

# Radical Communication Types in William H. Gass's *The Tunnel*

**Sergii Sushko**

Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, Ukraine  
erehwonado@gmail.com

## Abstract

*Radical communication largely characterizes W. H. Gass's The Tunnel. The novel incorporates many forms of radical speech and thought, it unfolds a number of radically charged issues of public and private life. It features a multitude of innovative experimental techniques and, in many instances, it demonstrates predominance of language and form over the content. In this paper, we have ascertained that the authenticity and multitude of radical communication forms in the said novel can essentially be grasped in terms of disjointing the Ich-Erzähler's narrative voice and the authorial one. It has been ascertained that the sincerity in narrative largely governs its radical content while the book's radical composition and radical language and style form the second set of the radical communication styles in the novel, reflecting Gass's bent on experimental fiction.*

*In the paper, the following radical communication style varieties have been singled out: "breaking the narrative monotony," "hate intensifying," "filial unwillingness to forgive," "revulsion invoking," "provoking indecipherability/unreadability," "accentuated total criticism," or "downgrading metanarratives," "ambivalent portrayal of the war and Holocaust," "pictorial communication style," "communication style of radically structured composition," "communication style of verbal adornment," "embellishment," "conceit" (as a figure of speech).*

*Keywords: narrative, narrative voice, scholar, communicator, radical fiction, Ich-Erzähler, protagonist, sincerity*

## Streszczenie

Rodzaje radykalnej komunikacji w *The Tunnel* Williama H. Grassa

*Radykalna komunikacja szeroko charakteryzuje The Tunnel W. H. Gassa. W powieści tej odnajdujemy wiele rodzajów radykalnych słów i myśli oraz odniesień do różnorodnych tematów nacechowanych radykalizmem, zarówno w obszarze życia publicznego, jak i prywatnego. Powieść ta łączy zróżnicowane i innowacyjne techniki eksperymentalne, a także, w wielu przypadkach, ukazuje przewagę języka i formy nad treścią. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest wskazanie, że autentyczność i mnogość form radykalnej komunikacji ukazanych w analizowanej powieści może być wyrażona poprzez rozdzielenie roli narratora występującego w pierwszej*

osobie (*Ich-Erzähler*) i autora. Wskazujemy, że autentyczność narracji kontroluje radykalną zawartość, zaś radykalna kompozycja, język i styl powieści leżą u podstaw kolejnego zbioru stylów radykalnej komunikacji, co odzwierciedla wyrażone tu zamilowanie Grassa do fikcji eksperymentalnej.

Niniejszy artykuł wyróżnia następujące rodzaje stylów radykalnej komunikacji: „przerwanie monotonii narracji”, „intensyfikację nienawiści”, „synowską niechęć do wybaczenia”, „przywoływanie odrazy”, „wywoływanie niezrozumienia/nieczytelności”, „zaakcentowanie całkowitego krytycyzmu”, „degradację metanarracji”, „ambiwalentne ukazywanie wojny i Holocaustu”, „obrazowy styl komunikacji”, „styl komunikacji typowy dla radykalnie strukturyzowanej kompozycji”, „komunikacyjny styl ozdobników słownych”, „upiększanie” oraz „próżność” (postrzegana tu jako figura retoryczna).

Słowa kluczowe: narracja, głos narracyjny, komunikator, radykalna proza, *Ich-Erzähler*, bohater, autentyczność

## 1. Introduction

Interdisciplinary research can justly be merited with having thoroughly examined the phenomenon of communication in its many ramifications – social, cognitive, linguistic, psychological and psychic, semiotic and intercultural. Communication is conveyance of a series of utterances on the part of the communicator. In this most general sense, fictional literature as a kind of written speech is communication on the same footing as any other form of spoken speech. Moreover, a work of fiction contains innumerable reproductions of the real life communication and the speech acts involved.

A guiding principle of any research is to learn some new things about an object studied. In our exploration of the radical communication styles in W.H. Gass's *The Tunnel* we intend to show that the radical communication and radical styles govern most of the content, form and structure of this novel. To do this we are faced with a twofold task: first, to ascertain what constitutes the radical configuration of the novel and, second, to determine what common features the oral speech and written one have in the way of the communication styles elicited.

These two tasks belong to the methodological anchors of our research, therefore we shall first outline them in a general form here. We shall start with ascertaining the points of similarity between oral / verbal speech and the written one. Relevant research examined in much detail the distinctions of both varieties showing essential differences between them. A chief dichotomy is perhaps formed by the contrast between an immediate response of the communicator in the real life speech situation, being a two-way communication, and a one-way communication which the written speech represents.

Yet, there is no impenetrable watershed between spoken speech and written one so much so

that salient features of one type can be identified within the other. We found support for this observation in an insightful finding made by an American scholar Douglas Biber.<sup>1</sup> We shall further say that this overarching similarity between the two varieties of speech happens due to the unifying communicative function of the language. Both types convey a certain message, bear particular stylistic markers, reveal a communicator's stand, attitude or purpose. Like in a real life speech act, the written speech features a figure of a communicator who is a producer, an enunciator of an utterance, a narrator. Any form of the written speech in a work of fiction conforms to the "addresser-addressee" communication model. A monologue, an inner speech variety, a descriptive fragment in a literary work demonstrate a certain communication style, each of the said forms invariably includes a recipient of the utterance – a reader, or a figure within the text who may function as an interlocutor, an observer, a commentator, an entrusted or unreliable narrator.

Fulfilling its communicative function, a literary work is capable of retaining and rendering many, though not all, properties of the verbal utterance, like straightforward or convoluted language to expose or hide the truth, individual vocabulary and style, social and educational distinctions, speaker's attitude and tone, his or her intention or motivation. When we find in a literary work a great many types and forms of utterances, they testify to a diversified stratum of communication styles. The fictional text communicators reproduce communication styles in all their diversity to be found in the real life speech situations and environments.

It is possible to say, that a work of fiction equally veritably represents both types of speech, with most of their salient features, communication styles included. These types are in the state of constant interaction, bringing about an illusion and effect of an inseparable and unstoppable flow of speech. Examples of this overflow of the written speech / language into spoken speech register and vice versa in high literature are numerous. A supportive example of this property of high literature is very illustrative in W.S. Maugham's admirable prose where we are often caught unawares of the transition from one type of speech to another.

The third theoretical anchor of our examination of radical communication styles in W.H.

