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FROM MIND TO TEXT

**CONTINUITIES AND BREAKS BETWEEN COGNITIVE,
AESTHETIC AND TEXTUALIST APPROACHES
TO LITERATURE**

Bartosz Stopel



From Mind to Text

From Mind to Text: Continuities and Breaks Between Cognitive, Aesthetic and Textualist Approaches to Literature explores the historical context of theory formation and of its contemporary status, including an overview of debates about theory's role in literary studies provided both by representatives of theory itself, as well as by those who distance themselves from it.

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Introduction

There are a few ways in which the subject, scope and the aim of this book could be outlined. For one thing, it deals with modes of existence of literature and, thus, its main topic might be called ontology of literary works. On the other hand, however, out of all the possible modes of this existence, the scope of the argument is narrowed down to those that are intimately connected to the major areas of contemporary literary studies. Thus, the book may be said to deal with particular methodologies of literary studies that define and delimit and consequently generate the very objects they wish to examine.

The three broad modes of existence I posit in what follows are literature as a “natural” phenomenon, literature as art and literature as a cultural artifact. The first mode emerges spontaneously out of everyday cognitive-affective processes, such as conceptualization or storytelling and whose creation, form and content, as well as experience of which is largely dependent on the propensities of the natural human cognitive-affective architecture. The second mode involves historical development of literature as a consciously designed work of art with growing aesthetic autonomy whose appreciation requires knowledge of art-historical contexts and attention to the work in question. Finally, literature exists as a product of a given culture, carrying its various covert and overt meanings and latent ideologies, tacitly exploring, challenging or transmitting dominant norms and values and being one of many manifestations of broader cultural processes.

Each of these modes of existence involves a corresponding method of research. The research associated with the first mode includes neuroscientific and cognitive approaches to art and literature along with its empirical studies, whose overall concern is to explore how the mental processes associated with everyday cognition are applied to creation and experience of literature. The second mode involves historical studies of literature and art as well as philosophy of art exploring the nature of aesthetic experience, artistic value or interpretation. The third mode is associated with contemporary literary theories that tend to see literary works as ideologically charged texts.

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The three broad research programs rarely come in contact with each other and sometimes, when they do, the contact tends to be hostile as when analytic philosophers of art accuse literary theorists of following a rather illusory and pointless method that unjustly banishes value and authors from the domain of literature. Conversely, literary theorists sometimes see analytic philosophers of art as conservative and trivial scholastics unable to penetrate into the deeper layers of literature's workings. On the other side of the spectrum, some neuroscientists and cognitivists tend to marginalize the art-historical and cultural-specific contents of literature, studying it as if it were a fully natural phenomena accessible via mere exposure. As a response to the above I argue that the three corresponding research modes form a hierarchy of continuity and are, in fact, three intertwined levels of inquiry into literature where a lower-level discipline provides both partial content and a framework for the emergence of upper-level discipline. For instance, the operations and natural tendencies of the human mind provide a general framework for the development of art, offering some insight into its forms and content, but fuller understanding of art appreciation requires integration of both the natural and the historical-institutional components. Likewise, researching literary works as ideological texts requires proper determination of the nature of the artifact studied as an aesthetic object that, among other things, shapes the possible scope of meanings it takes. In what follows, I set out to explore these continuities or points of convergence between those seemingly disparate levels of inquiry into the functioning of literature.

There has never been, and I suppose there will never be, a simple answer to the question of what constitutes a relevant method for literary studies. The field has always been scattered into a myriad of disparate types of inquiry. Roughly, the first half of the twentieth century marks a transition from romantic, expressionist theories of literature and a development of phenomenological, hermeneutic, formalist, Marxist and psychoanalytic approaches. The last three decades of the twentieth century were a time when structuralist, post-structuralist and ideological theories rose to prominence. Nowadays, the situation is yet again different. The approaches that dominated literary studies in the last decades of the previous century are in decline and new perspectives appear.

In the typology proposed here, one broad orientation in literary studies is the tendency toward drawing from the sciences and naturalizing the humanities, which is largely shaped by various modern approaches to the study of the mind and to cognitive science. It ranges from the empirical studies of reader response, through literary Darwinism and evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, affective studies, to cognitive linguistics and poetics, embracing a multitude of related tendencies. The other relatively new outlook is offered by analytic philosophy, whose aesthetic branch has managed to produce an extensive body of writing on the philosophical issues in literature and other arts in the recent decades.

