills adopted) and became so prevalent among novelists, that consequently as Wolfe notes: " There is no novelist who will be remembered as the novelist who captured the Sixties in America, or even in New York, in the sense that Thackeray was the chronicler of London in the 1840's and Balzac was the chronicler of Paris and all of France after the fall of the Empire". The vacuum created by the novelists' abandonment, was soon to be filled by the New Journalists. The new form enabled them "to make like a novelist".

As mentioned, the "New Journalism" is the use of literary techniques - which are techniques of capturing realism - when reporting actual people and events.

The four literary devices that make the reading so absorbing and gripping, the techniques that according to Wolfe (1973) "underlie the emotionally involving quality of the most powerful prose, whether fiction or nonfiction" are:

- Scene by scene construction;
- Recording the full dialogue;
- Using "Third Person Point of View";
- The recording of symbolic details that exist in a scene.

Generally, then, device no. 1 is a narrative technique, while devices 2, 3, and 4 locate people in their particular social setting and capture the ways they behave, talk and think.

1. Scene by scene reconstruction is telling the story by moving from scene to scene. As Gillespie and Roberts note, most participant observation research (including some provided in the present work), lean more to what Wolfe calls "historical Narrative" rather than scene by scene reconstruction of events. In the historical narrative the researcher\reporter tells what happened; in scene by scene reconstruction the events are presented so that the reader sees them taking place. Illustrations of scene by scene reconstruction of events occur frequently in Wolfe's writing. His piece on Leonard Bernstein's fund raising party for the Black Panthers (Wolfe,1970) is one example

that will be discussed later in the chapter "The Prophet and the Jester". Another is an excerpt from The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (Wolfe,1968) in which, using the stream of consciousness technique, Wolfe portrays Ken Kesey's paranoid state of mind as he hides from the U.S drug marshal in Mexico. Additional examples of the use of this technique, discussed in the present work, include the bowling match in Street Corner Society and a chapter from The Yellow Wind. Wolfe prefers this kind of reporting, of course, because it enhances the material's readability. To the extent that this style provides the reader with more raw information, however, Gillespie and Roberts, as well as this author, find this style attractive on scientific grounds as well.

2. Realistic dialogue, claims Wolfe, involves the reader more completely than any other single device. It also establishes and defines character more quickly and effectively than any other single device (2). Examples demonstrating the use of this device in the present work include Tally's Corner, The Yellow Wind and The Hippie Trip.

3. Using Third Person Point of View is a technique of presenting every scene to the reader through the eyes of a particular character. The reader is given the feeling of being inside the character's mind and experiencing the emotional reality of the scene as the character experiences it. The information that enables the journalist to use this device, notes Wolfe, comes through a long process of interviewing the figure about his thoughts and emotions. "To understand why someone behaves as he does" writes Howard Becker (1970) in his above mentioned

introduction to "The Jack Roller", "you must understand how it looked to him, what he thought he had to contend with, what alternatives he saw open to him; you can understand the effects of opportunity structures, delinquent subcultures, social norms, and other commonly invoked explanations of behavior only by seeing them from the actor's point of view". What sociologists routinely do in order to obtain this kind of information is interview the informant and then quote him extensively. This is basically the nature of the examples presented in this thesis, as exemplified by "Tally's Corner", or "The Hippie Trip". New Journalists go one step further and write the account from the third person point of view, as if they have found the character's personal diary and are now quoting from it. The use of this device requires an ability to empathize with a character, and substantial writing skills. It is obvious that the effort is worthwhile on artistic grounds. The case is less obvious on scientific grounds, since, as noted, the same amount and quality of information can be presented in the form of a simple interview or conversation. In any case, the sociologist should be able to ask the questions that will provide this kind of information. As we shall see, accounts such as The Power Elite could benefit from the implementation of this device.

4. The recording of symbolic details that exist in the scene The details are symbols of people's status life. Wolfe uses the term "status" in the broad sense of the entire pattern of behavior and possessions through which people express their position in the world or what they think it is or what they hope it to be. For Wolfe it means "everyday

gestures, habits, manners, customs, styles of furniture, clothing, decoration, styles of traveling, eating, keeping house, modes of behaving toward children, servants, superiors, inferiors, peers, plus the various looks, glances, poses (and) styles of walking".

In addition to the gripping nature of the techniques, points Wolfe, the readers' knowledge that everything actually happened is extremely powerful.

The New Journalism caught on fast among writers and readers. Not everyone, of course, welcomed it, particularly the journalistic and literary establishments. "Personal journalism" they cried, "Para Journalism". But as Hellman (1977) notes, "the conflict between conventional journalism and New Journalism is not one of objectivity versus subjectivity, but rather one of disguised perspective versus an admitted one ..."

In The New Journalism Wolfe (1973) addresses two other major claims. The first is that the New Journalists did not "evaluate" their material. Wolfe rejects this claim: "... [New Journalists] customarily go to great lengths to analyze and evaluate their material, although seldom in a moralistic fashion. None of them simply provides 'documentaries'".

The second claim is that the new form dealt only with "inconsequential" issues and subjects. Confronting the critics on their own ground Wolfe notes that every conceivable "consequential" subject and issue was dealt with by writers who profess the form of "New Journalism". He

mentions, among others Gay Talese's book on The New York Times (The Kingdom and the Power, 1966), Adam Smith's book on Wall street (The Money Game, 1967), and his own work on Black--White confrontations (Radical Chic & Mau--Mauing the Flak Catchers, 1970). Van Maanen (1988) adds to the list Mark Kramers' book on surgical operating team (1983) and Kidder's book on computer design group (1981). Van Maanen strongly supports and advocates the use of what he labels "Literary Tales" (1988:32), his label for New Journalism:

> Literary tales are meant to provide an emotional charge to the reader. The reality is not sliced, diced, and served up analytically (an illustration of this shortcoming will be presented later in the analysis of "Tally's Corner, i.m.) ... these tales offer the fresh perspectives of some very talented and insightful self-styled ethnographers. The best literary tales ... make the phrase 'active writing' more than a cliche'. Such possibilities spill over into academic worlds.

At this point I would like to make two comments. Both are concerned with what might be described as "the trap of superficiality".

The first comment is in regard to the New Journalists' passion for a good and coherent story. I shall demonstrate later that as a result of this passion New Journalists (represented in this work by Tom Wolfe) sometimes develop a tendency to file the edges of the facts so that everything will fit into the puzzle.

The second comment is in regard to the New Journalists' fascination with detail. Wolfe is aware of this fascination and does not perceive it as a shortcoming. While I maintain that details can be, at best, both interesting and meaningful (as in the case of Wolfe's writing), New Journalists sometimes tend to treat consequential issues inconsequentially,

to concentrate on the marginal and the detail, and neglect the underlying issues. To this effect, I can recall my own experience as a journalist. My editor (and subsequentially- myself) were always interested, to a point bordering on obsession, in what the people we wrote about ate. It is definitely interesting to find out what someone like General Arik Sharon likes to eat (practically everything, and a lot of it), but for the purposes of this thesis I maintain that details as such are not sufficient. Concrete detail is much more meaningful when it functions as the tip of the iceberg, when it indicates and implies concealed social structure (to use a term from Wolfe's work, to be analyzed later), when it enables the reader to see that there is something hidden.

ENDNOTES

1. "Literature" notes Richardson (1988) "violates a major pretension of science: the single, unambiguous voice".

2. Mills, by the way, advocated the same idea: "... use a variety of viewpoints. In this connection the writing of dialogue is often very useful", he writes in page 214 of The Sociological Imagination. Why Mills failed to follow his own good advice remains a mystery.

INTRODUCING THE FRAMEWORK

The aim is the fulfillment of

THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROMISE

Which means that sociologists should use

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION and write for the LAY PERSON

which is the intersection of

BIOGRAPHY

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

and

HISTORY

in other words

PROVIDING CONTEXT

or

THE LARGER PICTURE

which can be regarded as an important source of

EXPLANATION

this goal can be achieved by using the method of

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

the account should include both

CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT

include

INDIVIDUALS, NOT JUST COLLECTIVES OR IDEAL TYPES AS ACTORS

and be written, using

THE FOUR LITERARY DEVICES

GENERAL COMMENTS

Based on Mills' guidelines, the fulfillment of the Sociological Promise is a combination of two elements: use of the sociological imagination (providing the context), and writing for the lay person. Both elements are essential, for only when a sociological work complies with these terms, will it fulfill the promise. The sociological imagination-the explanation- has to include biography, social structure and history and the account as a whole has to address a wide readership. The fulfillment of the promise, the goal, can be regarded as the "dependent variable".

The "independent variables", adapted mainly from the fields of ethnography and New Journalism (1), include participant observation, the inclusion of individuals (not just collectives) in the account, and the use of the four literary devices. In addition, as already mentioned several times in this work, it is essential that both concrete and abstract be present in the account. I believe that the inclusion of individuals and the use of the literary devices are useful tools for enhancing interest in sociological writing. As Van Maanen (1988) notes: the narrator of a tale can not converse in a story with "types" of people. "Characters... must be given names, faces, motives, and things to do if a story is to be told about them".

Let me now elaborate on the meanings of, and relationships between the key elements presented in the above framework. The elements are the lay person, participant observation and explanation.

THE LAY PERSON

We have already seen what Mills writes on the issue of the target public, or "who sociologists should write for": " ... audience of teachers and students from all departments of a leading university, as well as an assortment of interested people from a near-by city" (1959). Although he does not specify who these "assorted people" are, it is clear that they are brought as a contrast to the professors of the leading university. It is obvious that Mills wishes sociologists address not just their colleagues and sociological writing encompass a variety of readers.

Van Maanen (1988) divides the readership (of ethnography) into three categories: collegial readers, social science readers ("who read ethnography) ... not in order to be entertained, challenged or enlightened about the nature of social science ... (but) only to be informed about certain facts the fieldworker has unearthed". Van Maanen's third category is general readers: "Large, nonspecialist ... audience... who need no special background (other than curiosity, informed or idle)". In the context of this study, the Lay Person is the general reader.

Earlier, Irving Horowitz (1973) and Transaction magazine were mentioned as an illustration of the failure to communicate sociology to the lay person. The failure in this case may be due, at least partially, to the fact that Transaction's founding fathers were confused as to who their readership was.

While Horowitz claims that the magazine was established for the "general reader", there is no doubt that it serves the social science readers. Alvin Gouldner, the first editor, wrote: "Transaction is written for those intelligent men and women who, though lacking the time and technical training to read professional journals, still seek to use and benefit from the social sciences in their working life" (emphasis mine).

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

I shall briefly review the basic assumptions behind the participant observation method.

Since one of the issues of this work is Social Process (and the appropriate ways it should be observed and reported), it is of interest to examine Symbolic Interaction's founding father view on the issue:

> George Herbert Mead, if we take him seriously, (writes Becker (1970) tells us that the reality of social life is a conversation of significant symbols, in the course of which people make tentative moves and then adjust and reorient their activity in the light of the responses (real and imagined) others make to these moves. The formation of the individual act is a process in which conduct is continually reshaped to take account of the expectations of others, as these are expressed in the immediate situation and as the actor supposes they may come to be expressed. Collective activity, of the kind pointed to by concepts like "organization" or "social structure", arises out of a continuous process of mutual adjustment of the actions of all the actors involved. Social process, then, is not an imagined interplay of invisible forces or a vector made up of the interaction of multiple social factors, but an observable process of symbolically mediated interaction (emphasis mine).

A related point is made by Becker himself (1970):

> [The Participant Observation method]...can give meaning to the overworked notion of process. Sociologists like to speak of "ongoing processes" and the like, but their methods usually prevent them from seeing the processes they talk about so glibly.

The information that can be obtained by the proper use of the method amount to: ".. a rich, concrete, complex, and hence truthful account of the social world being studied..." (Van Maanen, 1988).

Pauline Young describes Nels Anderson, the author of the above mentioned "Hobo", as: 162

> "An intimate participant observer of the life of the hobo on the road, in the 'jungle', in lodging houses, at Hobohemia, at work and at Hobo College in Chicago. [The author] identified himself with the life of the hobo for an extended period and gained insight into the inner life which would have been almost impossible had he not been able to eliminate social and mental distances through intimate participation".

In this respect, I share Bruyn's view (cited in Yablonsky, 1968:5) when he writes:

> "While the traditional role of the scientist is that of a neutral observer who remains unmoved, unchanged, and untouched in his examination of phenomena, the role of the participant observer requires sharing the sentiments of people in social situations; as a consequence he himself is changed as well as changing to some degree the situation in which he is a participant. The situation which is created is not unlike that created by the famous Heisenber Uncertainty Principle in physics where the instruments used to measure the velocity and position of an electron alter the accuracy of measurement... in participant observation the effects are reciprocal for observer and observed".

I believe that the reciprocity implied in the above quote should be manifested in the written account. David Riesman (1965) has described social science as, in part, a "conversation between the classes", meaning it enables people from various segments of society to witness different lifestyles, manners and morals, an opportunity they might never have ordinarily had.

The social scientist is the mediator in this imaginary conversation, for the readers see the new world through his eyes. The process of change he undergoes (if he does), and his reactions to the phenomena he encounters describes and analyses are important and should be reported, for he represents to an extent the larger "average" and "normal" society, and his

reactions are likely to correspond with the ones of the general reader. Later, we shall see how David Grossman and Lewis Yablonsky address the issue of reporting personal change and how the account is enriched by the inclusion of such reports.

On the issue of how results of participant observers are communicated to the public, Van Maanen (1988) notes that in recent years there have been shifts in ethnographic reporting, shifts that result from an increasing interest by fieldworkers in "... The social philosophies of hermeneutics and phenomenology, philosophies that blur if they do not demolish, the subject--object distinction so central to traditional ethnography...".

EXPLANATION

Explanation can be read as "meaning", "larger picture" or "context". "The Sociological Imagination" writes Mills, "enables us to grasp history and biography and the relation between the two within society ... the first fruit of this imagination ... is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period ... (1959:4,5). Peter Berger (1963) perceives the sociologist's role in similar terms. Berger likens lay people to somewhat confused children staring at a huge map of configurations drawn by others (adults). One of the role sociologists can play is to help these individuals locate themselves in terms of the configurations - to help them to understand the (social) map better, or in Berger terms, to understand the "full meaning of location in society". In these terms, when one wonders "what does it mean"?, one really asks "how did I get here" (to use David Birn's phrase) or "in what way are my personal troubles related to the public issues"? (to use Mills' phrase) The explanation offered by the sociologist, as Berger notes, is socially grounded. "The experience of (conversion) to a meaning system that is capable of ordering the scattered data of one's biography is liberating and profoundly satisfying", he writes (1963:63), "perhaps this has its roots in a deep human need for order, purpose and intelligibility". In the above paragraph Berger refers to religious experiences, and while one might argue that the meaning offered by the social scientist is less comprehensive and accordingly might carry less exhilarating impact, the search for meaning is still a powerful force in human existence.

The sociologist, then, offers explanations and meanings, which are socially grounded.

But what constitutes a "kosher" explanation?