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<sup>1</sup> Biber analyzed the distribution of 67 different syntactic and lexical features in several hundred text samples representing 23 different genres. Applying factor analysis to this very large data base, he found "no single, absolute difference between speech and writing in English; rather there are a number of 'dimensions' of variation, and particular types of speech and writing are more or less similar with respect to each dimension." In his latest work he has identified six such dimensions, characterizable in such terms as "involved vs information production," "narrative vs non-narrative concerns," "explicit vs situation-dependent reference," "overt expression of persuasion," "abstract vs non-abstract information," and "on-line information elaboration." (Chafe, Tannen 1987: 383–407).

Gass's *The Tunnel* is reliance on the dialectic, multifunctional unity of style and content in a literary work. In our long-running research of *The Tunnel*'s poetics, we have come to an understanding that it would be wrong to put either style or content to the forefront of the book's merits and accomplishments. The wealth of the language form and a heavy infusion of the visual and pictorial segment in the given book cannot and should not disguise the harsh, radical, marginal content of many of its narratives and discourses.

A belief that the style cannot be reduced only to the manner of representing and expressing things is known in the literary theory as monism, or monist view. At odds to the latter is the dualist approach "which restricts style to those choices which are choices of MANNER rather than MATTER, of EXPRESSION rather than CONTENT". (Short, Leach [1981] 2007). Either standpoint has a number of strong arguments in its favour. This dichotomy, however, is enlarged by other approaches to the problem of style in a literary text:

[a]n alternative to both monism and dualism which is in some ways more enlightening than either is the approach which may fittingly be called stylistic PLURALISM. According to the pluralist, language performs a number of different functions, and any piece of language is likely to be the result of choices made on different functional levels. Hence the pluralist is not content with the dualist's division between 'expression' and 'content': he wants to distinguish various strands of meaning according to the various functions.

(Short, Leach [1981] 2007)

In terms of a broad characterization of W.H. Gass's style in *The Tunnel*, it can be said that it is predominantly *opaque*:

[s]tyle is relatively *transparent* or *opaque*: transparency implies paraphrasability; opacity implies that a text cannot be adequately paraphrased, and that interpretation of the text depends greatly on the creative imagination of the reader.

(Short, Leach [1981] 2007)

These observations on the aspects of affinity of the written and spoken speech and dialectic interrelation of the style and content are peculiarly relevant for the treatment of radical communication styles in *The Tunnel*, W.H. Gass's *magnum opus* of 652 pages (Dalkey Archive Press edition). Published in 1995, the novel was crafted over the course of 26 years, during which period the author took the fancy of naming it the *work-in-progress*. Before completing the book, some fragments from it were published in various periodicals.

Among many unfathomable things in the book, the author's choice of entrusting the *Ich-*

*Erzähler* with running the radical narrative of revision of undeniable truths of life like sympathy, gratitude, family values, historical certainty, undisputed contributions of the great masters of the past is one of the most striking. This choice had brought about a principal confusion in the process of reading the novel, the said confusion resulting in identifying the *Ich-Erzähler's* narrative voice with the authorial one, that is, assuming the author to be sharing the protagonist's hate-governed discourses. This ambiguity divided the readers into admirers and haters of the novel. On the other hand, it proved effective in laying bare the *Ich-Erzähler's* set of mind and his stance to everything around him.

The numerous instances of radical communication style in the book can be seen in the University professors' narratives, in the downgrading of metanarratives, in transgressing and marginalization of the sensitive issues of private life, in the protagonist's unpardonable discourse of hate, misogyny, misanthropy and bigotry.

On a par with the multitude of radical content issues in the novel there is a vast scope of the language means of embodiment of the radical style in it. In the multitude of the radical communication instances in *The Tunnel* we have singled out the following communication styles naming each by a leading content and context it is used in: "breaking the narrative monotony", "hate intensifying", "filial unwillingness to forgive", "revulsion invoking", "provoking indecipherability/unreadability", "accentuated total criticism", or "downgrading metanarratives", "ambivalent portrayal of the war and Holocaust", pictorial communication style, communication style of radically structured composition, communication style of verbal adornment, embellishment, conceit (as a figure of speech). In this article, a detailed analysis is given to the communication styles of "hate intensifying" (radical narrative of hate), radical narrative of sincerity, radical narrative of the war and Holocaust.

## 2. Communication styles: an overview

A classical definition of the communicator style belongs to Robert Norton whose book *Communicator style: Theory, application, and measures* (Norton 1983) made a breakthrough in communication studies. Communicator style is the "way one verbally and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning is to be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood in the communicative process." (Sanders 1985). Communication types and styles can, on the one hand, be regarded as boundless in their number as each person possesses a unique style of his or her own. On the other hand, all the totality of communication styles is grouped in social psychology into different taxonomies: *four types* – passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive; *five*

*types* – assertive, aggressive, passive aggressive, manipulative and submissive, or *seven types* when the direct and indirect communication styles are added. R. Norton in his above-mentioned book specifies ten communication styles (Sanders 1985).

### **2.1. Communicator styles theories of nowadays. Semantics of the lexeme “radical”**

Over the last decades, a range of theories and projects have been developed to explore prerequisites of successful communication, explain miscommunication, provide some solutions for communicating across different speech styles. One of them is a theory of *six perceptual languages* which are paralleled to corresponding communication styles – Thoughts Language, Opinions Language, Feelings Language, Reactive language, Action Language, Reflections Language. This theory, developed by Taibi Kahler and Nate Regier, enters a cluster of communication style theories as it proceeds from a postulate that the speech style, that is perceptive language, can give different colouring to the content of communication. Ignorant of the differences among these ‘languages’, a communicator may form a false opinion, or impression, of the way her message is taken in by the person she is talking to. Accordingly, a desired effect of the communication can hardly be achieved. (Voza 2017).

To the newly constructed communication styles belongs Kim Malone Scot’s *Radical Candor style* which is aimed at ensuring the best possible communicative effect in the professional field. The researcher produced her innovative communication style based on her experience of coaching companies in the matters of managing the personnel. In her classification, dubbed as “Axis of Candor”, she prioritizes Radical Candor style as radically opposed to ineffective or ruinous Manipulative Insincerity, Ruinous Empathy, Obnoxious Aggression styles. (Scott 2017).

As can be seen, only the last vector of communication studies mentions a radical characteristic as its defining feature. As can be observed, there is a considerably lesser amount of research focused on the radical communication styles proper. One explanation is that research of the specifically radical communication types and styles is comparatively new, it has not yet embraced a diversified scope of radically charged and radically constructed forms and varieties of spoken and written communication.