Both new outlooks often affirm their separateness from the late twentieth-century literary Theory, emphasizing that they offer radically new perspectives that have little to do with the typical preoccupations of Theory. This is precisely what the following book addresses. Namely, it questions the idea that the three broad research orientations are mutually exclusive, and it does so during another state of methodological confusion in literary studies where nothing can be taken for granted regarding the relation between the three research perspectives as the question is relatively new and unexplored.

In order to proceed, it is necessary to clarify my terminological and conceptual decisions. First, my understanding of literary theory is limited to how this term is most often used nowadays, that is, it refers to the varieties of post-structuralist and ideological theories that adhere to the notion of the “text” or to “cultural text.” Thus, unless noted otherwise, every time I use the term “text,” “textualism,” “Theory,” or “literary theory,” I refer strictly to its narrow meaning outlined above. There are several reasons for that. As I mentioned, this is how the term “Theory” is used nowadays, particularly when one thinks of debates over the status of literary theory and phrases such as “against theory,” “crisis of theory,” “theory’s empire” used by its adversaries, which I review in Chapter 1. Although anthologies of, or companions to, Theory often encompass any texts about art, language, politics and related topics from Plato to Žižek, it would be futile to carry out any argument whatsoever regarding such an inflationist account of Theory. Moreover, it would surely be interesting to map how the new perspectives on literature which I outlined above relate to hermeneutics, phenomenology, early reader-response theories and other early approaches to literary studies, but this would both obliterate the meaning of the debate about contemporary status of literary theory, as well as requiring several other book-length explorations. Hence, apart from brief, individual discussions of some pre-Theoretical approaches to literary studies, this area is not explored in the following chapters. Moreover, it is often the case that calling literary theory “post-structuralist” produces a lot of confusion. In Chapter 1 I argue that there can be a strong and weak understanding of post-structuralism, and it is the latter in which I am chiefly interested.

Similar provisions need to be made regarding my use of art-related terminology. Throughout the first three chapters I use the terms “aesthetics,” “literary aesthetics,” “philosophy of art” and “philosophy of literature” interchangeably and see them as largely equivalent with the type of philosophical aesthetics as carried out in analytic philosophy (with the proviso that “literary” and “of literature” refer to specific areas of the aforementioned broader categories). This is slightly changed when I discuss the distinction into the aesthetic and the artistic, and introduce the notion of “art behaviors” in Chapter 4, all of which

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move beyond the narrow institutional understanding of art toward a more or less structured sensual experience.

My understanding of cognitive approaches to literary studies is broad, reflecting the umbrella-like nature of the term itself. It is composed of fragmentary, scattered research orientations and encompasses often disparate stances. What I see as common is the assumption that it is necessary to study the mental processes that shape human cognition and that these processes are embodied and intertwine with each other in all human activity. It entails that there are not any special autonomous mental units responsible for language processing or art understanding. To look at one of the processes is to touch upon many others at the same time. Further, cognitive approaches stress the necessity of acknowledging the bio-psychological constitution of human action and creation. In other words, it argues against strong cultural constructionism.

All three broad disciplines are largely autonomous and have their own research areas, their own aims, methods and conceptual apparatuses, but they are not merely independent and separate. Cognitive science forms the lowest level of the research hierarchy and studies and models those thought processes (among others) which are responsible for the human ability to create and to appreciate art. It can tell us what non-aesthetic and non-literary phenomena are responsible for the emergence of art in general and literature in particular. Apart from operating on its own level, cognitive science can also inform higher explanatory levels in many ways. It can serve as an adjunct discipline to explain some problems in philosophical aesthetics, as well as directly addressing multiple issues in poetics, narratology, reader response, etc.

Aesthetics is either a philosophical exploration of structured pleasurable sensual experiences or a philosophy of art. Its former understanding can be seen as situated at the intersection of cognitive science and research into art. In the latter sense, it explores the conditions of use of concepts involved in art-related activities. It is here where the proper definition of literature emerges along with informed appreciation of art where literary critics serve as models of competent readership.