As Abraham Kaplan notes (1963:329):

> Explanation is often contrasted with description, as telling us, not merely what happens, but why. To explain a fact or a law is to give a reason for it. The point is that descriptions may themselves be explanatory- the "how" may give us a "why" and not just a "what". An explanation may be said to be a concentrated description.

"The 'how' may give us a 'why' not just a 'what'". One of the main propositions of the present work is that concrete details, captured by the observer and described by the four literary devices, indicate how the "how" should be treated. In other words, what the sociologist should look for, pay attention to, and record. I regard the concrete details and the literary devices as a detailed "how".

Kaplan distinguishes between <u>seeing</u> an explanation and <u>having</u> the explanation. One of the main differences between the two is the issue of interpretation and explication (a main feature of <u>having</u> the explanation), which is the perceived role of the social scientist. One might <u>see</u> an explanation to the question "What are people doing here with each other", which according to Berger, (1963:20) is the main sociological question, but be unaware that he has it - the interpretation and explication, the connections with related phenomena are missing. This point shall be demonstrated shortly when Wolfe's writing shall be introduced. On the other hand, when one <u>has</u> the explanation <u>he knows that he knows</u>, because someone

(usually the scientist) explicated and made the connections for him. Characteristically, the process (of having) involves abstraction and the use of "laws". The issue of interpretation and who makes it is one of the main concerns of this thesis. Is interpretation the protected role of the writer or is it a joint venture? Actually, it is a question of power. The author can choose to tell, impose his views and leave the readers powerless by excluding them from the interpretation process, or he can choose to provide observations, show, and let the reader have a sense of power and achievement by enabling him to function as social scientist. "It is significant", notes Kaplan (1963:330) "that in the case of (any) explanation we speak of "seeing" or "understanding" something which previously was obscure ... an explanation makes something intelligible or comprehensible. Explanation is often said to mean "the discovery of like in unlike, of identity in difference. We see the explanation when we discern the identity, recognizing that what is going on is nothing other than something already known". Berger (1963:21) adds that: (the excitement in sociology) ... is not the excitement of coming upon the totally unfamiliar, but rather the excitement of finding the familiar becoming transformed in its meaning. The fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives. This also constitutes a transformation of consciousness".

An illustration of: a) 'discovery of like in unlike' and b) 'shedding a new light on old and taken for granted world' is provided by David Grossman in The Yellow Wind.

> The task of explanation is often to find or create a suitable pattern [writes Kaplan (1963:336)]. To find or create it we need not always obtain new data. The scientific achievement - especially in the formation of theories-often consists in discovering new significance in the old data, giving them significance by ordering them differently, making manifest a new pattern. It is in this way that descriptions often play an explanatory role: they allow us to see relations which had previously escaped notice. 'Understanding' says Scriven 'is roughly the perception of relationships and hence may be conveyed by any process which locates the puzzling phenomenon in a system of relations ... A description may enable us to supply a whole framework which we already understand, but of whose relevance we had been unaware ... our understanding comes because we see the phenomenon...and are in a position to make other inferences from this realization'. The explanation does its work by providing us with what has aptly been called a cognitive map, which tells us how things around us are laid out.

An illustration of this point - making new inferences because we see the phenomena - is provided by the use of the literary devices in Liebow's Tally's Corner.

The suggested framework advocates the use of both description and generalization. I agree with Kaplan when he argues that "What is required, is some generalization in the premises, or at any rate a tacit reference to a generalization" (1961:341). I also agree with Coser who advocates the reading of both Marx and Balzac. In other words, Coser stresses the importance, indeed the necessity, of keeping and balancing description (seeing the explanation, as is generally the case with Balzac) and generalization (having the explanation, as is generally the case with Marx).

The issues of writing about collectives vs. writing about individuals, the author's position and presence in the text, telling vs. showing and more, will be discussed in the next chapter-"The Prophet and the Jester".

As one can see, this framework is by no means rigid or static. Furthermore, as already mentioned, by "Dependent" and "Independent" variables, I am not implying direct causality. My claim is that if sociologists decide to follow the terms stated as the independent variables, a possible result will be the fulfillment of the "Sociological Promise", (stated as the dependent variable).

ENDNOTES

1. As Van Maanen (1988) notes, the gap between the two is narrowing. The way ethnographers and journalists present themselves is similar. Fieldworkers represent themselves as "marginal natives"(Freilich, 1970) or "professional strangers" (Agar, 1980) who, as "self- reliant loners" (Lofland, 1974) or "self-denying emissaries" (Boon, 1982) bring forth a cultural account, an ethnography, from the social setting studied. From the "New Journalistic" perspective, Tom Wolfe likes to consider himself a "martian"- determined to be the outsider in his own society, committed to a fresh angle when observing and reporting.

2. About the effectiveness of stories Becker (1986) writes:

> Perhaps as a result of my experiences in teaching, I have become more and more convinced of the importance of stories-good examples-- in the presentation of ideas. I used to be irritated when students told me that what they remembered from my sociology of art course was the story of Simon Rodia and the Watts Towers, which I told in enormous detail and illustrated with slides. I wanted them to remember the theories I was so slowly and painfully developing. Later I decided that the stories were more important than the theories. In a way, I should have known that... (emphasis mine).

THE PROPHET AND THE JESTER

C. Wright Mills has a prophetic quality to his writing. Tom Wolfe, on the other hand, remains the Jester. Both offer valuable social insights despite of the differences in their goals, stances, the issues they are concerned with and the way they communicate their findings. In this chapter I will concern myself with the ubiquitous Prophet and Jester referring to all writers who adopt these respective stances, not necessarily just Mills or Wolfe.

The Prophet is no small talk person. He is not interested in a good time. He is on a mission from God, God being a grand theory, a social cause or whatever has brought inspiration. There is a commitment. There is a mandate to educate. It is important to realize that the Prophet has two agendas: the first- explaining the situation. The second and more important - pointing the correct way to change. It is also ludicrous to assume that the first part - the explanation - is unrelated and independent of the second. It's easy to understand, then, the Prophet's fascination with Power and Power relations. Furthermore, it's not surprising that he is interested not in real people, with names, addresses and biographies, but in collectives and Ideal types, what Marcus and Cushman (1982) call "common denominator people"(1).

As God's messenger, the Prophet is very involved in his surrounding. Furthermore, he has formulated an opinion on everything, a prerequisite of becoming a Prophet. "I was embarrassed not to have any firm attitude towards the Cuban revolution", confesses Mills at the beginning of "Listen Yankee". What a revealing statement: Not just an attitude, but a firm one is expected.

This guy is serious. He Knows, with a capital K, what's what and who's who, how we got here, what we are doing to each other, who is exploiting and abusing whom, and how it's all going to end if nothing changes. What is the title of the first chapter of "Listen Yankee" if not WHAT DOES CUBA MEAN? No less. I already said - the man Knows.

The Prophet has a script in his head which, on the one hand allows him to make predictions and on the other exposes him to [illegible] destiny. In a way, the public can hold him accountable (Mills was wrong on several issues, the Cuban revolution for one).

Not only does the Prophet carry God's message, he uses God's tone of voice as well. He does not describe, he states. He is authoritative, does not allow himself to be surprised or baffled, is unforgiving and sometimes cruel and patronizing. For example, Mills refers to the entire American middle class (1953) as "Cheerful Robots". For patronizing style consider this:

> He [the White Collar man] is more often pitiful than tragic, as he is seen collectively, fighting impersonal inflation, living out in slow misery his yearning for the quick American climb. He is pushed by forces beyond his control, pulled into movements he does not understand; he gets into situations in which his is the most helpless position. The white collar man is the hero as victim, the small creature who is acted upon but who does not act, who works along unnoticed in somebody's office or store, never talking loud, never talking back, never taking a stand (emphasis added) ... Perhaps because he does not know where he is going, he is in a frantic hurry; perhaps because he does not know what frightens him, he is paralyzed with fear ....

Mills does not supply the "raw" observations for these far reaching conclusions. The Prophet, like Tolstoy, loves the human race, but is very harsh with people.

The Prophet trusts no one but himself in delivering the message. Maybe he's scared that someone might say something that will not fit in the script. Therefore, the reader is not allowed direct access to the characters. They (the characters in his stories) are not the ones to explain their motives and meanings. They will talk to the Man, and he will explain what they mean.

Consider page 8 of Listen Yankee: "Most of the words are mine" reports Mills. "...the arguments, the tone, the interpretations, the tang and feel -- they are in the main directly Cuban". The reader is left with no power to judge for himself and with no alternative but to take Mills' word.

Because he has a theory to validate, a message to deliver and a script to follow, and because he is a passionate man, the Prophet tends to insists that all pieces of information fit into his framework. No dissension is allowed. If a little twist of the facts is needed, then that is what he will do. "Mills' outstanding fault is the uncritical acceptance of his own position. The brilliance and conciseness he shows in ferreting out the weakness of a position held by others is not apparent when he is setting down his own views" writes Leonard Reisman (1956). At times, the cement that holds the bricks (facts) together is the Prophets' own mixture of observations and moral judgment, as shall be demonstrated later when The Power Elite will be analyzed. One thing can be said though: "His biases are the most fruitful that have appeared in the literature of American social protest" [this is what Mills (1956) wrote of Veblen].

The Jester's tool is the mirror. A warped mirror at times, but intended to make people laugh, not hurt, offend or change them. While the Prophet is interested in Power, the Jester explores "the hidden and sometimes peculiar manifestations of status seeking in American life" (Bellamy, 1982)(2). Perhaps there is something about Power that does not render itself into laughter, probably manifestations of status are more amusing. Unlike the Prophet, the Jester is fascinated with real and individual people, people that the reader can feel and smell and touch.

No one appoints the Jester (the editor, maybe, but certainly not God), He has an assignment, but not a Mission. As for the issue of accountability: he is accountable to himself, the editor and the readers, but he does not have a framework to enclose his observations and rarely makes predictions. He doesn't know everything, doesn't have a firm opinion on every issue, and he allows himself to be confused and surprised.

He watches. And as Yogi Berra noted: "You observe a lot watching". But unlike the Prophet, who watches from a great height, the Jester watches and reports from the ground level, from the scene. He looks people and events in the eye, not from above, and he knows what to look for, since he is equipped with an extremely sharp eye for everyday details, situations and gestures. Characteristically, the Jester describes what he sees. Of course, he is the one to decide where to look and what is appropriate for description, he decides which way the readers' eyes will turn, so one can argue that the observations are to a certain extent tainted and colored. Nevertheless, the Jester provides his raw material, his observations, so that readers are in a much better position to arrive at their own conclusions. In

addition, the Jester gives the characters free access to the public in order for the latter to explain their motives and meanings. The two parties (characters and public) can communicate with very little disturbance from the narrator. The Jester is definitely present, but not in an all consuming manner.

> Comedy may be considered to deal with man in his human state, restrained and often made ridiculous by his limitations, his faults, his bodily functions, and his animal nature...Comedy has always viewed man more realistically than tragedy, and drawn its laughter or its satire from the spectacle of human weakness or failure. Hence its tendency to juxtapose appearance and reality, to deflate pretence, and to mock excess. (Holman et. al: 1972).

Although Wolfe is not self-righteous nor a fighter, there is a decided moral edge to his humour. He does it most of the time without the common reader even realizing that there <u>is</u> an edge, the disguise being perfect. In works such as "The Painted Word" and "From Bauhaus to Our House" (the latter will be presented in chapter 6 of this work as an example of the Jester style), there is a straightforward wish to humanize art and architecture by showing how "the freight train of history got off on the wrong track by the most ludicrous sort of historical coincidence" (Bellamy 1982).

The following paragraph is an example of Wolfe's earlier work, and is written in a 'classic' Jester style. It is taken from the book <u>The Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flack Catchers</u>, and describes a party Leonard Bernstein gave for the Black Panthers in his Park Avenue apartment.

> Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm. These are nice. Little Roquefort cheese morsels rolled in crushed nuts. Very tasty. Very subtle. It's the way the dry sackiness of the nuts tiptoes up against the dour savor of the cheese that is so nice, so subtle. Wonder what the Black Panthers eat here on the hors d'oeuvre trail? Do the Panthers like little Roquefort cheese morsels rolled in crushed nuts this way, and asparagus tips in mayonnaise dabs , and

> meatballs petites au Coq Hardi, all of which are at this very moment being offered to them on gadrooned silver platters by maids in black uniforms with hand-ironed white aprons ... The butler will bring them their drinks ... Deny it if you wish to, but such are the penes'ees me'taphysiques that rush through one's head on these Radical Chic evenings just now in New York. For example, does that huge Black Panther there in the hallway, the one shaking hands with Felicia Bernstein herself, the one with the black leather coat and the dark glasses and the absolutely unbelievable Afro, Fuzzzy-Wuzzy-scale, in fact-is he, a Black Panther, going on to pick a Roquefort cheese morsel rolled in crushed nuts from off the tray, from a maid in uniform, and just pop it down the gullet without so much as missing a beat of Felicia's perfect Mary Astor voice....

The above account is more than entertaining. The depth stems from Wolfe's sharp eye for detail and gestures, (the maids wear black uniforms etc.) which enables him to demonstrate the bizarre consequences of "Radical" and "Chic" assembled under one roof. It also demonstrates the difficulty in creating a social change. Wolfe shows what the Bernsteins will have to sacrifice when they join the revolution. Are the Park Avenue apartment, the maids and the cheese morsels to be given up so easily?

One could argue, though, that the Jester treats consequential matters inconsequentially, that (in the above case) the underlying issues (race in America) are less interesting than the juxtaposition of status symbols that inevitably rise in the attempts to deal with them, and therefore are neglected or not dealt with properly. In other words, the issue is the one of substance vs. style, and the superficiality trap. This refers to a criticism noted earlier, regarding New Journalists' fascination with details. As one might remember, there was additional criticism, regarding new journalists' fascination with good stories. Although I cannot substantiate this claim, I have a strong feeling that if the maids' uniform in the Bernsteins' party were blue, or brown, Wolfe still would have written (I am

not suggesting he did that) they were black. It makes the story flow smoother. The Jester's flaws will be demonstrated later on, when "From Bauhaus to Our House" is be reviewed.

In summary, some of the main contrasts between Prophet and Jester are:

The Prophet is: A passionate fighter, committed to a cause, educational, in the know, authoritative and, at times, patronizing.

He: States

Has a script which allows him to make predictions and exposes him to scrutiny.

Uses: The Whip.

Interested in: Power and Power relations

Collectives

The Jester is: An ironic observer and commentator.

Sympathetic to human faults.

Flexible and tolerant.

He: Describes

Does not have a script and makes no predictions

Uses: The Mirror

Interested in: Status

Individuals

After reviewing differences and realizing that the two types of writer target and affect different glands, let us examine what the two have in common. Since one of the foci of this work is writing and writers, it is ironic to find out that the Prophet's and the Jester's positions on these issues are similar.

Both Mills and Wolfe agree that: 1. the writer, be he a Prophet or a Jester, should have a distinct voice (As do both Mills and Wolfe) and 2. the writing should be interesting.

Mills on writing:

> ... To write is to raise a claim for the attention of readers... to claim for oneself at least status enough to be read (1959:218).

Wolfe on the same issue:

> A writer needs at least enough ego to believe that what he is doing as a writer is as important as what anyone he is writing about is doing and that therefore he shouldn't compromise his own work (1973:51).