In treating the radical communication types and styles in spoken speech acts and in fiction one cannot overlook the dual semantics of the word “radical”. The primary, etymological meaning of this word has to do with getting to the roots of the problem and in this way finding a way to its solution. The second meaning of “radical” is even more often circulated in the English

discourse than the primary one. It conveys aggressiveness, commitment to solving social problems by means of force, uprising, strike, overthrow of governments and the like. This meaning of “radical” also applies to a person’s set of mind, his modes of behaviour, speech, treatment of the people around. “Radical” in this sense applies to manifestations of hate, anger, hostility, resentment, bigotry, ruthlessness, rejection of moral issues, exceptional criticism.

In fiction, we come across the use of “radical” as a noun and in an attributive function. There are novels in which a radical is delineated as a certain psychological type (George Eliot, *The Radical*) as well as there are countless books describing various instantiations of “radical” in a modifying function like radical thinking, radical course of action, radical personality, politician, opponent, believer, denier, climate change, Brexiteer.

A very illustrative explanation of the semantics of “radical” is offered by Nigel Krauth, an Australian literary scholar:

[f]or me, the Radical occurs when a writer sets out to defy convention and write in such a way that the accepted processes of writing and reading are called into question. The radical writer has the intention of reaching an audience by means that are different from the norm, that involve more of the physical senses in the reading (a more bodily involvement in the reading), or an intellectual understanding that the work is to be read differently in order to gain a fuller experience at a psychological or emotional level. The radical intention of the writer tends to announce itself quickly: the words are not set out on the page in the conventional fashion; typography is upset by concrete effects; visual images are entwined among or break into the text.

(Krauth 2016)

In respect of Gass’s *The Tunnel*, it can be said that the novel manifests the notion of “radical” in full compliance with the above-given quotation. The radical in the given novel is a break-off from the conventional, established, normative, publicly accepted. Designating a rebellious attitude, thought or action, conveying a flagrant discredit of the set order of things and grand narratives, the word “radical” accurately fits as a modifier of *The Tunnel*’s content, form and techniques.

## 2.2. Communication in fiction

The literary work fulfils its communicative function by way of its narrators and narrative voices addressing their interlocutors and potential recipients in the text proper and beyond it. These interlocutors and recipients are identified in the figures of other literary characters involved in a

dialogic speech act, in imaginary addressees to whom a character's talk or inner speech in one of its forms is directed to, in a figure of an imagined reader or critic to whom the author appeals to.

An enduring controversy in literary theory is one concerning the nature of communication in literature. As readers, we have a strong intuition that a text 'communicates' some message or intent to us. This intuition permeates much of critical literary scholarship; for example, textual analyses commonly entail inferences about the author's intended message or implicit world view.

(Dixon, Bortolussi 1996)

Not entirely discarding the application, for a literary work, of the theoretical framework according to which communication in conversational discourse gets unravelled, Dixon and Bortolucci point out to the limitations of the "sender-message-coding-reader's decoding" framework. They specify four fundamental drawbacks of this prevalent framework:

[f]irst, because the author and the reader are removed in space and time, they do not share a common perceptual and pragmatic context. Second, it is often unreasonable to ascribe a single, coherent intention to the author of a literary work. Third, the view that readers decode an intended message from a text trivializes the variability of literary reception. Moreover, some aspects of literary works are inherently ambiguous, and although the author may have had a particular intention in mind, that intention is essentially unknowable and cannot be recovered reliably by readers.

(Dixon, Bortolussi 1996)

To overcome these drawbacks, the scholars suggest viewing a reading process as a process in which "readers are 'communicating' with the implied speaker of the words of the text. In other words, communication is with the narrator, not the author." This way of the reader-narrator interaction could be instrumental in identifying the authorial voice: "Processing the narrator's voice as if it were communication is likely to be a natural, automatic process, and consequently it probably forms the basis of more sophisticated inferences about the implied authorial intentions." (Dixon, Bortolussi 1996). It is quite reasonable, on the part of the quoted researchers, to specify assumed reader-narrator communication as the first-order one, while qualifying the reader-and-implied author assumed communication as a higher-order one.

The said authors' next contribution on the problem of viewing the reading of fiction as a process of communication is more radical, and somewhat ambiguous. In their article "Text Is Not Communication: A Challenge to a Common Assumption, Discourse Processes" (Dixon, Bortolussi 2001) the authors argue that searching for the author's intended message is

unproductive and fruitless. In the place of the text-as-communication framework, they put forward a conceptualization of text “as an artifact, independent of the process that generated it in the first place. From this perspective, the text is merely a stimulus, and the goal of research on text processing is to understand how this stimulus is processed.”

To support their new approach, the scholars specify a number of interpretative difficulties arising from processing the text as communication. They refer, in part, to the texts “that seem to be deliberately constructed to thwart communicative processing”. They exemplify such texts with John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* and *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon specifying a number of their difficulties.

In some difficult literary texts, the reader may never achieve an understanding of the author’s intended meaning with any certainty, and readers must adopt a different style of processing than they would if the writer were present and could be asked to clarify or restate segments of the text that are not clear.

(Dixon, Bortolussi 2001)

Yet, for all their criticism of the text-as-communication paradigm, they are cautious not to abandon it for good, adding in Conclusions:

In sum, we are not disputing that writers have intentions and that these are reflected in the text; clearly they do. We also are not arguing that readers are uninterested in the intentions of the (implied) author. Our point is simply that what controls the reader’s inferences in this regard is generally the text, not the author’s intention.

(Dixon, Bortolussi 2001)

But the idea of the text as a predominant source of the reader’s inferences and a chief mediator between the author and the reader seems never to have been challenged. The crux of the problem is that the reader of modernist and postmodernist texts is often left perplexed by their insurmountable complexity, and it is in this case that he is justified with inward questioning on the purport, intent and message of the book. It is largely with this purpose that the writer-reader meetings are held and numerous interviews are given by the authors.

Much in keeping with Dixon and Bortolussi’s concept of interactive reading is a newer theory of mediating criticism propounded by Roger D. Sell, a prolific modern literary scholar (of Abo Akademi University, Finland). His profound contribution into literary studies is related with his discarding the notion and concept of reading as a unilateral process on the part of the reader. The researcher views the process of literary writing and reading in terms of the theory of

communication, communicative pragmatics (Sell 2000). A work of fiction can be assumed to be a series of communicative situations. Outlining the main features of the theory proposed, Sell writes:

[a] main assumption here will be that communicative situations are triangular. Two parties will always be in communication about some third entity. The basic situation can still be thought of in this way even when the two parties are the two halves of one and the same self-communing individual, as when we talk to ourselves or write a diary, and even when the third entity also includes one or both of the communicating parties, who in that case speak of “me” or “you” or “us”. Equally well, the third entity can be somebody or something quite unconnected with the communicants themselves (...)