Theory, as textualist-ideological studies, explores literary creation with the help of the notion of the cultural text that makes it possible to scrutinize the cultural-specific ideological content of art. Even though textualism originally emerged in opposition to seeing literature as art, rejecting “works” in favor of “texts,” I am convinced that Theory cannot produce reliable research results without assuming the aesthetic character of art. In other words, Theory’s ultimate aim is not appreciation, but it first must properly identify a given literary text as an aesthetic product to adequately conceive of its own object of study.

There is another way of accounting for this hierarchy of research and explanation, which perhaps alters the tripartite balance outlined above. This other way is to affirm the centrality and primacy of art and

philosophical aesthetics for any research program exploring literature. In other words, it is art as a mode of existence and aesthetics as a discipline illuminating this mode of existence that is the pillar at the center of literary studies. As a result, whatever Theory-fueled analyses of literary works one produces and whatever empirical, neuroscientific or cognitive studies of literature one carries out, one cannot ignore the peculiarities of art functioning as art. To put it simply, one cannot have reliable studies of literature without fully understanding how literature functions as art. Again, it is aesthetics at the center with textualist studies on its one side, and cognitive or neuroscientific on the other.

My outline of the hierarchy along with the gradual emergence of higher-level structures is in no way finite or definite. For instance, Ellen Spolsky famously argued that there is a close affinity between cognitive approaches to literature with its underlying Darwinian assumptions and post-structuralist Theory, as both emphasize fragmentary, incomplete, processual and unstable nature of human knowledge, appealing for more direct cross-disciplinary cooperation between cognitive and textualist approaches. Mine is only one of the possible configurations of the three disciplines, although I see it as the basic one. I elaborate on this issue in Chapters 4 and 5.

By writing this book I hope to take modest part in encouraging more cross-disciplinary discussions relevant to the issues at the intersection of cognitive-aesthetic and aesthetic-textualist research areas. Since potential readers include virtually everybody working at those borderlines, it is unavoidable that throughout the text, the three target readers occasionally switch, as some passages of my book (as well as some terminological decisions) were structured so as to cater to the varying needs of the three groups.

One final comment before overviewing the specific chapters of the book concerns the general methodological orientation. The problem this book explores can be called theoretical, philosophical, methodological, meta-theoretical, or it can be said to be located within philosophy of literature or perhaps philosophy of science. I consider all the above terms to be adequate and I suppose there is no need to decide which one is more accurate, as such terminological choices would necessarily be more a matter of one's background and tastes than of anything else.

My method can be called comparative analysis, as I attempt to describe and define some concepts central to each of the disciplines, then see how these concepts are really applied within each discipline and, finally, compare the results cross-disciplinarily.

Finally, my broadest philosophical commitment might be called pragmatist or late-Wittgensteinian as I believe in the primacy of certain practice over theoretical constructs that attempt at regulating it. To illustrate this, I accept that humans engage in art-related behaviors and I set out to explore its underlying logical-conceptual structure. I do not believe that

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we need a Theory or a definition of art first in order to carry on with enjoying art. Nor do I believe that if we cannot have a fully coherent and clear-cut Theory, then the practice to which it refers is somehow threatened or invalidated. Thus, in the above sense, I am not a Derridean or any other follower of Saussurean philosophy of language. Moreover, I believe that some concepts only make sense with the emergence of specific levels of explanation. The Theory-laden notion of the text is hardly applicable to analytic aesthetics, and a proper art-related definition of literature is only possible on the aesthetic level. That is to say, multiple definitions apply at the same time, depending on which level we refer to. Likewise, certain concepts are used here only for pragmatic reasons. I do not believe in a strong distinction into form and content, just as I do not believe in strong distinctions into art and non-art, but it makes sense to use such distinctions if only for purely pragmatic reasons, though in the latter case this is also a matter of adhering to a particular level of explanation.