Mills:

> ... Desire for status is one reason why academic men slip so readily into unintelligibility. And that, in turn, is one reason why they do not have the status they desire ... To overcome the academic prose, (one has) first to overcome the academic pose (1959:218).

Wolfe (writing about the early days of New Journalism):

> Readers were bored to tears without understanding why. When they came upon that pale beige tone, it began to signal to them, unconsciously, that a well-known bore was here again, "the journalist", a pedestrian mind, a phlegmatic spirit, a faded personality, and there was no way to get rid of the pallid little troll, short of ceasing to read. This had nothing to do with objectivity and subjectivity or taking a stand or 'commitment'- it was a matter of personality, energy, drive, bravura ... style

in a word ... The standard non-fiction writer's voice was like the standard announcer's voice ... a drag, a droning... (1973:17).

Mills (1959:221):

(There are) Two ways of presenting the work of social science, according to the idea the writer has of himself. One way results from the idea that he is a man who may shout, whisper or chuckle - but who is always there ... He is a center of experience and reasoning; now he has found out something, and he is telling us about it, and how he found it out. This is the voice behind the best expositions in the English language.

The other way of presenting work does not use any voice of any man. Such writing is not a "voice" at all. It is an autonomous sound in a great empty hall. It is a prose manufactured by a machine. It is not only impersonal, it is pretentiously impersonal.

Wolfe (1973:28):

Hey, come here! This is the way people are living now - just the way I'm going to show you! ... It's all right here! You won't be bored! Take a look!

Goldsen (1964), who titles Mills "a screamer", writes: "He felt the story as a novelist does, or a poet, and he relayed it to the reader in the best tradition of the pamphleteer."

Following are selected quotes illustrating the ability of Mills and Wolfe to write in a distinct and exciting manner. The first excerpt is from "The Power Elite":

In Switzerland are those who never know winter except as the chosen occasion for sport, on southern islands those who never sweat in the sun except at their February leisure. All over the world, like lords of creation, are those who, by travel, command the seasons and, by many houses, the very landscape they will see each morning or afternoon they are awakened. Here is the old whiskey and the new vice; the blonde girl with the moist mouth, always ready to go around the world; the silver Mercedes climbing the mountain bend, going where it wants to go for so long as it wants to stay. From Washington, D.C., and Dallas,

> Texas, it is reported that 103 women have each paid $300 for a gold lipstick.
>
> Bangs manes bouffants beehives Beatle caps butter faces brush-on lashes decal eyes puffy sweaters French thrusts bras flailing leather blue jeans stretch pants stretch jouans honey-dew bottoms eslair shanks elf boots ballerinas Knight slippers, hundreds of them,these flaming little buds, bobbing and screaming... (Wolfe,1966).

Mills reads like Jeremiah. He is angry and disapproving. Wolfe, who watches and wanders (see the excerpt from "The Radical Chic") is amused. However, both follow Becker's (1986) instructions: "Write the first sentence so that the reader wants to read the second".

The Prophet and the Jester have other things in common. Both are able to deliver a coherent and complicated thesis in an interesting way; and when they do have a thesis to deliver, their over-enthusiasm leads them to file the facts a bit. I stated before that usually the Jester refrains from theses; however, as already mentioned, there are at least two exceptions to this rule. As Riessman concludes when reviewing "The Power Elite" (1956):

> "The judgment to be made of Mills is never that what he says is true but unimportant, as can be said for much of the reporting in the social sciences; rather what he says is clearly important but not unquestionably valid".

Similar observation and conclusion can be made about Wolfe (at least in the case of "Bauhaus"). However, even when Wolfe has a thesis or an argument, he never writes as if the sky is going to fall any minute, as does Mills. Again, these differences will be demonstrated in the analysis of the two writers' work.

Last, but definitely not least: both Mills and Wolfe are intolerant of boredom and have an extremely sensitive nose for pretension. Consider this:

> An element of a shared symbolic system which serves as a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open in a situation may be called a value ... But from this motivational orientation aspect of the totality of action it is, in view of the role of symbolic systems, necessary to distinguish a 'value orientation aspect. Syntatic meaning as defined here, is not concerned with the meaning that accrues to elements or actual relationships between elements but rather with the relationship between relationships.

Can you distinguish between two paragraphs in the above quote? In the first quote, taken from "The Sociological Imagination" (it ends with the word "aspect"), Mills is dissecting Parsons. In the second paragraph, taken from "Bauhaus", Wolfe is making fun of Peter Eisenman, a distinguished and pompous architect who ran the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York.

ENDNOTES

1. As Richardson (1988) notes: "A collective story tells the experience of a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of a larger sociocultural and historical forces. The sociological protagonist is a collective. I think of similarly situated individuals who may or may not be aware of their life affinities as coparticipants in a collective story". Richardson herself wrote a collective story about relationships between single women and married men (1985). In her book, Richardson tries to converse with collectives, and I believe it to be one of the main reasons for the work's lack of absorbing powers.

2. As Gillespie and Roberts note, this theme pervades Wolfe's work: "My chief approach is to look at a situation in terms of its status components, in other words, how people rank themselves with regard to one another and how other people rank them .... I use the methods of sociology..." (Wolfe, 1975).

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER SIX

The books in this chapter can be divided into three categories:

1. Studs Terkel's "Working" illustrates my argument that a balance between the general and the concrete is essential. Working scores low on both "Independent" and "Dependent" variables.

2. The three following books: Tally's Corner The Hobo and Street Corner Society score higher on the "Independent" variables. Most, but not all of the "Dependent Variables" are present in these books.

3. Books that fulfill the "Sociological Promise" (i.e., all the dependent variables are present). Some books were written by sociologists, others by journalists. I shall demonstrate how journalistic books (written in various styles) fulfill "The Promise" and how the sociology books can benefit, in various ways, from implementation of the Independent Variables. The books shall appear in the following order:

    1. From Bauhaus to Our House\Wolfe. An illustration for the Jester style of writing.

    2. The Yellow Wind\Grossman. A demonstration of an accurate and effective use of the Independent Variables that result in a powerful 'mosaic'.

    3. The Reckoning\Halberstam, demonstrates the benefits of constructing a work around individuals.

    4. The Power Elite\Mills. An illustration for the Prophet style of writing.

5. Everything In Its Path\Erikson. We shall see how even this powerful work can benefit from implementation of the Independent Variables.

6. The Hippie Trip\Yablonsky. In this sociological work both Dependent and Independent variables are present.

As mentioned earlier, not all the books are equally important for my thesis. As a result, each will be used, but some will get longer and more detailed treatment. Furthermore, the format in which they will be analyzed is not unified. A unified format is provided in a summary table at the end of this chapter.

APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

WORKING/STUDS TERKEL

In the introduction to the present work, "States and Social Revolutions" by Theda Skocpol was reviewed, in order to sustain the argument that the author's insistence on the exclusion of individuals and biographies damage any attempt she might have made to fulfill the Sociological Promise.

Terkel's book ironically demonstrates that one can have a book full of individuals, and still fail to fulfill the Promise. The book is chosen to substantiate the claim that a level of abstraction and generalization is necessary if an account is to have any explanatory value, that concrete details are not enough to provide meaning.

The book is classified as a sociological work under the sub-title "Labor and Laboring Classes", and is an account of what American workers said to Terkel during three years of interviews. The book is Terkel's edited account, not verbatim transcription. "People talk about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do", reads the sub-title.

Terkel chooses to present his findings in a book which is divided into sections with titles such as: Working the Land, Communications, Cleaning Up, Watching, The Auto Industry, Appearance, Counting, Bureaucracy, The Sporting Life, Fathers and Sons and Footwork. More than a hundred people, from a spot welder to an airline stewardess, were interviewed, and they give a very detailed account of what they do all day at work. Notice that the book's name is not "Work", but "Working" and as I interpret it, Terkel aimed at

providing some understanding about people and their realities in the process of working.

Terkel falls short of his aim for a number of reasons:

- The author never explains the logic behind the editorial decisions to gather observations with no apparent common theme. This attempt at generalization fails because it is arbitrary and has no self evident justification. For example, in the "Watching" category one finds Pauline Kael, a famous film critic alongside Vincent Maher, a policeman. This is a symptom of the absence of an underlying conceptual framework.

- No figure in the book is unique or even recognizable. The interviewees have names but they don't have faces. Somehow, the people in the book are not real. As mentioned, the book contains more than a hundred individual stories and ideally, every story would have special characteristics that will enable the interviewee to establish himself as a unique figure and, at the same time, a part of a larger picture. Unfortunately, no story stands out. Each and every story is told in the same short and choppy sentences, and the figures are forced by the editor to use exactly the same syntax(1). For example, Jill Torrance, a model, and Babe Secoli, a supermarket checker, read suspiciously alike. Note the resemblance of rhythm in the following quotes.

Page. 50:

> I do whatever kind of product anyone wants. This week I had a job for some South American product. They said, 'we want you to be sexy, coy, pert, but not too effervescent.' It always means the same smile and open eyes. For forty-five minutes they tell you what they want. They explain and explain and you sort of tune out and do the same thing.

Page. 282:

> Somebody talks to you. If you take your hand off the item, you're gonna forget what you were ringin'. It's the feel. When I'm pushin' the items through I'm always having my hand on the items. If somebody interrupts to ask me the price, I'll answer while I'm movin'. Like playin' a piano.

There is an irony here. Terkel is absent from the book in that he does nothing with the stories; yet he is very much in the book in the sense that everybody appears to be speaking through his voice.

The readers are not introduced to the characters properly; we meet the actors at a certain arbitrary point in their lives with very little, if any, personal history. Who is Jill Torrence? Where did she grow up, What does her apartment look like, What does she do for fun, who are her friends, what does her boyfriend think of her job? We don't know. What were Babe Scolli's dreams as she grew up? How does she reconcile dreams and reality? Terkel does not tell us.

As a result, no individual story stands out as impressive or unique. The reader simply does not care what the characters are going through. Even if he makes an effort, how can he succeed when he doesn't know them at all; when the distance they (the reader and character) walk together is extremely short, insignificant and arbitrary, and there is no real development of events or people over time.

Simultaneously, no ongoing attempt is made to reach any kind of generalization about human nature or the nature of work.

"I think most of us are looking for a calling, not a job. Most of us, like the assembly line worker, have jobs that are too small for our spirit. Jobs are not big enough for people", says Nora Watson, one of the interviewees, in the introduction to the book.

This is very compelling declaration, one that could have been pursued and served as a theme. Terkel, however, did not substantiate or ground it in specific observations and did not pursue it as a theme.

A narrative or a plot could have provided a helpful tool for reader involvement. The material is almost calling to be told as a story, and Terkel himself (his different experiences with the interviewees during the preparation of the book) could be the thread, the link between the stories. However, there is no narrative. One is simply lost between individual, insignificant stories. Consequentially, the book is very tedious. After ten or fifteen pages there is no incentive to go on reading more of the same.

To summarize, Terkel could have pursued two directions: He could have made the accounts more unique, vivid and absorbing by using the four literary techniques and providing some kind of link or a plot. Or he could have used less stories, and provided a context; i.e., - generalize. Either one of these strategies could have improved the book's chances of fulfilling the Sociological Promise.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Participant Observation: NO. Terkel does not watch people working. He watches them talking. He could, however, use the method and describe the different scenes where the information for the book was obtained. He could also, as noted, use himself as a link between the observations.

2. Shift between concrete and abstract: No abstract.

3. Inclusion of individuals: Present.

4. Use of literary devices ("New Journalism" techniques):
   a. Scene by scene: absent.
   b. Dialogue: absent.
   c. Using the third person point of view: Present.
   d. Using status symbols: Absent.

As noted, The use of the realistic technique, (describing the interviewees reactions, the way they talk, what they surround themselves with, etc.) - would have enriched the book scientifically, give the characters more depth and contributed to reader involvement.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Use of the "Sociological Imagination": out of the three crucial elements, two (history and social structures) are missing.

2. Readership: The people who participated, their families, and workers from particular industries or jobs will read parts relevant to them. The larger audience will page through. They will not be provided with meaningful information.

ENDNOTES

1. "... By cleaning up and sanitizing remarks for publication informants (are made) rather mannerly, pleasant, rational, and down to earth chaps ...", notes Van Maanen (1988). Although Van Maanen refers to 'natives' in anthropological work, his remark is valid here as well. Problem is, its impossible to remember who's who or distinguish between the people, since they all talk in the same way.

TALLY'S CORNER, THE HOBO, AND STREET CORNER SOCIETY

The writers of the following three books concern themselves with people who live on the outskirts of society. Nels Anderson, already mentioned in this work, writes about the hobo, a migratory casual worker, a phenomenon which had already disappeared from the American scene; Elliot Liebow conducted his research for Tally's Corner in a poor Washington D.C. black neighborhood; and William F. Whyte, the writer of Street Corner Society joined and observed gang activities in an Italian-American slum district. I will elaborate on Tally's Corner, since in this book the reader finds an extensive use of literary techniques. The other books will then be brought into the discussion, to compare and demonstrate various themes.

Tally's Corner is a book about black street corner men-losers in search for dignity. They are able to find some by attempting to share conventional American goals, but at the same time create a set of "Shadow Values", that are more in tune with their lives. "Go out there and make like an anthropologist", were Elliot Liebow's uninstructed instructions (from Hyalan Lewis). Liebow had no hypotheses to test and no strict methodology to follow. In his own words, he set out "to record and interpret lower-class life of ordinary people, on their grounds and on their terms" (p.10). He wrote a book that is interesting to read after almost twenty five years; a combination of anthropology, sociology and journalism.

Although there is no reference to "New Journalism" in the book, Liebow uses the genre's four techniques quite extensively.

SCENE BY SCENE CONSTRUCTION

The chapters in Tally's Corner are constructed as scenes, or short stories. For example, the scene in the chapter "Men and Jobs", is opened with the description of a white man in a pickup truck looking for black workers whom he cannot find. From this observation (Page. 30) Liebow proceeds to explain the underlying forces of economics, social values and individual states of mind and body, the intersection of which results in the behavior readers had just witnessed. At the end of the explanation, Liebow returns to the driver of the pickup truck thereby "closing" the scene. However, this example cannot be regarded as "Scene by Scene" in the 'Wolfean' sense, for Liebow tells what happened, he does not follow and describes events as they unfold. This kind of write up is what Wolfe labels "Historical Narrative". In another place Liebow is able to observe the salient incidents of an eight months affair between Sea Cat, one of Tally's friends, and a woman named Gloria. The affair begins with Sea Cat interested primarily in the money and property which Gloria has inherited from her late husband. The affair ends, however, largely as a result of Sea Cat's self-defeating behavior, with Sea Cat "mourning his loss more in emotional than money terms" (Page 160). From careful observation of this and related events, Liebow is able to infer that the cornermen's distinction between themselves as lovers and as exploiters is not as clear cut as they draw it. As a result, he concludes that "man's exploitative impulses compromise his attempts to initiate and maintain more meaningful man-woman relationships", while his romantic impulses jeopardize his ability to exploit a woman.