(Sell 2000)

We can observe here that Dixon-and-Bortolussi's and Roger D. Sell's models of (pseudo)interactive reading of fiction accurately reflect a productive and fruitful way of reading difficult books, which the postmodernist fiction affords in abundance. It is a recognized fact about reading postmodernist genre masterpieces that we, readers, are often stopped short trying to tackle an impossibly difficult passage. Alarming, in the postmodernist prose we are often confronted with impenetrable passages to understand which no assumed communication with the first-person or entrusted narrator would help.

In contrast to the oral speech, the communication styles in fiction display a stronger interdependence of the form of expression and content of utterance, they get diversified by embracing not only the behavioural-psychological features of a person's utterance but also the communicated content.

Thus it can be said that we cannot analyse a textual fragment, involving a character's utterance or a descriptive fragment, exclusively in terms of the tone, style, techniques and strategy, unrelated to what this utterance or fragment is about. In a literary work, the fusion of the content and style is to some degree higher than in the verbal intercourse because the written speech is not accompanied by the paralingual features, it lacks immediacy and prevalence of the tone of the utterance which often characterize spoken speech.

To support our viewpoint that communication styles are veritably represented in fiction, a suitable example of the failed speech tactics could be appropriate. It has to do with a scene from Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* in which Miss Laura Fairlie commits a very painful blunder victimizing as it were herself. By relying on Sir Percival Glyde's noble feelings and generosity she abandoned herself to the role of the compliant communicator, “The breaking of

our engagement must be entirely your wish and your act, Sir Percival – not mine.” (Collins 1859). Thus, for all Laura’s determination to break her engagement, her wrongfully selected speech tactics ensured Sir Percival’s domineering stand and Laura’s subsequent avowal to marry him. This scene of a high emotional pitch represents an imagined conversation, and its representation in the written form outlines, no less forcefully than in the real life conversation, the communicator styles and tactics of the communicators.

### 3. Radical fiction typology in the literary studies

As a genre variety, radical fiction finds its definition in a number of scholarly works. Radical fiction has long been linked with the two major factors – the social protest politics and experimental and marginal literature:

[i]t can be observed that in critical writing generally the word ‘radical’ refers to particular types of politics – left-wing or right-wing but mostly the former – and the kinds of writing that come from those viewpoints. In talking about the arts, the word ‘radical’ is almost always used in conjunction with references to the ‘avant-garde’, which is itself a highly contested term (...)

(Krauth 2016)

In the critical tradition, the radical fiction genre embraced the books which dealt with the working-class condition, growing protest and rebellious mood, revolutionary ideas, strong criticism of the social inequality. There are classical paragons of radical literature of this kind immortalized, for example, in E. Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*, E. Zola’s *Germinal*, J. Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, J. London’s *Iron Heel*.

The classical definition of the radical novel belongs to Walter B. Rideout (1956), an American literary scholar. In his seminal work *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900–1954* it is defined as “one which demonstrates, either explicitly or implicitly, that its author objects to the human suffering imposed by some socioeconomic system and *advocates that the system be fundamentally changed*” (Rideout 1956).

Later, in his *Introduction to the Morningside Edition* (Rideout 1992) the scholar dwells at some length on the limitations of his book’s title as seen by himself and his book’s critics. He shares their concern that the title laid some restriction on the principles of selecting the books for analysis. In part, he is sorry for having to leave out of research some celebrated novels:

[m]ost of all, the objectors deplored my omission of John Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*. That I added a note about this novel on page 335 to explain my reason for the omission indicates that I too deplored it.

(Rideout 1992)

A concise but methodologically interesting account of Rideout's book is given in Looby's monograph *Censorship, Translation and English Language Fiction in People's Poland* (Chapter 2 titled "Progressives") (Looby 2015). The scholar sums up Rideout's classification of the radical novel genre and clarifies the term "radical" in Rideout's title and the term's wider context in the censorship restrictions.

However, the radical fiction taxonomy is not confined to the register outlined above. There are at least two more registers of the said genre. The second variety of radical fiction is marked for experimental, innovative and marginal writing, hundreds of book titles can be readily supplied to represent it. The books instantly associated with the radical content and style and radical communication patterns, are Joyce's *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, Rex Warner's *Wild Goose Chase*, William S. Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*, Thomas Pynchon's *The Gravity's Rainbow*, to name but a few.

This second register of radical fiction works has had a long history. Nigel Krauth (2016), gives a succinct vision of this variety which is characterized by experiment and innovations in the form, techniques and ways of publishing. He names an English poet George Herbert (1593–1633) and Laurence Sterne (1713–1768) among the earliest progenitors of radical fiction. The scholar reminds us of the famous "four lines" with which Sterne opens Chapter CCI of *Tristram Shandy*:

Laurence Sterne's famous 1761 drawing of his plotlines - 'the four lines I moved in through my first, second, third, and fourth volumes\* of *Tristram Shandy* (Sterne 1940: 474) - and his inclusion of them in the pages of the novel, pre-date sophisticated literary experiments of recent times (...)

(Krauth 2016)

The third copious variety of the radical fiction genre is represented by a large number of utopian and dystopian novels in which the future is shown as a classless or dehumanized or totalitarian society. In the publishing industry, this register of radical fiction is represented by the Radical Fiction Series which includes both the great 20<sup>th</sup> century novels of work-and-labour discontent and mass literature books. Some scholars go as far as unite utopian and proletarian novels into one generic cluster of the radical novel:

[u]topian novels by such writers as Edward Bellamy, William Dean Howells, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Sutton E. Griggs and proletarian novels by such writers as Robert Cantwell, John Steinbeck, Richard Wright, Meridel Le Sueur, Claude McKay, and Ralph Ellison can help us conceive of a unity of utopian and Marxist socialisms.

(Birdwell 2018)

#### 4. The radical narrative range in *The Tunnel*

We feel inclined to say that the eminent writer William Howard Gass has coded his own stand to the things described in *The Tunnel* so tightly that it is possible to speak only of the figure of the 'refracted' author in the novel, with little hope of identifying a clear authorial voice.