Chapter 1 elaborates on the definitions of concepts related to Theory and aesthetics as used throughout the book. It explains my choices regarding the definition of “Theory,” “aesthetics” and some related concepts. It also explores the historical context of Theory’s formation and of its contemporary status, including an overview of debates about Theory’s role in literary studies provided both by representatives of Theory itself, as well as by those who distance themselves from it. The chapter begins with reviewing the growing belief in an overwhelming crisis of Theory accompanied with a development of several tendencies within literary studies that oppose Theoretical explorations of literature. Next, it moves to compare Theory with one of the tendencies, as exemplified by analytic aesthetics, investigating the role of Theory and the role of philosophy of literature in literary studies. What follows is a discussion of the status of aesthetics in analytic philosophy. Finally, I discuss the notion of the artworld that is essential to most contemporary analytic theories of art and move on to describe the institutional definition of literature, as exemplified by the works of Olsen and Lamarque, tracing its relation to Theory and to some related works on the topic written by Fish and Culler.

Chapter 2 begins with a comparison of the institutional account of literature to some approaches to literary studies popular before the emergence of Theory. The point is to show that the language of art, aesthetics, works, authors and intentions need not entail a return to a pre-Theoretical world. My main targets are phenomenological theories, formalists and New Critics, and I attempt to show some problems and inadequacies of their stances that are clear in comparison with the work carried out in analytic aesthetics. The two following sections of Chapter 2 explore the relationship between Theory and aesthetics in more detail. Specifically, I examine Barthes’ and Foucault’s seminal textualist

essays and compare them to analytic understanding of textualism and of Theory in general. I argue that the type of inquiry into literary texts typical of Theory cannot really operate without some assumptions about the aesthetic nature of the artifact in question.

The final section of the chapter moves to the other end on the spectrum of problems discussed by philosophical aesthetics. Namely, it addresses the status of institutional discourse. If, as its proponents argue, appreciation of art is a matter of following certain conventions that govern interpretation, then what is the status of these conventions based on the common definitions of conventions and on our knowledge of human cognition? I argue that even though the notion of institution (in the sense of rule-governed procedures that regulate our understanding and appreciation of art) should be kept for pragmatic reasons, how we understand and evaluate art is not, strictly speaking, a convention, as how we come to cognize art is not fundamentally different from our cognition of other objects, products of culture, minds, etc.

Chapter 3 moves beyond the debates about Theory and aesthetics and explores the final point of the preceding chapter, focusing on human cognition. It first reviews selected areas of cognitive linguistics and speculates how they might address some questions posed by Theory and aesthetics. It then moves to demonstrate how cognitive science can convincingly show the inseparability of human conceptualization, figurative language, storytelling and art, pointing to a continuity between ordinary thought processes and the contents of art. Later, it reviews several advances in cognitive poetics that seem problematic in how they approach aesthetics and formalism. Further explorations into the roots of the forms and contents of art, along with an investigation into the basis of human experience of art include the role of mindreading, empathy and emotions in appreciation of artworks. Another important development discussed in Chapter 3 is the notion of literary universals that are understood as cross-cultural regularities in both the form and the content of literary narratives. The existence of cross-cultural patterns in art that are unaccountable purely in terms of traditions or cultural transmission is a serious argument against strong cultural constructionism in the humanities. The final section of the chapter investigates several paradigms within cognitive science regarding human information processing showing both their relevance and their shortcomings when applied to literary studies.

After discussing some aspects of human cognitive-emotive architecture in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 attempts at a more direct engagement between cognitive, aesthetic and Theoretical tendencies in literary studies. The first section discusses the question of the beginning of art and places it in the context of debates about aesthetic experience, understood as a structured sensual experience, being closer to Deweyan rather than to Kantian aesthetics. Still, the idea of pleasurable sensual/imaginative

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experience is not equivalent to the experience of art, whose value often surpasses direct sensual/imaginative pleasure and requires considerable degree of competence to be conferred. Thus, the second section discusses the continuity between the aesthetic and the artistic and explores several types of value associated with art. My argument then moves to tracing the continuity between spontaneous, untutored responses to art, whose domain is closer to cognitive literary studies, and competent judgments of art critics whose description is the domain of philosophy of art. The concepts most helpful in exploring the issue are taken from cognitive science and include simulation, grounded cognition and degrees of activation within the mental lexicon.

Chapter 5 draws from philosophy of science on the issues of interdisciplinary relations and hierarchies, emergent structures, tacit knowledge and complex systems and outlines the disciplinary hierarchy with relation to types of experience and explanation in art with cognitive approaches providing the basis, aesthetics forming a higher-level emergent structure and Theory-driven readings constituting another higher-level emergent structure. I then proceed to commenting on a related project involving psycho-historical framework for art appreciation and discuss levels of interpretation as explored by Arthur Danto in analytic aesthetics. Finally, I give examples of flawed analysis in literary studies that either reduces art to perceptual-psychological responses typical of the first level of art experience or imposes theoretical frameworks on artworks to the point where their artistic value is overlooked.