RECORDING DIALOGUE

In writing about his discussion with Tally (Page.62), Liebow uses dialogue to illustrate the impact of a man's job on his self esteem. In the dialogue Tally is attempting to communicate the shame he feels because of his lack of education and the low esteem in which his job as a cement finisher is held. Liebow is trying to cheer him up.

> (Tally): ... Anybody can do what I'm doing and that is what gives me this feeling. (long pause) Suppose I like this girl. I go over to her house and I meet her father. He starts talking about what he done today. He talks about operating on somebody and sewing them and about surgery ... Then she starts talking about what she did. Maybe she's a lawyer and her father says to me. 'And what do you do Mr. Jackson?' (pause) You remember at the courthouse, Lonny's trial? You and the lawyer was talking the hall? I just stood there listening. I didn't even know what you was talking about. That's happened to me a lot.
>
> (Liebow): Hell, you're nothing special. That happened to everybody. Nobody knows everything. One man is a doctor, so he talks about surgery. Another man is a teacher, so he talks about books. But doctors and teachers don't know anything about concrete. You're a cement finisher and that's your specialty.
>
> (Tally): Maybe so, but when was the last time you saw anybody standing around talking about concrete?

As Gillespie and Roberts note (n.d.), the likelihood of developing a questionnaire item which would capture in a systematic fashion the mortification which Tally exhibits in this conversation seems slight.

THIRD PERSON POINT OF VIEW

An example for the use of this device is Richard's description of his despair and hopelessness (Page.67):

> I've been scuffling for five years...from morning till night. And my kids still don't have anything, my wife don't have anything, and I don't have anything.
>
> "There", he said, gesturing down the hall to a bed, a sofa a couple of chairs and a television set, all shabby, some broken. "There's everything I have and I'm having trouble holding onto that". And to Leroy, Richard says: "Look Leroy, don't give me any of that action. You and me are entirely different people. Maybe I look like a boy and maybe I act like a boy sometimes but I got a man's mind. You and me don't want the same things out of life. Maybe some of the same, but you don't care how long you have to wait for yours and I--want--mine--right--now".

This is Richard's view of his life. However, this is not what Wolfe means by "Third Person Point of View". What Wolfe means is that after a long process of observing and interviewing, Liebow is the one who should have done the writing (not just transcribe it), from Richard's point of view. As mentioned earlier, I have my doubts about the virtue of using this device, since almost the same effect can be achieved by simply quoting the individual (as in the above case), or transcribing a conversation (like the one between Liebow and Tally cited earlier).

THE RECORDING OF SYMBOLIC DETAILS THAT EXIST IN THE SCENE

An example of the use of this technique is the description of the Carry-out shop, Tally's corner. In this illustration Liebow seems to set the theme of his book-- the paradoxical relationship between the larger culture of American society and the world of the cornermen in which they construct

public fictions that "turn weaknesses into strengths and failure into success" in order to accommodate their low circumstances to the "parent value system".

> For those who hang out there, the Carry-out offers a wide array of sounds, sights, smells, tastes and tactile experiences which titillate and sometimes assault the five senses. The air is warmed by smells from the coffee urns and grill and thickened with fat from the deep-fry basket. The jukebox offers up a wide variety of frenetic and lazy rhythms. The pinball machine is a standing challenge to one's manipulative skill or ability to will the ball into one or another hole. Flashing lights, bells, and buzzers report progress or announce failure. Colorful signs exhort customers to drink Royal Crown Cola and eat Bond Bread. On the wall, above the telephone, a long--legged blonde in shorts and halter smiles a fixed wet-lipped smile of unutterable delight at her Chesterfield cigarette, her visage unmarred by mustache or scribbled obscenities. In the background, a sleek ocean liner rides a flat blue sea to and unknown destination (Page.22, emphasis added).

As Gillespie and Roberts (n.d.) note, the juxtaposition of this Madison Avenue version of the American Dream, respectfully left intact, with the rest of the sights and sounds of Tally's corner seems to symbolize both the extent to which the dream affects the men of Tally's corner and their remoteness from its realization. In this above case Liebow demonstrates that he has a perceptive eye for details and contrasts. However, as the book progresses, Liebow chooses not to use these skills extensively.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Participant Observation: Yes

2. Shift between Concrete and General: Yes. Liebow prepared his homework. After all, this was his Ph.D. thesis; he knew what "culture of

poverty" means and how concepts and constructs can and should be used. Findings from academic research is inserted all through the book (for example Josephine Kline's research "Samples from English Cultures").

3. Inclusion of Individuals: Yes. However, the organization of the book around roles and relationships (father, provider, lover) tends to fragment the figures. The reader, who was introduced to the Tally and his friends briefly, and only once, at the outset (page 25) tends to forget who is who and doesn't witness how the different roles are connected and related for one individual. The organization might be necessary for scientific reasons, for it provides the lines along which the social scientist, among others, can compare the particular individuals and social structure with other people, in other times and places. However, this kind of organization prevents the development of a coherent story line. An interesting gestalt (my definition of gestalt being the whole person and the interrelationship between the various segments of his life) is broken into its relatively uninteresting parts.

4. Use of the four literary devices: Yes. (As previously elaborated). However, "Tally's Corner" could benefit from a more extensive use of the fourth literary device- recording of people's status life. As mentioned, after the opening scene (described above), Liebow doesn't use this important device again (the description of Richard's house, cited earlier, is too short and does not offer much more than mere description). The sharp observation of the unmarred model in the

Madison Avenue cigarette commercial stands alone in its insightfulness. The book's themes could be substantiated with additional observations of this kind. For example: Tally's favorite T-shirt carries the Harvard emblem; one of the beaten-up cars in the neighborhood carries the sticker "my other car is a Rolls Royce"; the pictures of John and Bobby Kennedy hang on Tally's messy apartment walls - anything that exists in the scene and is symbolic of street corner people's present lives and future aspirations.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Use of the "Sociological Imagination": As mentioned, the book focuses on biographies and social structure. However, the work lacks historical perspective. Liebow's attempt to put Tally and his friends in an historical framework holds hardly two paragraphs (in his introduction).

2. Readership: Staff and students from different faculties in a leading university, as well as an assortment of interested people from a nearby town, will certainly be interested in the subject and capable of understanding it. The question of whether black people in the Ghettos will make the time to read it remains open.

THE HOBO\NELS ANDERSON

Almost seventy years after publication, this book still offers the reader a good sense of Chicago's Hobohemia in the 1920's. This is achieved due to the fact that the book operates almost as a documentary film; it contains realistic and concrete details such as jargon, menus, descriptions of nights in sleazy hotels, songs and ballads.

The work fulfills the Sociological Promise since the author uses the Sociological Imagination (all three necessary ingredients are present) and the book appeals to the general reader. However, I argue that The Hobo could benefit from the implementation of the Independent Variables. Let us examine in what ways.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Participant Observation: Yes. However, the author is absent from the account. The author informs the readers at the outset that he lived for a long time as a Hobo- ant then disappears for the rest of the book. Anderson, who moved from Hobohemia to Academia, who now represents the "decent" world and knows what "decent" people want to know about Hobos, could have used himself and his personal experiences as an effective link between the observations. Probably he did use his personal experiences, but he never bothered to mention it, or to bring himself into the account. Had he done so, it would make the account more vivid and interesting (since it will have what Widmer refers to as "shaping individual point of view") and at the same time enhance

validity (reader knows the source of observations and conclusions). Something else that is missing from the account is an understanding of the inner world of the characters. Here again, Anderson could have used his personal experience to demonstrate some of the psychological difficulties that are involved in this kind of life. We shall see later how Grossman and Yablonsky do it.

2. Shift between Concrete and Abstract: Yes.

3. Inclusion of Individuals: Yes. A gallery of personality types and biographies is portrayed and presented.

4. Use of literary devices. "The Hobo" could benefit from an extensive use of the literary devices. As mentioned earlier, the "psychological" aspects of the characters are absent. Anderson could have used the third person point of view in order to fill this gap. In addition, Anderson needs to provide more detail, so that the reader can judge for himself if he wishes. Use of device no. 4 - recording of symbolic details that exist in the scene, could have assisted Anderson in providing those details. As for example in page 16:

> City life is interesting but full of danger. Even in a world where the conditions of life are so elementary, prudence dictates a certain amount of reserve and hence formality and convention in the relations of men. The flophouse and the cheap hotel compel promiscuity, but do not encourage intimacy of neighborliness.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Use of the Sociological Imagination:

Biographies: Yes

Social Structure - Yes. As well as providing an explanation of the social background of the phenomena, Anderson covers a lot of ground writing about work and work agencies, health, voting patterns, social and political Hobo organizations. However, there are no relationships, or even interaction, between the characters in the book. As mentioned, one can find an abundance of realistic detail, but typically these details are environmental. In a book like this, I would expect to find descriptions of how Hobos relate to each other. Had he chosen to include relationships, Anderson could have been assisted by the four literary devices, as was demonstrated previously in this work.

History - a new introduction by the author places the Hobo in historical perspective and explains his disappearance from the American scene.

STREET CORNER SOCIETY\WILLIAM F.WHYTE

In introducing his book, Whyte (1943) writes:

> It seemed to me that any sound generalizations must be based upon detailed knowledge of social relations. Therefore, I concentrated my attention upon the interaction of individuals in their groups. ... If we can get to know these people intimately and understand the relation between little guy and little guy, big shot and little guy, and big shot and big shot, then we know how cornerville society is organized.

Consequently, Street Corner Society is an account of people and their relations in a social setting. In this brief review, I wish to demonstrate the effective use Whyte makes of literary device no. 1 - "Scene by Scene Reconstruction". I am referring to the bowling match. Here, Whyte shows how the status of different Norton Street Gang members affects their behavior in a group setting. The credibility of his explanation of the match is enhanced by his description of the events which took place prior to, during, and subsequent to the match. These include observations of the members' bowling skills in situations where they don't bowl as a group; the precipitation of the match by challenges of the low status members to the skills of the leaders; the leaders' prediction of the match's outcome; the "razzing" directed against the low status members during the match, and the discussion of the match's outcome by the group.

Page 20:

> ... Alec (a low status member) let it be known that he intended to show the boys something... after the first four boxes, Alex was leading by several pins. He turned to Doc (the gang's leader and said "I'm out to get you boys tonight'. But then he began to miss, and, as mistake followed mistake, he stopped trying.

Between turns, he went out for drinks, so that he became flushed and unsteady on his feet. He threw the ball carelessly, pretending that he was not interested in the competition. His collapse was sudden and complete; in the space of few boxes he dropped from first to last place.

A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE THREE BOOKS

Organization (of the books): Tally's corner is organized around roles. It enables a better comparison, but fragments the characters.

"Hobo" is essentially a description of a lifestyle, and does not include interaction between people.

"Street Corner Society" is organized around social relations between individuals in the social setting of a gang. 161

Street Corner Society and Tally's Corner lack historical perspective. However, they demonstrate a good interplay of structure and biography.

In all three books, the authors "credentials" are provided at the introduction of preface, (by credentials I refer to 'why the author claims he knows'; what he did and how he did it). As Becker (1970) notes, this is how traditional ethnography is written. After providing their credentials, two writers continue to be present in the account, while the third writer, Anderson, retreats and disappears entirely.

FROM BAUHAUS TO OUR HOUSE\TOM WOLFE

> O beautiful, for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain" opens the book, "Has there ever been another place on earth where so many people of wealth and power have paid for and put up with so much architecture they detested as within thy borders today?
>
> I doubt it seriously. Every child goes to school in a building that looks like a duplicating -machine replacement -parts wholesale distribution warehouse. Not even the school commissioners, who commissioned it and approved the plans, can figure out how it happened. The main thing is to try to avoid having to explain it to the parents (Page.3).

From Bauhaus to Our House demonstrates Wolfe's ability to deliver a complicated and coherent thesis in an entertaining, interesting and funny way. It also demonstrates that when the Jester has a thesis, he sometimes commits the same sins as the Prophet. In reviewing this work, I shall use quotes extensively, in order to demonstrate the casual, unpretentious yet meaningful manner in which Wolfe makes his point.

Wolfe's argument, basically, is that ideas and attitudes originated in Europe in the early years of the twentieth century, in what he labels "compounds", carry such weight and impact that, though completely obsolete, they still determine the way so many Americans live today. In glass boxes.

> In the art of the compound, you announced, in one way or another, usually through a manifesto: 'We have just removed the divinity of art and architecture from the hands of the official art establishment ... and it now resides with us, inside our compound. We no longer depend on the patronage of the nobility, the merchant class, the state, or any other outside parties for our divine eminence ... no alterations, special orders, or loud talk from the client permitted. We know best. We have exclusive possession of the true vision of the future of architecture.' The creation of this new type of community proved absolutely exhilarating to artist and composers, as well as architects, throughout Europe in the early years of this century. 'We're independent of the bourgeois society around us! (They became

enamored of this term bourgeois.) And superior to it'. It was the compounds that produced the sort of avant-gardism that makes up so much of the history of twentieth-century art. The compounds-whether the Cubists, Fauvists, Futurists, of Secessionists- had a natural tendency to be esoteric, to generate theories and forms that would baffle the bourgeoisie. The most perfect device, they soon discovered, was painting, composing, designing in code... Composers, artists, or architects in a compound began to have the instincts of the medieval clergy, much of whose activity was devoted exclusively to separating itself from the mob. For mob, substitute bourgeoisie- and here you have the spirit of avant-gardism in the twentieth century. Once inside a compound, an artist became part of a clerisy, to use an old term for an intelligentsia with clerical presumptions" (page 18. Furthermore, Wolfe claims that) ..., The axiom of artistic competition in the twentieth century (became), that the ambitious young artist must join a "movement", a "school", an ism-which is to say, a compound. He is either willing to join a clerisy and subscribe to its codes and theories or he gives up all hope of prestige.

I quote the compound thesis at such length because, as mentioned, Wolfe argues that the ideas and attitudes generated in European compounds more than fifty years ago (and imported to the U.S. in the 1930s), have a crucial effect on modern American architecture and therefore the American way of

Because people live in the buildings which are the products of these

there is in this book - as we shall see in a moment - the sought after

tion of biography and history in (American) society.

ttitudes that were generated in the compound, imported to America,

found modern expression there are:

a. No loud noises or special orders from the client.

b. Design by code.

c. The clerical nature of the compounds' leaders.

Let me start with the third point. Wolfe argues that leading American universities are the incarnation of European compounds. In order to substantiate this point, he dedicates a chapter to "The Apostates", in which he describes the fate of the sinners. The best example for once a most distinguished architect, who was doomed by the establishment to anathema after changing his architectonic style, is provided by Edward Durell Stone, designer of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, whose demise (only in terms of prestige, he still enjoys huge commercial success) Wolfe follows (photos of both Stone's styles are provided).

The following example demonstrates another characteristic of the compound: a design by code. It also demonstrate the results of such an attempt.