In the critical literature as well as a host of overviews and collections of quotations devoted to W.H. Gass, there is a large number of remarkably insightful assessments of his prose and his creative method. Likewise, a good amount of the author's own utterances on his literary method is affordable. These sources provide valuable information which can be helpful for seeing sense and purport in some incomprehensible or desperately marginal passages in *The Tunnel*.<sup>2</sup>

The radical turn in Gassean prose, in *The Tunnel* in particular, is rooted in the writer's biographical circumstances. The predominant, even overpowering feeling which the writer had carried over from his childhood into his adult life is that of hate and anger. In the 1977 interview to Thomas LeClair (Art of Fiction, No. 65, Issue 70) William Gass opens the lid over what had made him the person, and the writer, he has grown into after having practically torn the ties with his parents in his adult life.

I think that for a long time I was simply emotionally unable to handle my parents' illnesses (...).

I just fled. It was a cowardly thing to do, but I simply would not have survived. I still hate scenes unless I make them.

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<sup>2</sup> A philosopher by training, Gass "maintains an art-for-art's-sake 'ethic' of infinite aesthetic value, in a structure of the sublime grotesque, as his principle of creativity," to quote Criticism contributor Reed B. Merrill. Merrill added: "His interest lies in the pleasures of the imagination, in model making, and in aesthetic projections composed in the face of an all-pervasive determinism." "Gass, William H. 1924– ." Source: Concise Major 21st Century Writers. Date: 12–01–2021. Moreover, New York Times correspondent Christopher Lehmann-Haupt perhaps best summarized Gass's sensibility by declaring: "For three decades now, he has been saying that the words in a worthwhile work of fiction do not describe a world outside that fiction; instead those words embody the fiction and the fiction embodies the words." Gass merely feels that fictions should constitute their own worlds of words and not necessarily attempt to represent some external reality—a position consistent with postmodernism. Weber noted that the author "is dissatisfied with 'character,' 'plot,' 'realism,' and similar conceptual terms that relate fiction to more than itself, and dislikes explication and paraphrase as analytic methods that superimpose 'meaning' upon fiction." Source: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/gass-william-h-1924>. Date 12–01–2021.

(Gass 1977)

The writer Gass acknowledges here not only his great psychological stress developed from growing up in the atmosphere of his parents' discordant lives, but also his inability to forget and forgive. This continued state of wishing to "get even" with the grievances of his childhood and adolescence served him a good turn, helping him to find vent to his grievance in writing. Strange as it may seem, it was anger and aggression that proved to be instrumental for Gass's penmanship.

What is psychologically best for a writer is what produces his best work. I suspect that in order for me to produce my best work I have to be angry. At least I find that easy. I am angry all the time. (...). Anyway, my work proceeds almost always from a sense of aggression. And usually I am in my best working mood when I am, on the page, very combative, very hostile. That's true even when I write to praise, as is often the case.

(Gass 1977)

The quotations given are very outspoken and self-revealing throwing some light on what moved W. Gass to choose for his book such a radical character with such a large assortment of radical views and speeches.

In regard of W.H. Gass's novel, it must be said that it features a large scope of radical language and radical communication instances. Radical language in the novel is found on the phonosemantic, lexical, syntactical, stylistic, supra-segmental levels. Bearing in mind the maxim of inseparability of the form and content, it is still possible to say that the narrative of certain events in *The Tunnel*, the unfolding of the protagonist's consciousness and recollections play the second fiddle to the novel's registers of language, vocabulary and style. This widely shared view of the novel in question is generally supported by the author himself. However, the true miracle of *The Tunnel* lies in the fact that its wealth of the language and style innovations does not eclipse its acutely alarming content, many serious issues of life and history get foregrounded precisely with the help of Gass's linguistic and stylistic experimentation.

The textual terrain of *The Tunnel* has a mosaic-like structure embracing a host of different topics, themes, narratives, observations, descriptions. While much of these belongs to profound genuine descriptions befitting high prose, equally much of the thematic material, and even more of the form and style, is characterized by the narrator's radical stance. In *The Tunnel*, the radical stance governs such dominant narratives as the protagonist's strong dissatisfaction with himself as a writer of the book about the Nazi Germany, the re-assessment of classical fiction, in

particular the autobiographical genre, the protagonist's childhood and adolescence, the protagonist's family life and that of his parents, the ambiguous reflexiveness on the Holocaust issues, the deconstructive history metanarrative, the University professorship. The radically infused description is also prominent in a host of other themes unfolded in the book— hatred, quarrel, bigotry, the PdP (a fictional Party of Disappointed People).

#### 4.1. The radical narrative of hate in *The Tunnel*

In the interview given to *Paris Review* in 1977 Gass confessed in finding hatred a driving force of his personality and his writing, the confession being often quoted since then:

If someone asks me, “Why do you write?” I can reply by pointing out that it is a very dumb question. Nevertheless, there is an answer. I write because I hate. A lot. Hard. And if someone asks me the inevitable next dumb question, “Why do you write the way you do?” I must answer that I wish to make my hatred acceptable because my hatred is much of me, if not the best part.

(Gass 1977)

In the hate-infused segment of English-written fiction, W.H. Gass is not a single representative. The hatred speech can be exemplified by many well-known works of fiction – be it William Godwin's *Things as They Are, Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, G. Orwell's *1984*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, to name but a few.

While there are some established autobiographical parallels in the novel, its author William H. Gass can by no means be regarded as *alter ego* of his fictional character William Frederick Kohler. We can ascertain at least four varieties of the hate speech manifestation in the novel. The first one is represented by the protagonist-narrator's *lengthy angry expositions of downright criticism* on a particular topic, namely the autobiographical genre, sincerity, diary running, history metanarrative, an inescapable gap between the expected and achieved ends in writing (the writer's dissatisfaction), the Holocaust coverage in the scholarly polished writing, inserted story on bigotry, to name only a few. The second variety includes *the other characters' anger-and-fury-charged expostulations*, the third variety covers the novel's *family and narrative discourse*, and the fourth one is made up of the *authorial voice narrative* which it is still possible to recognize in the *Ich-Erzähler* mode of the narration. Possessing a great amount of suffused anger and grief over the senseless mass murder, this authorial narrative offers a rather extensive revision of not so much the Holocaust tragedy itself as the established and permissible ways of representing it in fiction. It is perhaps here that the most misunderstanding lies when W.H. Gass gets accused in transgressing the unwritten laws of writing.

It is the third variety of the novel's hate speech that forms a nearly palpable embodiment of hate. The degree of the protagonist's dislike, hostility, revulsion, forgetfulness and unforgiveness in respect of his parents and relatives is surprisingly high and intense in the novel. Descriptions like those of Uncle Balt deny a person a non-distorted portrayal and due sympathy.