> In 1955 a vast worker-housing project called Pruitt-Igoe was opened in St. Lewis. The design, by Minoru Yamasaki, architect of the World Trade Center, won an award from the American Institute of Architects. Yamasaki designed it classically Corbu [Le Corbusier, an extremely influential French architect], fulfilling the master's vision of highrise hives of steel, glass, and concrete separated by open spaces of green lawn. The workers of St. Louis, of course, were in no danger of getting caught in Pruitt-Igoe. They had already decamped for suburbs such as Spanish Lake and Crestwood. Pruitt-Igoe filled up mainly with recent migrants from the rural South. They moved from areas of America where the population density was fifteen to twenty folks per square mile, where one rarely got more than ten feet off the ground except by climbing a tree, into Pruitt-Igoe fourteen-story blocks.
>
> On each floor there were covered walkways, in keeping with Corbu's idea of "streets in the air". Since there was no other place in the project in which to <u>sin</u> in public, whatever might ordinarily have taken place in bars, brothels, social clubs, pool halls, amusement arcades, general stores, corniches, rutabaga patches, hayricks, barn stalls, now took place in the streets in the air. Corbu's boulevards made Hogarth's Gin Lane look like the oceanside street of drams in Southhampton, New York. Respectable folk pulled out, even if it meant living in cracks in the sidewalks ... In July of 1972, the city blew up the three central blocks of Pruitt-Igoe with dynamite.

Here we have it: the intersection of the biography of a Pruitt-Igoe tenant and history (of an idea), in a housing project in St. Lewis. Reading From Bauhaus to Our House a former tenant of the disastrous housing project is able to follow and comprehend how he and his family were caught up between European architectural theory and American bad judgement.

A lighter example of the effects of designing by code is provided by Wolfe in the following story about the Seagram Building in New York:

> The one remaining problem was window coverings: shades, blinds, curtains, whatever. Mies (Van der Rohe, another influential architect) would have preferred that the great windows of plate glass have no coverings at all. Unless you could compel everyone in a building to have the same color ones (white of beige, naturally) and raise them and lower them or open and shut them at the same time and to the same degree, they always ruined the purity of the design of the exterior. In the Seagram Building, Mies came as close as man was likely to come to realizing that ideal. The tenant could only have white blinds or shades, and there were only three intervals where they would stay put: open, closed, and halfway. At any other point, they just kept sliding (Page.76).

Besides telling good stories Wolfe, in the above examples, turns academic Marxism on its head: material conditions do not determine the nature and quality of ideas. In fact, it is the other way around. Superstructure (ideas), determine material conditions (way people live).

A beautiful example demonstrating both design by code - in this case the code being "expressed structure", - as well as architects' power over client (no loud noises form the client ... we know best), is provided by the following story. Here, Wolfe demonstrates his ability to choose a perfect example and exploit it to its limits:

> The art-gallery addition, at York and Chapel streets in New Haven, was Yale's first major building project following the Second World War. A gray little man named Louis Kahn was appointed as architect. ... The existing gallery, built just twenty -five years earlier, was an Italian Romanesque palazzo... It had massive cornices and a heavy pitched slate roof. On the Capel Street side, it featured large windows framed in compound arches of stone.
>
> Kahn's addition was ... a box ... of glass, steel, concrete, and tiny beige bricks. As his models and drawings made clear, on the Chapel Street side there would be no arches, no cornice, no rustication, no pitched roof-only a sheer bland wall of small glazed beige brick. The only details discernible on this slick and empty surface would be four narrow bands (string courses) of concrete at about ten-foot intervals. In the eyes of a man from Mars or your standard Yale man, the building could scarcely have been distinguished from a Woolco discount store in a shopping center. In the gallery's main public space the ceiling was made of gray concrete tetrahedra, fully exposed. This gave the interior the look of an underground parking garage.
>
> Yale's administrators were shocked ... (until) Kahn stared at them)... and the voice said: What do you mean, "It has nothing to do with the existing building"? You don't understand? You don't <u>see</u> it"? You don't see the string courses? They express the floor lines of the existing building. They <u>reveal the structure</u>. For a quarter of a century, those floors have been hidden behind masonry, completely concealed. Now they will be <u>unconcealed</u>. Now the entire structure will be <u>unconcealed</u>. Honest form - <u>beauty</u>, as you choose to call it- can only result from <u>unconcealed structure</u>!
>
> Unconcealed structure? Did he say <u>unconcealed structure</u>? Baffled but somehow intimidated, as if by Cagliostro or a Jacmel hoongan, the Yale administration yielded to the destiny of architecture and took it like a man.
>
> Administrators, directors, boards of trustees, municipal committees, and executive officers have been taking it like men ever since (Page 65).

Now, this is a great story. But although the reader truly gets the gist and flavor of the senselessness and the intimidation. However, this story, as others in the book, has its flaws. The most noticeable one is superficiality. Does Wolfe suggest that it was merely Kahn's look and voice that frightened the administrators? Nothing else? Were the board members,

among them (I assume) graduates from the best business and law schools in the country, all tough and competent, so intimidated by the use of the term "expressed structure"? This slippage into superficiality is a due the reader pays for an interesting, funny, coherent and fluent story. In the struggle between substance-analysis- and style, the former has to give a bit.

Consider this:

> To those philistines who were still so gauche as to say that the new architecture lacked the richness of detail of the old Beaux-Arts architecture, the plasterwork, the metalwork, the masonry and so on, the Mieslings [Mies' apostles] would say with considerable condescension: 'Fine. You produce the craftsmen who can do that kind of work, and then we'll talk to you about it. They don't exist anymore'. True enough. But why? Henry Hope reed tells of riding across West Fifty-third Street in New York in the 1940s in a car with some employees of E.F. Caldwell& Co., a firm that specialized in bronze work and electrical fixtures. As the car passed the Museum of Modern Art building, the men began shaking their fists at it and shouting: 'That goddamn place is destroying us! Those bastards are killing us!' In the palmy days of Beaux-Arts architecture, Caldwell had employed a thousand bronzeurs, marble workers, model makers, and designers. Now the company was sliding into insolvency, along with many similar firms. It was not that craftsmanship was dying. Rather, the International Style was finishing off the demand for it, particularly in commercial construction (p.79).

Another good story. But to suggest that craftsmanship was eliminated merely by the new style of architecture; to provide just one observation to support this argument to omit and ignore alternative explanations appears to be too light, even for someone who is not an expert on the subject. It seems that Wolfe, the former Jester, is set to deliver and substantiate his thesis no matter what, which means that practically every detail has to fit into the puzzle. In cases of dissention, Wolfe does not hesitate to squeeze the facts. Just like the Prophet.

We now arrive at a crucial point, namely author's credibility and theoretical validity. In other words: how do we know that Wolfe's explanations and interpretations are correct?

> These are not merely my impressions, I promise you, (Wolfe reassures us at the outset- page 3). For detailed evidence one has only to go to the conferences, symposia and jury panels where the architects gather today to discuss the state of the art. They profess to be appalled themselves. Without a blush they will tell you that modern architecture is exhausted, finished. They themselves joke about <u>the glass boxes</u>. They use the term without a snigger.

Still, Wolfe rarely mentions his sources or introduces the observations from which he arrives at his conclusions. There is not a single bibliographical reference in the book, and as one can read the account is written as if most of the time God, (a funny God, but God nevertheless), provided Wolfe with the information and conclusions. Though Wolfe remains faithful to the Jester position and style by providing pictures, and allowing the audience to witness (for example) that the addition to Yale's library <u>does</u> look like a Woolco warehouse, characteristically he <u>tells</u> the story and provides the conclusions himself. The reader has to take it like a man.

Do we trust Wolfe? Are his credentials sufficient? I am referring here to the essence of Wolfe's argument, not to each and every detail. Considering Wolfe's Ph.d. in American studies from Yale University, his long and impressive record of publications on the subject of architecture and art, and his reputation as a perceptive and knowledgeable observer and commentator on the American scene, the answer is in the affirmative. Indeed, the book has its flaws and they were noted above. However, Wolfe (just like Mills), is such a master of presenting the reader with the large picture, in getting the essence across, that one does not feel the need to dissect and validate each component of this picture.

THE YELLOW WIND/DAVID GROSSMAN

Earlier in this work, I mentioned Becker's view of a scientific endeavor such as studying a modern city. Referring to Park's days at the University of Chicago, Becker argued that the analogy to a mosaic is adequate, for each study, be it about Hobohemia of the Jewish Ghetto, has its own shape, color and flavor and at the same time is a part of a larger picture and a growing knowledge of a modern city. Reviewing Terkel's book, I argued that Working could, in fact should have been constructed as such a mosaic.

The Yellow Wind succeeds where Working fails. This work is an example of participant observation in which the ethnographer\reporter holds the thread, in fact is the thread between the various segments. Grossman is present in each chapter, be it a visit to a Palestinian refugee camp, a Saturday in a Jewish settlement or in a poignant description of the Israeli justice system. The author is not a scientist and makes no claim of objectivity. His most available and valuable tools are his associations, imagination, and curiosity. Nonetheless, by a proper use of the devices suggested in the present framework, he succeeds in creating a complicated, rich and meaningful mosaic. David Grossman is a foremost Israeli journalist and novelist. In the winter of 1987, shortly before the 20th anniversary of the Six Day War, Grossman spent several weeks in the occupied West Bank. He met with people from both sides of the barricade, Israelis and Palestinians. Grossman avoided politicians; he was interested in the men and women who are the actors in a play someone else wrote for them, the victims of forces beyond their control, the small figures in the big picture. The exact same people Mills was interested in.

The topic of war and peace (and consequently that of the occupied territories) is the one most controversial and divisive issue in Israeli society. I will not elaborate on the topic here except to mention that in Israel one segment of the population still refers to the West Bank as the "Freed Territories" and claims that Israeli Jews hold historic rights to the land, while the other segment insists that the continuing occupation is a disaster and the only just solution is the return of the West Bank to Arab hands and the foundation of a Palestinian state there.

For more than twenty years now, since 1967, Israeli Jews have played a part previously unfamiliar to them. In an ironic role reversal, Jews, with their long history of persecution and humiliation, with their traditional position and mentality of the "underdog", became the oppressors and the conquerors. They are now the people who carry the guns and, much too often, the exploiters of others.

The Yellow Wind provides readers with information on both rational and emotional levels, although the learning process is not formal or organized. The knowledge of the larger conceptual issues can be taken for granted because of the intended readership. Most Israelis and Palestinians were only too aware of the situation in the occupied West Bank long before the book's publication. However, two factors combined to make the work powerful. First, the whole book is dedicated to a single subject. The reader is exposed not to a secluded segment in a newspaper, but to a whole picture portrayed by the author, with each segment helping to convey the message. The second factor is the Grossman's talent, assisted by the "New Journalism's" devices. As mentioned earlier, David Riesman perceives social

science as a form of conversation between various segments of society. It enables readers to 'meet' people they have never met before. In the case of The Yellow Wind the meeting is hardly new since the segments were already more than familiar with of each other's existence. But the perspectives provided by the author are fresh: it allows Israelis to see Palestinians as they see themselves.

The Yellow Wind is my chosen example of an appropriate, effective and exciting use of the suggested devices-the "Independent Variables". As a result, every piece, each story in the book is unique and stands independently and at the same time is a part of a larger picture. The individual stories are like glass fragments with the total picture as a large mirror in which Israelis and Palestinians can examine their reflection.

EXAMPLES SHOWING USE OF "NEW JOURNALISM" DEVICES

In the following examples, literary techniques used by new journalists are coupled with Grossman's personal reflections to create a compelling account. The excerpts are taken from the opening segment of the book, titled "A Man Is Like a Stalk of Wheat" in which Grossman's describes his visit to Deheisha, a refugee camp not far from Jerusalem. In the first excerpt Grossman provides the context in which the people he describes are situated.

Page. 5:

> In Deheisha, drinking water comes from wells. The only running water is the rainwater and sewage flowing down the paths between the houses ... Beside each house - a yard. They are small, fenced in with corrugated aluminum, and very clean. A large jara, filled with springwater and covered with cloth stands in each yard.

In the camp Grossman meets an old Palestinian refugee. He notes: (Page. 6):

> I discover - with some bafflement, I admit- that she reminds me of my grandmother and her stories about Poland, from which she was expelled. About the river, about the fruit there. Time has marked both their faces with the same lines, of wisdom and irony, of great skepticism toward all people, both relatives and strangers.

Now, for some Israelis, this is an inconceivable comparison. It is impossible for them to see the similarities between an old Polish Jewess and an old Palestinian refugee. They might even find the comparison offensive. Why, they might have an old Polish grandmother of their own. By putting the two in the same framework - his own associations - Grossman compares where comparisons are, for some, unheard of. He raises the possibility that this old Palestinian woman might have grandchildren of her own, grandchildren, who just like him (Grossman) will some day demand answers. Furthermore, he gives

the readers a better understanding of how biographies are shaped by larger social and historical forces. He demonstrates that Jews do not have monopoly on suffering. Grossman does it not by comparing collectives; in fact, he does quite the opposite - he focuses on two individual old women while himself operating as the connector, the link, between them.

Page.9:

> Everyth[illegible]pens elsewhere. Not now. In another place. In a splendi[illegible]or a longed for future. The thing most present here is a[illegible]nce. Somehow one senses that people here have turned themselves voluntarily into doubles of the real people who once were, in another place. Into people who hold in their hands only one real asset: the ability to wait.

Patience is supposed to be a well known Jewish trait. At least in the diaspora, before the foundation of the Jewish state. Here again Grossman draws comparisons between supposedly not-to-be-compared situations in order to demonstrate an ironic role reversal. In addition, he demonstrates that what is believed to be a unique trait of Jews, is actually a consequence of a particular combination of history, social structure and biography. Here is the Sociological Imagination in practice - the intersection of history and biography in a society. Isn't this role reversal exactly what sociology teachers try to achieve in introductory sociology courses (and what makes introductory sociology exciting when it happens)?

EXAMPLES OF THE EFFECTIVE USE OF DIALOGUE

The excerpts are taken from the chapter "I want to shoot Jews", Grossman's visit to a Palestinian kindergarten.

Page. 23:

"A little while ago," says the second teacher, somewhat heavy, blue-eyed, and delicately made up, always on the edge of a giggle or a blush, "a little while ago the military governor visited the kindergarten and asked me if I teach the children bad things, against Israel and the Jews."
"And what did you say to him?"
"I said that I don't. But that his soldiers do"
"What do you mean?"
"What do I mean? I'll explain. When a child goes for a walk outside and sees a tree, he knows that the tree bears fruit and leaves. right? When he sees a soldier, he knows very well what that soldier does. Do you understand?"
"What do soldiers do?" I ask a girl of about four, called Naima, green-eyed, little gold earrings in her ears.
"Searches and beatings."
"Do you know who the Jews are?"
"The army".
"Are there other Jews?"
"No".
"What does your father do?"
"Sick".
"And your mother?"
"She works in Jerusalem for the Jews. Cleans their houses".
So she answers me, the new little Palestinian problem.
"And you" - a chubby boy, somewhat dreamy - "do you know who the Jews are?"
"Yes, they took my sister".
"Where to?"
"To Farah."
(Both his sisters are there, in jail, the teachers explain.)
"What did your sisters do?"
"They did <u>not</u> throw stones" he says angrily.
Suddenly a little boy gets up, holding a short yellow plastic stick in his hand, and shoots me.
"Why are you shooting me?"
He runs to the teacher, peeks at me from behind her arm, and laughs. He is two years old.
"Who do you want to shoot?" the teachers ask, smiling, like two others taking pride in a smart child."
"Jews"
Their lips make out the answer with him.

From the above description the reader can learn that:

1. Hatred starts at a very early stage and is nourished by the educational establishment.

2. The Palestinian children are familiar only with one kind of Israeli.

3. A day will come when the Palestinians cease being intimidated by the Israelis.

There is another irony here, and Grossman, like every Israeli, is aware of it. The irony is that forty years ago, the Palestinian child who shot Grossman would have been a Jewish child shooting a British soldier, as a part of the effort of a cohesive Jewish community to end the British mandate over Palestine.

SCENE BY SCENE CONSTRUCTION

Grossman uses this device in chapter 5, "Life Sciences", when he describes a visit to Bethlehem University. From the outset, Grossman creates the impression that university life goes on as usual, despite the state of constant siege created by the Israeli authorities.

> Page. 54:
>
> Sitting on two chairs pulled together, are a boy and a girl. They whisper between them, her hair almost falling into his face.
>
> Page. 59:
>
> From among the milling crowd I make out a crown of red hair. The face of a young boy. Striding in the middle of a knot of students. This redhead from Bethlehem jokes non-stop, eager to entertain. I join them in their walk to class, look for the girl he is trying to impress, and I think I have found her.

One can feel the personal sympathy Grossman has toward the redhead student. After all, Israelis also try to impress young women.

All of a sudden, there is an abrupt change in the peaceful atmosphere.

Page. 61:

> A loudspeaker suddenly barks outside. From the window I see a student in a black leather jacket gathering people around him..." The pastoral courtyard changes its face, and the students are protesting against the occupation. But even a stolen glance allows me to make out that redhead among the sea of darker ones. Now he is completely foreign, waving his fist with the others and thundering with all his might. Oddly, that is the main thing that remains in my memory from this moment - being totally disappointed with a person whom I did not even know.

A distance is created, then, when the two individuals, Grossman and the redhead Palestinian, are cast into two hostile collectives. Grossman does not merely tell the reader what happened. He describes the scene as it folds. He <u>shows</u> the reader how the distance is created. This chapter contains most of the components suggested in the framework-the author uses the method of participant observation, is present in the account and reports of his reactions toward a changing situation, the chapter focuses on individuals, and the author uses literary devices (the chapter is constructed as a short play). All these elements allow the author to demonstrate how his own reaction (in this case fear) to what had happened in the courtyard affects his attitudes toward Palestinians. Every Israeli, sympathetic to the Palestinian cause as he may be, has, after reading this chapter, to confront himself with the same question Grossman asked himself while the demonstration took place: "what would have happened to my belief system if those people outside hurt my own child"?.

In chapter 14, "The Wastonaires" Grossman, who up till now focused chiefly on individuals, provides a broader look at what has happened to the fabric of traditional local life as a result of the introduction of:

> ... an unofficial public institution functioning alongside the Israeli military government and civil administration. In the local slang, wasta means 'mediation'. So the wastonaire is an intermediary - or, in other contexts, a pimp. The wastonaires are usually from the middle of lower classes, some of them former criminals who have come up in the world and won wealth and power by grace of a sharp and no-nonsense instinct for spotting the opportunities presented by the existing complex and murky situation. Most of them began as collaborators with the security forces, and then, when their relations with the military government had become well established, they began to present themselves to the populace as possessing contacts and influence within the administration. There were men of similarly sharp and quick instincts in the military government who immediately understood that it was worthwhile fostering such contacts and helping the collaborators refurbish their image.

In this case Grossman does not show. He tells and generalizes. Subsequently, the account is significantly less vivid, and questions of validity arise. The reader is not allowed direct access to the observations and is therefore denied of a possibility to arrive at his own, perhaps different, conclusions. In comparison, one can cite Tom Wolfe's Mau-Mauing the Flack Catchers (1968). In this piece Wolfe describes recipients of welfare intimidating the bureaucrats who are in charge of its distribution. Here, the reader is a witness to the interaction between the two groups, sees the intimidation and is able to arrive at his own conclusions about the social processes and mechanisms involved in welfare distribution. Wolfe, of course, has his own conclusions. However, he supports and illustrates them with observations.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Participant Observation: Yes.

2. Shift between concrete and abstract: Yes. Although Grossman does not develop constructs, there is a constant shift between concrete observation\description and statement by the author about what he just described. The case of the Palestinian refugee who reminded the author of his grandmother is a good illustration for this. Another example is Grossman's conclusion (supported by observation) of Palestinians' unique perception and attitude toward time and place ("Everything happens elsewhere... the thing most present here is absence").

3. Inclusion of individuals: Yes.

4. Use of literary devices: Yes.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Use of the Sociological Imagination: The book's strength lies in the individual and biographical. One can get glimpses of social structure (the wastonaires, how Palestinians perceive their leadership etc.), but these issues are not developed or followed through.

   As for history: The book takes place in the present and there is no explicit effort to explain or follow historical processes. However, most readers, Israelis or Palestinians are familiar with the processes leading to Israeli occupation of the West Bank. It is interesting to note that many readers, Israelis and Palestinians alike, claim this

book is the writing on the Wall and Grossman has a prophetic vision:

> I tell Abu Harb that I called my book The Yellow Time in Hebrew, and he asks me if I have heard about the yellow wind. I say that I haven't, so he begins telling me about it, and about the yellow wind that will soon come, maybe even in his lifetime: the wind will come from the gate of Hell, a hot and terrible east wind which comes once in a few generations, sets the world afire. and people seek shelter from its heat in the caves and caverns, but even there it finds those it seeks, those who have performed cruel and unjust deeds, and there, in the cracks in the boulders, it exterminates them, one by one. After that day, Abu Harb says, the land will be covered with bodies. The rocks will be white from the heat, and the mountains will crumble into a powder which will cover the land like yellow cotton.

Six months after publication, the Palestinian uprising started.

2. Readership: Professors and students, politicians, settlers, businessmen, journalists, home-makers; the book became a best seller in Israel. It was also read by many Palestinians and was translated to English.

THE RECKONING\DAVID HALBERSTAM

This work illustrates a successful combination of sociology and journalism and attests to the fact that a journalist can use the "Sociological Imagination" and fulfill the "Sociological Promise". The book is not a report of participant observation such as Liebow's or Grossman's, nor an essay in Mill's style. Halberstam adequately combines journalistic methods, (mainly interviews), with findings of extensive academic research, maintains an dispassionate narrative and tells it all as an interesting and coherent story.

The story is that of America's industrial decline and Japan's ascent. "The story" writes Halberstam in his "Author's Note" (Page.729) "is what I would call soft drama-that is, something profound that has taken place so quietly, in such small increments, that it is barely visible to the naked eye". Halberstam decided to follow two corporations, American and Japanese, manufacturing the same product- cars. "I chose the auto rather than steel because it was a consumer item, familiar to every reader, and the symbol of America's surge into the middle class - indeed to the rest of the world, the most American of products" (emphasis added). Both corporations are 'number two' (in size) in their respective countries: Ford and Nissan.

In The Reckoning the reader finds all three components listed by Mills: biographies, social structure and history. In fact, and this is the main and crucial difference from all books reviewed so far: the book is organized around biographies of actual people: "important" and "ordinary", "influential" and "influenced", of Henry Ford and Joel Goddard (a worker of Ford), Lee Iacocca and Sansui Tanaka (a worker of Nissan). Some of the

figures make history, everyone lives it. All the figures act within the frameworks and boundaries of the very different cultures and social structures of America and Japan which determine basic personality, attitudes toward work and labour unions, relationship between financing institutions and industry, and much more.

The product is common: cars. The way in which cars are manufactured, being a product of social structures, history, culture, economy and religion, is different. The book explains and illustrates the aspects in which the two societies differ and how these differences eventually manifest themselves in the building of cars.

However, there are no chapters in the book titled "history" or "social structure". We read about these issues in a way that is probably the best and most effective to draw reader's attention, identification and curiosity: we read about people who live history and social structure. This is the reason readers finish this 734 page book - because it's about people. The "actors" were born into the social structure, are part of it and the flow of history. They are not cardboard figures; they are real.

Pages 604 and 606 provide an illustration of the above statements. Halberstam focuses on two individuals: Joel Goddard is a fired Ford worker, and Sansui Tanaka works for Nissan.

Page.604:

> The morning went even worse than the first one, Finally Goddard took his three toolboxes and trudged out. The other men were sitting around having lunch, and as he walked he knew they were watching him and gloating over his failure. He felt demeaned. He wasn't sure if he had been fired, but if he had been fired, he thought, it was from a shithole.
>
> When he got home, he barricaded himself in his bedroom, and for the third time in his life (the first was when he broke his leg in a high school football game, the second was when his father died), he cried. Joyce Goddard felt just as bad.

Page.606:

> The emperor praised all the medal winners, and one of them thanked him. Then they toured the palace garden. They were given cigarettes with the mark of the imperial chrysanthemum on them, and although he did not smoke, Tanaka kept the cigarettes so he could give them to his friends at work. That night there were parties. First there was one given by his family. All the members of his family told him how proud they were of him. Then there was a party given by Nissan at the New Grand Hotel, perhaps the fanciest in all Yokohama. Several hundred people had been invited, almost all of them Tanaka's superiors. At this party he finally began to cry. Some of his closest friends from work were also there, and they accompanied him to the third party of the evening.

We read about two men, an American and a Japanese, crying. They are crying because of something that is related to their work place. The points that I want to make concern both the people and the work place:

As for the latter: By elaborating on specific examples and using historical narrative, Halberstam explains how the two industries arrived where they are at that particular moment in time. We read about American

vanity; the oil crisis and the different ways it affected the two industries; the roles different individuals played in the making of crucial decisions. In short, the reader understands how history, social structure, culture and religion interact and intersect, how they combine and mesh to create a strong and competitive Japanese industry, the industry that honored Tanaka, and weaken Ford so it had to dismiss thousands, among them Goddard.

As for individuals: the readers are properly introduced to the characters a long time (and many pages) before the above events are described. The reader follows the characters through childhood in Japan and America, is familiar with their motives of choosing their jobs, knows what the jobs mean to them, what the jobs mean to their families. The reader cares about these individuals and wants to know more about their lives, as he would when reading a good novel.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Participant Observation: No. In this case "soft, (historical) drama" there is no need for it.

2. Shift between Concrete and Abstract: Yes.

3. Inclusion of Individuals: "The Reckoning" is the best illustration (from the ones reviewed in this thesis) for the benefits of including individuals. Halberstam focuses on actual people, and his approach is holistic (in contrast to fragmented, as in the cases of Terkel and Liebow). We see how everything is connected and interrelated: work, family, leisure.

4. Use of Literary Devices: There is much use of realism in "The Reckoning".

Scene by scene: by definition the book, unfolding a "soft drama" is constructed in a "scene by scene" fashion (again, not in the 'Wolfean" sense. He will call it "historical narrative").

Dialogue: Since it is not Participant Observation, Halberstam does not record dialogue. However, he reconstructs it very effectively.

Third person point of view: from endless hours of interviews, Halberstam is able to reconstruct and provide an accurate account of "the third person point of view" be it Sansui Tanaka, Lee Iacocca or Joel Goddard.

Status symbols: extensive use of this device, from the way Iacocca dresses to the way the Japanese kept the heat in their offices a bit too high as an after effect of the horrible cold of second world war.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Use of "The Sociological Imagination":

   Biographies: Yes

   Social Structure: Yes

   History: Yes

2. Readership: the book is aimed at the general reader.

THE POWER ELITE\C. WRIGHT MILLS

In this work C. Wright Mills, demonstrates what he means by "Sociological Imagination". It is a demonstration by a master. Mills certainly fulfills the "Sociological Promise", for he intersects biography and history in the context of American social structure, and at the same time writes so that the general reader can understand and follow his arguments. As we shall see Mills fulfills the Promise without using most of the "Independent Variables" suggested in the present framework. He is able to do so, partially because he is an exceptionally good writer.

Although the two necessary components stated as the "Dependent Variables" are present in The Power Elite, there are some problems in the book. These problems can be attributed chiefly to the Prophetic style which characterizes Mills' writing. I maintain that implementation of the "Dependent Variables" could have reduced the impact of these problems.

The Power Elite shall be used to demonstrate three points:

1. It can be regarded as a working paper or a draft for "The Sociological Imagination". I shall show how Mills arrives at his famous conclusion that sociology is the intersection of biography, social structure and history.

2. It demonstrates Mills' ability to write for the general public.

3. As already mentioned, it demonstrates Prophetic style and the problems this style can raise.

Before I start, let me cite Mills' argument:

> By the power elite (writes Mills in Page 18) we refer to those political, economic, and military circles which as an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decisions having at least national consequences. In so far as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them.

As Riesman (1956) notes, Mills locates his conception of the power elite between two extremes: the view of the elite as an omnipotent group of deliberate manipulators and the view that there is no elite but only autonomous power groups that counterbalance one another. As Mills himself notes (1956:28):

> What I am asserting is ... that in this particular epoch a conjuncture of historical circumstances has led to the rise of an elite of power; that the men of the circles composing this elite, severally and collectively, now make such key decisions as are made; and that given the enlargement and the centralization of the means of power now available, the decisions that they make and fail to make carry more consequences for more people than has ever been the case in the world history of mankind.

Mills' argument is <u>not</u> my concern. Therefore, it will not be discussed any further.

Back to the three points that <u>are</u> my concern. The first one: in "The Power Elite" Mills explains why it is essential to study biography, social structure and history.

Mills holds that the proper way to understand the American Power Elite" is:

> Neither solely in recognizing the historic scale of events nor in accepting the personal awareness reported by men of apparent decision. (Because) linking the two are the major institutions of modern society. These hierarchies of state and corporation and army constitute the means of power... (Page.5).

Later, Mills elaborates on the necessity of studying all three components. In this paragraph he writes of the very rich:

> To understand (them)..., it is more important to understand the geographical distribution of oil and the structure of taxation than the psychological traits of Haroldson L. Hunt; more important to understand the legal framework of American capitalism and the corruptibility of its agents than the early childhood of John K Rockefeller; more important to understand the technological progression of the capitalist mechanism than the boundless energy of Henry Ford ... Perhaps J. P. Morgan did as a child have very severe feelings of inadequacy, perhaps his father did believe that he would not amount to anything; perhaps this did effect in him an inordinate drive for power for power's sake. But all this would be quite irrelevant had he been living in a peasant village in India in 1890. If we would understand the very rich we must first understand the economic and political structure of the nation in which they become the very rich. (Page 98).

Second point: sociologists should communicate with the general public, in a manner the public is able to understand(1). This point is demonstrated right at the outset.

> Page 3:
>
> But not all men are ... ordinary. They are not made by their jobs; they set up and break down jobs for thousands of others; they are not confined by simple family responsibilities; they can escape. They may live in many hotels and houses, but they are bound by no one community. They need not merely 'meet the demands of the day and the hour'; in some part, they create these demands, and cause others to meet them ... What Jacob Burckhardt said of 'great men' most Americans might well say of their elite: 'They are all that we are not'.