Anyhow, Uncle Balt has yielded me a metaphor for Being, makeshift maybe, but an image in the form of a tall dark column of damp air, hole going nowhere—yes—wind across the mouth of a bottle. At dawn, dusk, and dinner—about as often as the barnyard cat—that's when I saw him. He really was a man shaped of absence, and must have made love, when he had to, by continued and fervent uncoupling. One saw he had the intangible integrity of a hollow, a well's heavy wet deficiencies.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 121–122)

For all the heavy radical tinge in the unreliable narrator's portrayal of Uncle Balt, it is written in the very best traditions of high prose which makes its objects stand out as if alive while conveying a desired philosophical implication or subtext:

[y]esterday, before the rain arrived, the wind began to rattle furiously through the cornfield. I could hear it in my study like hundreds of snapping flags. Out there, in that world—that life—one stalk, like the one I had imagined standing by my mother's bed, counts for nothing, only in the mass is it fruitful, and the dust, only in clouds containing trillions is it murderous and terrifying; ants, bees, baboons, live in families for similar reasons.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 123)

#### **4.2. The radical narrative of sincerity in *The Tunnel***

The narratives of the Holocaust, Nazism, atrocities of World War II make up a distinct conceptual centre of *The Tunnel*, there being other narrative centres in the book as well. The said narratives are largely unfolded from the point of view of sincerity, a principle and category which W.H. Gass, through his entrusted narrator William Frederick Kohler, gives an all-embracing characterization. It is by claiming the principle of sincerity to be the uppermost tool of exploring truth that the narrator finds it proper to discard all academic writing about the war. In fact, he blames academic writing on the said issue for insincerity, for glossing over the terrible truths about the war.

To achieve his aim of discrediting academic writing, the entrusted, unreliable narrator gives a fictionalized instance of this kind of writing, being, in fact, the final passage of his manuscript. He opens the WWII narrative with the following radical judgement equating guilt and innocence:

[t]hus, neither guilt nor innocence are ontological elements in history; they are merely ideological factors to which a skilful propaganda can seem to lend a causal force, and in that fashion furnish others—in disguise of their greed as it may be, their terror sometimes, pride possibly, remorse even, or, more often, surly resentment—a superficially plausible apologia for tomorrow's acts of robbery or cowardice, revenge, rape, or other criminalities already under way.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 13)

Being an instance of scientific prose by the form, this statement renders guilt and innocence to secondary, not primary, factors in the quest for ultimate truth, be it a historical event, personality or an instance of an individual's life. This passage can be seen as an intentionally coined ambiguity aimed at demonstrating the revisionist trend to remove guilt and innocence, as moral and legal categories, from the research agenda and public conscience.

It is the consciousness of the protagonist and narrator William Frederick Kohler that revolts against the self-worded passage. It pesters him for a sheer untruth, for the lack of sincerity in covering appalling realities of the war, its causes. The moral category of sincerity becomes his *idée fixe* and, most probably, of *The Tunnel*'s author. Half-sincerity on the part of the writers writing about themselves (André Gide) is seen by the narrator and, again, by *The Tunnel*'s authorial voice, as the worst failure of the autobiographical genre. It may be assumed that the quest for sincerity in the two-books-in-one structure of *The Tunnel* – the revised, truer version of his manuscript *Guilt and Innocence in Hitler's Germany* and the book of personal biography – gradually turns out to be an absolution for sharing the mostly inappropriate things of personal character, for relentless fictionalization of the Holocaust killings sparing no detail. *The Tunnel* can essentially be seen as a plea for limitless, unrestricted sincerity, frankness seen as a single dominant merit of fiction:

(...) sincerity makes every day dull Sunday, does lump sums, keeps tabs, lies through its honesty like a Bible-beater's pious threats and Great Good News, instead of letting obfuscation and deceit, both rigamarole and simple beauty, put pleasure in the punch [*inserted picture*] and crooks into the straight; thus Gide could not be Gide and be sincere, nor I contain my skeptical and scoffing self like a firefly in a bottle (*q.v.*)—its intermittent gleam an imprisoned promise behind the glass—and be sincere.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 21)

This strive for downright sincerity lies at the bottom of many ambivalent things in the novel. Many fragments are devoted to convey this radical 'summersault' when in place of guilt comes shared guilt:

The idea that flutters down to me now—that there are both active and passive virtues, virtues of struggle and of acquiescence—pale as it is, like a bleached leaf, I received first, as I vaguely remember it, from the thin straight lips of Jerry—what was his name? —the Presbyterian minister (...)

(Gass [1995] 2007: 37)

Whether virtues are finally of two kinds, and whether vice is the practice of a passive virtue in a time and situation which calls for action, or v. versa, is really irrelevant. What is important is that Jerry—what was he called?—gave me my first demonstration of the power of the word.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 39)

Ambivalence and downplaying as stylistic devices in H. Gass's writing palette are spectacular in the deconstructionist delineation of history. In place of the proven fact and veritable account comes unproven, arbitrary opinion of a historian:

Time is an enemy of matter, not of mind, and history (as I said to Governali), so long as it is tied to Time like a tin can to the rear of the wedding car, can only be a recital of (...) tents.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 109)

And in that atmosphere, Herschel ventured the opinion that history was the science of men in time.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 132)

And in that atmosphere, Herschel ventured the opinion that history was the self-knowledge of the mind. A birdcall on a wooden whistle, I thought, what do we know about knowledge?

(Gass [1995] 2007: 137)

Ambivalence is prominent in the portrayal of the Nazi rulers. In place of denunciation and damnation of the war perpetrators comes their ambiguous psychological portrayal. The falsely foregrounded sincerity is voiced sometimes to unbearable pitch, obviously transgressing truth. Immersed, engrossed in his ruminations on how to conform to the top sincerity standards in writing, pleasantly diverted by the outside noises (Gass's favourite staple – a book of fiction produces a noise comparable to noises around us), Kohler suddenly shifts to an insulting assumption:

[a] role, I was about to write (...). Sincerity, I was about to say (...) Yet Hitler—the dissembler, the liar, the hypocrite, the mountebank, the deluder, the con man, the sophist, the manipulator, the dreamer, the stage manager, and the ultimate ham—he was probably history’s single most sincere man.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 39)

Scandalous as this assumption is, it is helpful in drawing a line between the protagonist’s narrative voice and that of the author. In the narrative flow of the novel this line is often indiscernible giving way to the unreliable narrator’s voice, but it is not so in the given case. This quotation belongs to the *Ich-Erzähler*, whereas in *The Tunnel* there are copious chunks of the text, even whole narratives, which are told in impersonal narrative voice. It is here, again, that the imperative of sincerity brought to its limit appears to have done the novel a bad turn making provocative, radical utterances look true.