Every nine-to-five job holder can understand immediately what Mills is talking about. Furthermore, the paragraph does not transmit: "Danger, Do not approach-Sociologists At Work". Quite the opposite. It is inviting. Consider what Mills has to say about ordinary people: "They feel that they live in a time of big decisions; they know that they are not making any" (Page.5).

Now, Mills discovered people who are different. Very different. He is willing, (to the points of eagerness) to share his knowledge.

Third point: The Power Elite demonstrates what I earlier referred to as the "Prophetic" style, both in type of issues the Prophet is concerned with, (in this case power), and the way they are written up. It also suffers from problems that are characteristic to this style.

This book is a social commentary and critique. The criticism, though, is notably less subtle or disguised then Wolfe's or even Grossman's. In a flamboyant and passionate way, Mills states his case. He tells the reader what he has discovered. He conducted the research, he collected the necessary data, he made all the interpretations, enclosed it in a framework and now presents it to the reader. It is a one man operation. Furthermore, it is a book about types of people. Mills mentions biographies of various individuals, be it an upper class New York girl or a U.S. army General, but no particular individual has a name.

Now I shall review Mills' use of my suggested "Independent Variables".

Participant Observation: No.

Shift between Concrete and Abstract: Yes. Both concrete and abstract are present in the work.

Inclusion of Individuals: No.

Use of Literary devices: No.

Mills, then, does not use three quarters of the suggested criteria. Let us examine now what kind of problems "The Power Elite" suffers from, and how implementation of the "Independent Variables" could have helped.

1. "Mills pick(s) up with his own interpretations when the data run out and he moves from the fact to the observation with ease and without warning", notes Riesman (1956). Riessman is correct in that Mills does not rely just on facts. However, what Mills provides are far from 'clean' or 'objective' observations. His observations are colored (not to say contaminated) with moral judgment. This flaw is a direct by-product of the Prophetic pose. We already saw his disapproval of the $300 lipstick. Now consider this: "In America, (the celebrity) system is carried to the point where a man who can knock a small white ball into a series of holes in the ground with more efficiency and skill than anyone else thereby gains social access tho the President of the United States" (p.74). I argue that at various points in the book Mills could have described rather than interpreted, show rather than tell. A description - providing the raw material - would enable the reader to maintain some power in the interpretation and enhance scientific validity.

2. Another characteristic of the Prophetic style is writing about collectives, or types of people. It makes the reading tedious, since, as mentioned earlier, it is hard to identify with an ideal type. It is much easier to identify with a specific figure.

3. Mills fails to explain, or even describe, the individual points of view and states of mind of the participants in his book - the ways they see and perceive the world. Although, as Mills notes, it is not <u>sufficient</u> to understand individuals, it is <u>important</u> (and interesting) to examine how power effects one's view of the world.

Responding to points 2 and 3, I argue that inclusion of individuals and use of the literary devices (two of the Independent Variables) could improve "The Power Elite". From the literary devices, particularly useful in this case are recording of dialogue, and the third person point of view. Use of these devices would identify individual figures clearly and provide a look at their inner world and state of mind.

Furthermore- various parts of the book call for description, and the use of device no. 4 especially when Mills is concerned with issues of status, (The Local Society, Metropolitan 400, The Celebrities and others). Mills has given us enough in terms of analysis; however, he could have provided specific examples of people, events and surroundings, locating his figures in their natural social arena. So when he mentions an upper class New York girl, I prefer to read about an actual young women. Through her, I can familiarize myself with New York's upper class. I would like to be introduced to the young woman over lunch at Sardi's (as Wolfe would probably do), where she waiting for her fiance', a Harvard graduate and a top executive on Wall Street. I want to hear their conversation: what terms do they use to describe the servants they are going to hire; I want to see how they treat, and are treated, by the waiters at Sardi's; I want to know where the young couple is going to spend their honeymoon. I want to know how this young woman was brought up, what did she hear around dinner table, who were her friends, <u>how does she perceive her life and the lives of people around her</u>. I want to read about a specific young woman, because it is easier for me to understand and identify with someone real than with a social type or collective. It might be marginal to Mills' thesis; nevertheless, it is interesting, informative and provides incentive to go on reading.

ENDNOTES

1. A book review from 1956 (Rossi) reports: "The Power Elite has received much more attention in the press and literary journals than is usual for a product of our trade".

EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH\KAI ERIKSON

This book has already been quoted extensively in the introduction. I shall now elaborate on the book's content, and add my comments and suggestions.

> On February 26, 1972, 132 million gallons of debris-filled muddy water burst through a makeshift mining-company dam and roared through Buffalo Creek, a narrow mountain hollow in West Virginia. Following the flood, survivors from a previously tightly knit community were crowded into trailer homes with no concern for former neighborhoods. The result was a collective trauma that lasted longer than the individual traumas caused by the original disaster. In Everything In its Path Erickson details the conflicting tensions of mountain life in general-the tensions between individualism and dependency, self-assertion and resignation, self-centeredness and group orientation. He examines the loss of connection, disorientation, declining morality, rise in crime, and rise in outmigration that resulted from the sudden loss of neighborhood (From the book's cover).

In his report Erickson links the disaster to a general context of "disaster literature" - "The (individual) stories in themselves are but moments in a longer reach of time" he claims "they have no meaning, reflect no moral, until they are placed in a wider context". However, the author demonstrates how the disaster in Bufflo Creek is unique. "In order to understand fully what an event like this means to the people who survived it, one needs to know something about who they were and where they came from, how they organized their lives and what they asked of the future. In this case, we need to locate the people of Buffalo Creek in the larger sweep of history and on the wider social and cultural map, and that process begins with a look at Appalachia". Here is a statement of the "Sociological Imagination". Indeed, I believe that in this work - the winner of the 1977 Sorokin Award for an outstanding contribution to the progress of Sociology - Erikson

fulfills the "Sociological Promise"; he intersects biographies with historical forces in the context of Appalachian social structure, and the book is accessible to a general public.

However, I would submit that parts of the book require the employment of two of the "Independent Variables", namely participant observation and use of literary devices in reporting.

Erikson makes extensive use of the words of the people of Buffalo Creek, and their individual stories are woven into the text. The author read thirty or forty thousand pages of transcript material, almost all of it in the form of words spoken by the survivors to inquiring attorneys. In addition, he conducted interviews during the course of several trips he made to Buffalo Creek and made a survey through the distribution a questionnaire among the survivors. Thirty thousand is an enormous number of pages. I suggest that Erikson could have saved time and come up with the same, if not better quality of results, had he chosen to use the participant observation method. I am not suggesting he had to move to Buffalo Creek after the flood. What I am suggesting is that when Erikson was already there, he should have used this method and report his findings using the literary devices.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

1. Participant Observation: Consider the following story (p.10):

> Sociologists are often drawn to street corners when they try to get a feel for new locales, and the nearest thing to a street corner on Buffalo Creek is Charlie Cowan's gas station. I positioned myself there on my first morning, watching the coal trucks make their way up the scarred roads of the hollow and talking a little self-consciously with the people who came in to pass the time of day. At one point a leathery old man came in to get a soft drink and we exchanged a few words on the heat of the

> day. I looked up at the overcast sky and remarked (with a studied attempt at country shrewdness) that a storm might come up and cool the air. He turned away with a fierce "Haw", his face creased in irritation, and limped off to his car without another word. One does not mention storms casually on Buffalo Creek, and one certainly does not appear to welcome them as a relief from uncomfortable weather. I met the old man later at a large gathering, and he brought me a cup of coffee in what I took to be a shy act of penance. He did not say a word, but I had the impression that he was ready to make allowances for my insensitivity now that he associated me with Arnold and Porter (Erikson acted as a consultant for this law firm).

In another place, Erikson describes his reluctance and apprehension before he entered the devastated town and his desire to run away. However, those are two isolated observations\descriptions, and they are mentioned, as always, in the introduction, as if they are marginal to the "real" story. Then, Erikson chooses to disappears from the account. It is interesting for me to see how the introduction to the mountains, the mountain people and the devastation affected, <u>personally</u> the Yale professor: done well (and I am positive that Erikson could have done it well), it is much more than gossip, it is a conversation between two very different segments of American society. Though Erikson <u>does</u> describe and explain the mountain ethos, he is never involved in the story. Such an involvement, as demonstrated above can be very powerful.

2. Shift between Concrete and Abstract: Yes.

3. Inclusion of Individuals: Yes.

4. Use of Literary Devices: Had he chosen to describe more, Erikson could have used the literary devices extensively. For example: how is the trailer camp set up (like the old village? are there any distinguishable new patterns)? what kinds of artifacts do the survivors keep that are a reminder of their old lives? is there a

special place where they keep the old artifacts? do they treat them differently? how is the disaster brought up in a conversation? these are interesting and informative issues. Furthermore, Erikson did not have to work hard to obtain the information (probably, if asked, he already knows the answers to those questions, after spending so much time in Buffalo Creek). It is simply a matter of deciding where to look, what to focus on, and how to write it up.

THE HIPPIE TRIP/LEWIS YABLONSKY

Lewis Yablonsky, a 43 year- old sociology professor involves himself in the youth movement "in order to study, at first hand, the hippie panorama". "In part" he writes, I like to think that I have taken this trip for many socially concerned people who are interested in this new youth phenomena, but can not spare the time or energy or would not know how to proceed". Reading this, we remember two points: first - Riesman's note about social science as a tool for conversation between various segments of society. Second - that Grossman does the same thing in "The Yellow Wind"; he spends time and energy, travels in the West Bank and informs concerned and interested Israelis who cannot afford it themselves, or do not know how to proceed.

Before determining whether Yablonsky succeeds in fulfilling the "Sociological Promise" I shall first review his use of the tools suggested in the present work i.e., the presence of the independent variables. I took the liberty of presenting them in a different order.

1. Participant Observation

"The primary research instrument used in this study was myself" notes Yablonsky in the preface. Indeed, Yablonsky not only observes the hippie scenes in Big Sur, The East Village and Haight Ashbury; not only does he ask the questions other American's want to ask, about drugs and free love; he participates as well. And he informs the reader as to how the encounter affects him; how the people and new experiences affect a 43 year old sociology professor.

In the following passage (p. 81) Yablonsky is eating soup with some hippies in Big Sur:

> Suddenly I felt completely out of place, as if I were dressed in a full dress suit. In spite of the fact that I had on an old sweat shirt, cotton slacks, and sneakers, I looked and felt overdressed for this primitive scene. Compared to the others, I must have looked like Fred Astaire in the movie Top Hat.

After a visit to New York's East Greenwich Village, (p. 116) Yablonsky reports:

> Rather suddenly I had a strong motivation to leave the entire East Village scene immediately ... I hailed a cab and returned to my comfortable Fifth Avenue hotel room and an excellent room-service steak. Somehow everything felt and tasted better compared to the intellectual and physical poverty I had just experienced... I was turned off by the movement. It was not brave new world; it was violent and depressing.

Yablonsky's most significant and meaningful act of participation is his L.S.D. trip. Just as Grossman visited Deheisha, the refugee camp, for the Israelis who cannot afford it, Yablonsky takes the acid trip for the Americans who really want to know what it feels like, but don't have the opportunity, guts or resources. Yablonsky's personal account of the L.S.D. trip fills ten pages, starting on page 224:

> My first sensation was that a finely wound super watch spring of enormous tensile strength was in my gut, had burst loose, and had begun to unwind. The next set of flashes involved a feeling of sharp crystals bursting in my brain. Everything began to look like sharp-edged crystal snowflakes breaking into arrows. I was filled with awe and became panicky with fright....

2. Use of realistic details and literary devices

In the following description of a Haight-Ashbury morning (p.199) Yablonsky sets the scene:

> It was phantasmagoria of bells, beads, Indian headbands, robes, flutes, and bizarre musical instruments of every description. Hippies dressed in the wildest, most colorful, and unique clothes I had ever seen were standing on corners. Others were slowly walking, almost in a processional, up and down the (street)... There were friendly smiling panhandlers who weren't very aggressive about getting the loose change they requested from every hip or square passer-by. One bright young man facetiously entreated you to "take a hippie to lunch".

Use of Dialogue: Yablonsky quotes extensively from interviews he conducts during the research. The following paragraph can be summarized categorized and generalized in a single sentence: "Members of the new movement emphasized the absence of double moral standards". But consider this:

> Yablonsky: Let me ask this question of the tribe. This is always a delicate subject with people. Maybe it shouldn't be. I'll just ask how much screwing really goes on around here? Is there more sex life around here than, let's say, back at your high school?
>
> Brian: Oh, wow, ha, ha... I don't know that, I think there's more at my school. It isn't hidden that much here. Back at school, sex is a taboo thing. I mean the teacher's don't talk about it, the students ain't supposed to talk about it the moms and pops don't talk about it. Nobody talks about it. If you do anything you do it behind everybody's back. Up here it is open it's a thing, it's part of life, and I think that is beautiful... Its much freer here. When you are in a group and you and a girl want to ball and there are some guys with you and you want to get rid of them, you don't try to explain to them. Like if you were at school or something, you know, like "Would you do us a favor - go out and get us some ice cream or something?" But here you just say, "Now look, I'm going in that room and that room is the 'ball room', you know, I'm going to do 'my thing', excuse me for a while". The way it is back home, everybody knows that girls

> are getting screwed and that guys are having a good time. I mean, everybody knows that ... But the first time somebody comes along and says "Hey, Mary got screwed last night", everybody starts on the big thing that Mary is a whore. Now here, like Mary got screwed last night and she went and did it, well, gee whiz, good enough- wow, I mean what's it to me? I mean, wow, that's the way it is here.

As mentioned, the entire paragraph can be summarized and generalized in a single sentence. But this account is vivid and entertaining and it delivers the message very effectively. Like, we know what this guy is talkin' about.

However, Yablonsky does not provide just realistic details. There is a constant shift between concrete and general, description and analysis (another independent variable). After a description or a dialogue, Yablonsky carefully explains "what it means". He emphasizes themes and issues, as in the following example. After a verbatim account of Gridley Wright, Yablonsky's guide to hippie society, (pages 46-55) Yablonsky concludes among other things that (the conclusions might seem archaic. One has to bear in mind that The Hippie Trip was published in 1968):

1. The hippie movement is a spontaneous evolution. It is not a "heavy" worked out plan.

2. Drugs are a key to the God in man. Drugs are sacraments for a greater knowledge of the universe, a vehicle to a cosmic consciousness.

3. There are spontaneous leaders in the movement. They are not "pushy" leaders who are self-appointed. They are selected by hippie constituents because they are 'spiritual centers'.

Some of the explanations are not free from moral judgment. After describing the scene in Big Sur, Yablonsky notes:

> ... Part of the paradox was that they were using remnants of the Establishment, which they claim to hate, to start their new civilization. This was, in certain respects, a "cop- out", predatory and exploitative. The Campbell soup, polished brown rice, flashlights, candles, and most of their clothes were all from the industrial society that they rejected. Their use of Carnation powdered milk symbolically reflected for me their exploitative and somewhat dishonest use of American middle-class ingenuity (page 89).

One can accept or reject Yablonsky's analysis. The main point, however, is that these conclusions arrive after a detailed description of the scene. This enables the reader to arrive at his own conclusions, based on the raw material (observations).

In describing an encounter with a "Village High Priest" (page 115) Yablonsky reports:

> From that point on Cal's "rap" turned into the psychotic word-salad rumblings I had heard from patients at many mental hospitals. But in this case, Cal was free, and was the self-appointed leader of a tribe of young hippies.

Now here is a conclusion and a moral judgment, without the raw material, without the description. The reader has to take Yablonsky's word and to rely solely on his judgment. This weakens the conclusion considerably - it opens the floor for arguments about validity.

The last independent variable is the inclusion of individuals, not just collectives or types of people. Yablonsky introduces us to a variety of individuals populating the hippie movement, among them Gridley Wright, his guide; members of various communes; and individuals occupying social roles unique to the movement, such as the High Priest or the Friendly Drug Pusher.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Biographies: As noted, the reader is introduced to a variety of individuals and their biographies which are shaped by the movement.

Social Structure and history: As noted, there is a consistent effort to place the observations in context, and to evaluate and analyze the material; in other words to provide the "Larger Picture". In chapter fifteen, titled "Significant Dimensions of the Movement", Yablonsky, acting as a 'sociologist', grounds the movement in a sociological and historical framework. Here the reader traces the movement's origins, and is informed of dimensions such as stratification, leadership, socialization of children and work patterns. The data were obtained from Yablonsky's own observations and interviews, as well as hundreds of questionnaires he distributed.

The main aspect of this book that could be improved is the quality of Yablonsky's observations. This is probably due to the fact that Yablonsky does not possess Wolfe's or Grossman's sharp eye for subtle detail or contrast. In addition, he sometimes goes on and on about what he did, like, 'we woke up in the morning and we went for coffee, and we climbed up the mountain and we ate soup and we said goodbye'. Like, so what? In "The Yellow Wind" we could sense that there is something behind, or beneath the description or the observation; Here, (sometimes, definitely not always) the details cover nothing. The concrete is the concrete is the concrete, and there is nothing else. Like, there is no concealed structure. Dig it?

SUMMARY

The following table serves as a summary of chapter 6, in which I analyzed ten books in order to illustrate my thesis.

Although the use of YES and NO is, to an extent, a simplistic reduction of the material and does not do full justice to the complexity of written work, with a sweep of the eye the table shows that books derived from various disciplines (Sociology, Journalism and Anthropology) can be conveniently arranged according to the presence of my suggested variables.

As already mentioned, I do not want to imply causality. However, it seems that the appropriate use of the "Independent" variables can result in the fulfillment of the Sociological Promise.

SUMMARY TABLE OF CHAPTER SIX

Authors	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES				DEPENDENT VARIABLES			
	Participant Observation	shift between concrete and abstract	inclusion of individuals	use of literary devices	Use of "Sociological Imagination" Biography	Social structure	history	Readership
Skocpol•	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	LIMITED
Terkel	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	LIMITED
Liebow	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	BROAD
Anderson	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES*	BROAD
Whyte	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES.	NO	BROAD
Wolfe	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	BROAD
Grossman	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES+	BROAD
Halberstam	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	BROAD
Mills	No	YES	No	No	YES	YES	YES	BROAD
Erikson	No	YES	YES	No	YES	YES	YES	BROAD
Yablonsky	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	BROAD

• Although Skocpol appears only in the introductory chapter, her book warrants analysis here.

* The historical perspective was not included in the original manuscript.

+ As indicated in the analysis of the book the intended readership is familiar with the historical context in which the work takes place.

CONCLUSIONS AND SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The present work was initiated and developed out of growing discontent, on my part, regarding what I find in my sociological studies. The reason for the discontent is twofold, involving: a) the sociological agenda and b) sociological writing.

"Just because the social is such a crucial dimension of man's existence, sociology comes time and again on the fundamental question of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a man in a particular situation", writes Peter Berger (1963:167) "...[the sociologist] will naturally be interested in the events that engage men's ultimate beliefs, their moments of tragedy and grandeur and ecstasy. But he will also be fascinated by the commonplace, the everyday"(1963:18).

But instead of real people with questions and problems, joys and sorrows and regrets, in a word: biographies, I find cardboard figures, which have to be fitted into theories and constructs, and obey the "laws" sociologists unveiled. Furthermore, I find remoteness from everyday life without what I perceive as any substantial scientific understanding.

"We would say ... that the sociologist (that is, the one we would really like to invite to our game)" writes Berger in Invitation to Sociology (1963:18), "is a person intensively, endlessly, shamelessly, interested in the doings of men... their institutions, their history, their passion (emphasis mine).

For a profession whose subject matter is men's passion, for someone who is supposed to be bold and shameless and daring (Berger's observations), and

always present in the text (Mills' recommendation to the young sociologist in "The Sociological Imagination"), sociological writing appears to me to be passionless, impersonal and dry (most of the time), pretentious and pompous (some of the time). Too often I feel like someone is trying to vacuum the soul out of the text. Too often I could sense no one behind the words. "A prose manufactured by machine" (Mills' phrase) is an adequate metaphor.

My discontent intensified when I was introduced to the work of Theda Skocpol. I find it ironic that a scholar who deliberately excludes people from her analysis and writing, whose book is aimed at limited academic circles (contrary to Mills' advice in "The Sociological Imagination" to write for the general public) and who writes in a highly impersonal way - is granted the C. Wright Mills Award.

The present work attempts to address these two issues: the sociological agenda (what should sociologists concern themselves with, or the 'proper' subject matter of sociology) and the different ways sociological understanding can be communicated.

Let me discuss the framework's strengths and limitations, with an emphasis on where and when it is most usefully applied. I will endeavor to use points made by mainstream sociologists that emphasize the legitimacy of my suggested framework.

It is obvious that the suggested framework works better [illegible] individuals in everyday situations (by everyday I do not mean banal). It be applied successfully to the observation and description of a family, prison cell or a work place. Furthermore, the framework is especially use[illegible]

when a society undergoes a process of fragmentation and change, when new milieus are created and new manners and morals are introduced.

Peter Berger likens society and social life to a stage, a theater, a circus and a carnival. He also likens it to a puppet theater: "We see the puppets dancing on their miniature stage, moving up and down as the strings pull them around, following the prescribed course of their various little parts" (1963:176). T he four literary techniques suggested in the framework are excellent devices for recording and presenting this "miniature stage". Furthermore, there are gadgets and props on the stage which assist the social scientist in his efforts to assemble and provide a "more complete picture of the reality under consideration" (Mills,1959). As Barton and Lazarsfeld (1955) argue, qualitative observations can serve as indicators of more abstract phenomena. The assumption underlying this argument is that even though abstract phenomena cannot be observed directly, they leave "traces" which can be followed. The concrete details, especially dialogue and symbolic details that exist in the scene, function as traces, or indicators. They enable the observer to know about the existence of a phenomenon under the surface and allow him to learn more about the nature of the this phenomenon. Berger notes that: "social reality ... has many layers of meaning" (1963:23). I believe that the concrete details help the observer penetrate some of the layers. Furthermore, one of the roles Berger assigns to the sociologist is that of the debunker, the one to indicate that not all is what it seems to be, the one to penetrate the facade. Concrete details and accurate description function as facade penetrators, as debunkers, as was demonstrated (by way of juxtaposition) in Wolfe's writing about the Bernstein's party.

As Becker (1970) notes: "(sociologists) want data formulated in the abstract categories of their own theories rather them in the categories that seemed most relevant to the people they studied ... (they) focus more on the "structural" variables and synchronic functional analyses than on those factors that manifested themselves in the life and experience of the person". A similar point is made by Diesing (1971:139) when he describes the holist standpoint:

> Variables, indices, and operational definitions are in current practice selected to meet such requirements of scientific method as measurability, controllability, verifiability, and above all, general applicability, rather than for their faithfulness the particular subject being described. Consequently they are likely to be highly abstract and general, applicable in some way to many human systems but not expressing the unique qualities of any particular system (emphasis mine) ... the holist believes [Diesing continues] in the primacy of subject matter; he believes that whatever else a method may be, it should at least be adequate to the particular thing described and should not distort it.

In another place Diesing notes: "To the holist, generalizations and general laws do not explain; only specific circumstances do" (1971:160). The literary devices assist the observer in capturing and explaining specific circumstances in which social interaction occur. The devices are useful in expressing the unique qualities of and any particular system under study (as was demonstrated by Liebow and Yablonsky). They help to establish (or restore) the primacy of the subject matter.

Erikson (1976) claims that "traditional methods of sociology do not really equip one to study discrete moments in the flow of human experience". Becker notes that "Sociologists like to speak of 'ongoing processes' and the like, but their methods usually prevent them from seeing the processes they

talk about so glibly". Denzin (1978:45) suggests sociologists make more use of the narrative approach in an "attempt to present a moving depiction of the lives and actions of those (they) have studied". I believe that the participant observer using the literary devices suggested in this framework is able to capture discrete moments in the flow of human life, present a moving depiction of people's lives and actions, and give new meaning to the overworked notion of process, as was demonstrated in the course of this work when books such as The Yellow Wind and The Reckoning were reviewed.

I shall now review the framework's limitations, in other words- where it is less useful or less applicable.

"Whether the point of interest is a great power state or a minor literary mood, a family, a prison, a creed", Mills (1959:7) specifies some of the potential subjects of sociological inquiry. It seems that my framework is more suitable for studying the family and the prison than the great power state. Detailed description is more revealing and informative in the study of everyday life than in the analysis of the relationships between super powers. Furthermore, the framework, emphasising participant observation, is implicitly oriented toward the present. As Diesing notes, (1971:151) there are areas in which personal observation is not easily come by. One of those areas is history.

I am not suggesting (nor did Mills) that comparative history is useless, or that the Sociological Promise is restricted to the description and analysis of everyday life. Historical analysis is a legitimate, if not important part of sociology. My claim is simply that when writing of history, sociologists should include individuals and write the account as vividly as possible. History does not necessarily equal boredom, and monographs that remain true to historical facts and events can make fascinating reading, as demonstrated by the writing of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Barbara Tuchman. Abraham Kaplan (1963:367) contends that historical explanation is extremely close to a work of art: "the great historian does not merely explain events", he writes "but also allows us to see them".

There are problems with the method of participant observation, recommended in the present study. As Diesing (1971:151) notes:

> the main problem is observer bias. All the theories and hypotheses the observer takes into the field affect his perception and interpretation; personality and cultural differences are further sources of bias; and his position and mode of involvement provide a bias of perspective.

However, Diesing continues to argue that:

> this does not mean that observations are to be discarded as invalid; they must simply be interpreted.

Question: Don't we run the risk of becoming too popular, by fusing "important" and "interesting"? In other words, are we sacrificing social structure and analysis on the alter of individuals and concrete details? Am I suggesting that sociology be written and read like the Edmonton Sun? (an easy to read tabloid).

Answer: Definitely not. Journalism and social science share a tradition and a set of interests. Both observe human conduct, describe it, and address the question: "What is going on around here?" (Weaver and Mccoombs, 1980:491). However, as Roberts notes "an apparent bias exists in the direction of influence, with journalists displaying more openness to learning from social science practice than vice versa". In any case, it is important to emphasise that the journalistic and scientific enterprises are not identical; journalism attends to the specifics of particular events while science is ultimately interested in the universal case. As Lofland (1974:103) notes, "Lauded qualitative field reports ... get that way by framing a social structure or process, and not merely by depicting in journalistic fashion some social life studied"; moreover, failing to provide

such conceptual framing often results in the dreaded "then they do this, then they do that" style (1974:104). In the course of this thesis it is emphasized time and again that both description and analysis are essential to a proper sociological work.

As the title of this chapter indicates, there is some "unfinished business" in this work. By "unfinished business" I mean issues that can and will be debated further in great detail and length, for it is much too presumptuous to assume that this work shall exhaust them.

The first issue is the role of sociology. The present framework is heavily based on the writing of C. Wright Mills, who claims that sociologists have an obligation to the "general public", and that they should write accordingly. Mills is important, Mills is classical, but so, for some, is Parsons. The first question I was asked after presenting my thesis to an audience of sociologists was: "Would you present the same arguments to an audience of physicists?" (assuming that physicists are the most 'scientific' and least understood population). Some sociologists (most of them?) still strive for a disinfected and sterilized system of knowledge and, furthermore, reject the assumption that sociologists have an obligation to communicate with the general public.

Even if one accepts Mills' position and agrees that sociologists should communicate with the general public, several open questions remain. The most important question for me is: is it conceivable, in our time, to expect one person, (whether a sociologist or not), to possess the "sociological imagination" as perceived by Mills when he writes:

> (the sociological) imagination is the capacity to shift (from) the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; form considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self - and to see the relations between the two (1959:7).

Considering the enormous complexity of modern life (not to mention the structure of academia) isn't Mills asking for too much? Isn't he being a bit unrealistic, not to say naive? Should sociologist's training programs include in depth studies of history and economics? How long will it then take to train a sociologist?

Another open issue in this work is the tension between description and generalization. Two books that illustrate this tension are Tally's Corner and The Reckoning. Tally's Corner is constructed around roles and relationships. It tends to fragment the characters and prevent the development of a coherent story line. On the other hand it is valuable on scientific grounds, on grounds of 'comparability'. The Reckoning, which is constructed around individuals, has a 'plot', and is more readable. It is, however, less 'comparable' than "Tally's".

From Kai Erikson's Everything In Its Path, I quote the following:

> "You know what it's like"? said one survivor, "It's like you were watching the best movie ever made and it stops for a commercial or something like that." And the commercial just goes on and on and on....
>
> .... For more than two years", writes Erikson "Buffalo Creek lay in a kind of suspension, unable to forget the dark torment of the past and unable to plan a brighter future".

Here we have the survivor's description and the scientist's explanation, the concrete versus the generalization. Which of the two is more powerful? Which gives the reader a real sense of what goes on in the survivor's life? Which paragraph better captures the "color of life"?

"Much of what follows is theoretical, of course, since that is part of what a sociologist can contribute to human understanding", Erikson warns his readers in the introduction to Everything in its Path. How large a part? Fifty percent? Ninety five percent?

Besides the agenda of sociology, the other important issue raised by this thesis is sociological writing; to be precise, the voice or the pose of the writer. As demonstrated in "The Prophet and the Jester", one does not have to write in a "pretentiously impersonal" manner in order to convey significant social insight. Further research needs to be done to examine the feasibility of creating "ideal types" or "archetypes": "The Prophet", "The Jester", and, I could add: "The Scientist". Each of these three "ideal types" has its goals and interests, strengths and limitations. Each, however, provides meaningful information about social life. Related questions which may spur further research are:

- Can one combine the specialized skills of Marx and Balzac? Where is the line between using literary skills and literary talent?

- Should the author be present in the account only in "hard dramas" (like Grossman, Erikson and Yablonsky) and to what extent should he be present? Where will the line be drawn

between participation and being the center of attention, (a line crossed, and in fact erased by New Journalists such as Hunter Thompson and Norman Mailer)?

The suggested framework, being somewhat basic and flexible cannot and does not aim at providing conclusive and exhaustive answers. I believe, however, that it does offer some spicy food for thought.

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