In a way, part of the problem of differentiating between the narrative voices could be resolved by introducing the category of *shared narrative voice* which is, obviously, different from the category of unreliable narrator. The shared narrative voice includes two or more narrators who run the narrative thread and are known to the reader. No one will disagree that the authorial voice will always be present in a work of fiction, without any exception.

An instance of the shared narrative voice can be seen in the following utterance. It is shared voice because formally it belongs to the *Ich-Erzähler* (*when I write*) but, at the same time, it is an instance of autofictional, metafictional writing where the author reflects on the writer’s self-questioning and – within this quotation’s context – expresses his rejection of the necessity for the writer to identify with the objects of his writing.

When I write about the Third Reich, or now, when I write about myself, is it truly the truth I want? What *do I* want? to find out who I am? What is the good of that? I want to feel a little less uneasy. We drag our acts behind us like a string of monsters. I am the Reich, the third son, the remains. This sort of thing—confession—this father-forgive-me stuff—is not in my line. My thoughts fly out like Zeno’s arrow, to stand.

(Gass [1995] 2007: 106)

William Frederick Kohler is ruthlessly critical of the famous writers representing autobiographical and memoir genre, Andre Gide in particular. He cannot forgive them their insincerity, their half-truth when some things are confessed and repented and some are concealed. Kohler’s (or Grass’s?) philosophy on sincerity is expressed clearly and radically enough in the preceding section AND UNWHOLESOME TRUTH. He confers the utmost

sincerity on words which by their nature are just neutral and indifferent to whatever abominable or revolting thing they might be employed to convey.

#### **4.3. The radical narrative of the war and Holocaust in *The Tunnel*: radical deconstruction of content and experiment-governed form**

We observe in the novel treated that the discourse of war, Nazism and Holocaust in it is structured into a range of juxtaposed utterances, the juxtaposition running between the protagonist's voice and those attributed to other narrative voices. Here we have one more prominent feature of the book's radical form and style, namely entrusting different narrative voices with unravelling the said discourse. Thus the quasi-scientific statement about disappearance of the ontological difference between guilt and innocence belongs to William Frederick Kohler, the book's protagonist and narrator, whereas the whole subsections and textual fragments disclaiming this statement are shared by the protagonist with other narrators, including the authorial voice.

We find it instrumental to discern the two largely opposing narrative voices by way of comparing the thematically related textual fragments. While the said statement is authored by the protagonist, the statement being the final phrase of his just-finished book, the subsection titled THE RED-SKINNED CORPSE OF SINCERITY can be associated with the authorial narrative voice and the unreliable narrator's one.

What grounds can be brought in in support of this assumption? The subsection does have a few formal markers to be disjointed from the protagonist's narration. For one thing, it is not written in the *Ich-Erzähler's* mode, thus it can be attributed to the authorial voice or that of an unreliable narrator. For another, the lengthy utterance is written in an ultimately unreadable stream-of-consciousness technique. Where could William Frederick Kohler, a scholar on the war issues who has just written a non-fiction book, supports a theory of "no ontological difference", William Howard Gass, in disguise of the unseen authorial voice, writes a stunning section whose leading motive is indignation and condemnation of the war and its atrocities.

It is particularly in this controversial, absolutely radically crafted fragment that the *Leitmotiv* of sincerity is manifested to its utmost. The selections from this section quoted below exemplify this kind of experimental and challenging writing:

(...) well WHAT ELSE? dry spiteful speech, jailed conjunctions, metaphors machine-gunned where they stood, **rat tat tat tat** bayoneted underwear, famine, fevers

burning what's within, prepositions lying in the fields, ell-bones showing through their kinks and connections, snow in the south, trench mouth in the north, shrouds on the soldiers advancing on Finland, waves of remorse, ...

... **tat** not to mention **tat** those lost in service **tat** down in the fight, all the gone into the repeated spelling of 'hell,' so we are -eft with -ifs and -aw and -ove and -onging, -itt-e more, as if our thought were starting over in its mewling infancy, inside its seed, although the spirit, **ah!** the spirit, O the spirit has stopped. **tat**. stopped. like Woody the Butcher Boy's Block stops the cleaver THWACK! or a sand-jammed gun goes snick, down dog, down tock, down hickory dick. **tat**.stopped. ...

(Gass [1995] 2007: 23–26)

In this section of two and a half pages long, the onomaetopic **rat tat tat** is repeated, in various combinations, 26 times. William Gass is here at his best as a staunch advocate of experimental fiction, of the self-worth of fiction for fiction's sake.

One cannot but be taken aback, to put it mildly, with this sort of truly radical writing defying all norms of intelligibility (*prepositions lying in the fields*). It must be said that scholars have not left this challenging writing in disregard. In the generic terms, this kind of writing follows the tradition of integrating the textual and visual perception of the text. A highly competent treatment of this kind of writing, in general and in particular, is done by Brigitte Felix, a French Professor of American literature. She makes a point of William Gass's eminent role as one of the forerunners of this trend in contemporary American fiction.

(...) William Gass's illustrated text and use of plastic typography in *Willie Master's Lonesome Wife* (1968), and, more recently, his novel *The Tunnel* (1995), can be considered two eminent forerunners of this trend in contemporary American fiction, which goes back to a now not so contemporary moment, the 1960s and 1970s.

(Felix 2016)

The French scholar quotes William Gass explaining the authenticity of the eccentric and marginal kind of writing in his book:

I wanted to make sure that the text which the narrator is engaged in creating is as personal, odd, and as far from the historical research and writing he has been doing as possible. You don't find cartoons, doodles, limericks, and so on, in any ordinary history book. I wanted to convince the reader that the text he or she is reading is an entirely private one; that it has no ultimate or public aim.

(Gass, Felix 2016)

In his scholarly works, W.H. Gass makes a point of an ultimate autonomy of the text, its isolation from the real life we live in. But this insistence does not hold true at least for his magnum opus. *The Tunnel* conveys a host of themes, narratives, conflicts and problems which are reflections of the contemporary life and problems of public concern. It is a principal finding of our long-running research of *The Tunnel* that its brilliant literary and linguistic techniques cannot outshadow its content.

Returning to the “rat-tat” section of the novel’s text, Brigitte Felix veritably sums it as follows:

[b]ecause of the thematic context, the intrusion of “rat” and “tat” is reinterpreted by the readers not as purely visual interferences but as significant noise — the sound of shootings — which cannot but evoke the mass executions conducted by the *Einsatzgruppen*. So the two words figure the return of the “buried” story of Kohler’s life, his relation with the deadly Nazi ideology, his ill-concealed anti-semitism.

(Felix 2016)

“THE RED-SKINNED CORPSE OF SINCERITY” fragment is unquestionably, like everything in the book and the whole book, constructed by the writer William Gass. However that does not mean that everything written by the author, any author, can be attributed to him. The author delegates his characters and entrusted narrators to to run the narration. This model is predominant in fiction while, naturally, not excluding the authorial direct narration, when the writer assumes the role of the omniscient narrator. .... not by the fictional professor of history William Kohler. It would be entirely wrong to ascribe this large passage to the book’s protagonist because the latter is, in fact, no fictionist. He is a professor of History who made his name by writing on the Nazi Germany and WWII. What he is most poignantly disturbed and frustrated by is his own disability and unwillingness to write on these subjects with all available truth and utmost sincerity.

Why do we attribute the said fragment to the author’s figure, more accurately, to the ‘refracted’ author’s narrative voice? The fragment cannot belong to any other narrative voice in the book because it happens to be an outstanding specimen of the experimental form. William H. Gass is unanimously acclaimed as a theorist and fictionist ranking the form and style as an ultimate and highest achievement of fiction. Unlike the writer W.H. Gass, *The Tunnel*’s protagonist William Frederick Kohler is not a literary theorist preoccupied with experimental

prose. Nor is he a fictionist having written a work of fiction. He is told to have written the book on guilt and innocence in the Third Reich, a researcher's work, the book from which only a few glimpses are given in *The Tunnel*. In the researcher's work, an exercise in experimental style could hardly be proper. So here we see one of the demarcation lines which may help to frame out the principal chunks of the text identified either with the protagonist's narrative voice or the 'refracted' authorial one.

In conclusion, we have to acknowledge that exploring the segment of radical communication styles in *The Tunnel* helped, to our belief, to get a clearer comprehension of the governing narratives and styles in the novel, to come closer to an understanding of the writer's favourite techniques, finally, to get aware of the interplay of the narrative voices, when there is a risk of confusing the *Ich-Erzähler's* or unreliable narrators' voices for the authorial one. Yet the enigmatic indiscrimination, in the novel, of the dichotomy of proper and improper, decent and flagrantly indecent remains a riddle-in-waiting to be solved. So far, Gass's insistence on the autonomy of a work of fiction from the reader and on an equally autonomous and self-sufficient process of writing explains erasure of this dichotomy only to a limited extent.

## 5. Conclusion

The ultimate goal of our exploration of radical communication types in W.H. Gass's novel *The Tunnel* was to ascertain their functioning and contextual typology in the text of the book. This goal was shaped by a clear awareness, on our part, of the pervading radicalism of the content and form of the novel in question. *The Tunnel* unravels a number of meta-narratives, discourses, issues of public concern and private life in evidently radical ways, radical in the sense of uncompromising revision of established truths, moral categories, empathies exposed.

In the course of the research of the ways of functioning of the communication styles in fiction, we have established that written speech shares many salient features with oral, or verbal, speech. One of the leading common features is observed in a concurrence of such functions as referential, or informational, expressive, aesthetic, one aimed at persuasion and volition-giving.

In respect of the concept of style in literature it was reasserted that no uniform theory of style shared by all scholars exists. In fact, there is a plethora of views on what constitutes style as well as a long list of definitions of style. The theoretical frameworks of style involving monist, dualist and pluralist approaches demonstrated that stylistic register of a literary work can be treated differently depending upon a researcher's adherence to one or another theory.

In the multitude of the radical communication instances in *The Tunnel* we have singled out

the following communication styles naming each by a leading content and context it is used in: “breaking the narrative monotony”, “hate intensifying”, “filial unwillingness to forgive”, “revulsion invoking”, “provoking indecipherability / unreadability”, “accentuated total criticism”, or “downgrading metanarratives”, “ambivalent portrayal of the war and Holocaust”, pictorial communication style, communication style of radically structured composition, communication style of verbal adornment, embellishment, conceit (as a figure of speech). Within this article, we have not given all of them a due treatment confining our analysis to the three communication styles, those of “hate intensifying” (radical narrative of hate), radical narrative of sincerity, radical narrative of the war and Holocaust.

The radical writing techniques in *The Tunnel* span a wide range of modernist and postmodernist modes of writing some of which – be it autofictional or metafictional writing, the “stream-of-consciousness” technique, downgrading of metanarratives, the peripheral status of the plot, interplay of narrative voices, intense intertextuality, implied dialogicity, exploring new vistas of language and style – are systematically employed. These are enhanced by authentically Gassean techniques like a shared narrative voice.

The radical communication in *The Tunnel*, conveyed in the written speech form, can be treated in a number of ways: a) a principal writing mode and pattern; b) a single component of the book’s literary structure embracing numerous manifestations of the radical thought, speech, behavior and speculation; c) by specifying particular varieties, objects and scenes of the radical communication aimed at producing a kind of taxonomy of the radical content and forms in the book; d) by identifying the intertextual parallels of the radical revision of established views, norms, truths and values presented and enlarged upon in the book; e) by exposing the radical element in particular narratives, scenes and fragments in the book; f) by extricating the authorial voice from the continuous narrative voice of the *Ich-Erzähler*, thus discriminating between the two for a sole purpose of not confusing one narrative voice for another.

Radical speech and styles in *The Tunnel* are manifested by a direct or implied opposition of the norm-governed speech and the speech varieties largely exercising abuse, aggression, libel, lewdness, insult, derogatory words and tone, verbal violence, humiliation and intimidation, comprehensibility margin. In the long-standing research of *The Tunnel* we have come to a principal conclusion: the radical speech forms and ambivalent narratives in the book are not simply counterbalanced by the outstanding excellence of the language and style; they fulfill their “quest for sincerity” bringing relentless truths about nearly everything.

While a precious stock of scholarly research on Gass’s heritage, and *The Tunnel* in

particular, keeps on piling up, the radical paradigm of the book, to our knowledge, remains on the “waiting list” of Gassean studies. We find researching this paradigm to be truly instrumental in getting closer to the enigmatic, ambivalent and provocative purport, structure and meaning of *The Tunnel*.

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