1 Theories and Institutions

Again, Theory

In the introduction to the 2005 collection of essays entitled *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent*, Daphne Patai and Will H. Corrall, the editors of the volume, write:

This anthology appears at a moment when not only have theoretical discussions of literature become stagnant but articles and books are published in defense of the conceptual stalemates that have led to this very immobility. In the early years of the new millennium, theorists are busily writing about the impasse in which theory finds itself, discoursing on the alternatives as portentously as they once wrote about the death of the novel and the author.

(Patai and Corrall 2005, 1)

Indeed, judging by the growing number of books whose titles contain references to a sense of an end either of the theoretical project or the post-structuralist paradigm,¹ one might get an impression that after pronouncing the death of the author, or the novel, the next important achievement of literary theory is the death of the Theorist. Although the end or the death of Theory has been pronounced quite often since its inception,² this time the difference is that the sense of malaise is expressed by literary theorists themselves and, more importantly, several new approaches to literary research emerged, which claim to have little in common with the methods of what we have come to understand as literary theories.

In analytic philosophy of art, the claims about Theory's necessary demise go back at least to Olsen's 1987 *The End of Literary Theory*. Even though it contains well-grounded philosophical arguments against some literary theories which are perhaps not able to successfully explain the nature of literary aesthetics, it is not exactly clear why it should indicate that literary theory has in any sense ended. Olsen's assumption that literary theories need to successfully explain the aesthetic dimension of literature, otherwise they will fail at producing a

comprehensive philosophy of literature, seems to be misguided to the extent that it is precisely the rejection of research in aesthetics, and what Barthes called the passive reception of a literary work, that has laid at the foundation of literary theory from the end of 1960s onwards. But if one starts with a premise, as Olsen does, that the very concept of literature is logically embedded in broader considerations on art and aesthetics, then, predictably, all theories from post-structuralism, through deconstruction, feminism, post-colonialism and to new historicism must be considered as failures in their insistence on studying literature by means of various methodologies and not merely aesthetically appreciating it. Perhaps, then, they do fail at producing comprehensive philosophies of literature per se, but if that was not their aim in the first place, wouldn't Olsen's criticism be rather far-fetched? After all, why would post-colonial theories require strict definitions of concepts such as fiction, aesthetic experience or a literary work of art in the types of research they usually encourage?

Neither is it entirely clear what many other Theory's adversaries have in mind when they speak of both Theory and its failure. The aforementioned collection edited by Patai and Corral contains numerous essays authored by scholars from both the humanities and the sciences attacking what they call literary theory in almost every conceivable way. The criticism ranges from purely philosophical and technical, through political, pragmatic, ethical and often contains charges of poor research, manipulation and ideological bias. The target of criticism is almost everything that has been happening in the humanities from the 1960s onwards, a category in itself so broad that it can clearly be accused of anything. As it often happens, the reports of Theory's death have been greatly exaggerated, although one can clearly notice a certain flight from theorizing and a growing aversion to its methods. It would be all too naïve to put the blame for it on some hypothetical failures of specific research programs in terms of integrity of their philosophical foundations. It is a trivial fact that popularity of certain intellectual movements is not necessarily connected with their, more or less imaginary, philosophical success. Apart from pointing to contingent fads and fashions as reasons why some intellectual trends come and go, one cannot ignore the broader socioeconomic context in which the groves of academe function. It is hardly disputable that most of those research programs in the humanities developed after structuralism have been intertwined with the leftist political agenda. Thus, one can at least accept as a credible hypothesis that perhaps with a gradual demise of leftist politics in the West in favor of right-wing neoliberalism, a substantial part of the momentum behind the humanities was lost. After all, the highly technologized turbo-capitalism, with its typically myopic attitude toward that which cannot be easily and quickly capitalized, has little interest in what goes on in the human sciences.

In academic circles, a serious blow at contemporary humanities was struck in the mid-90s with the infamous Sokal affair that attempted to demonstrate the supposed systematic abuse of science and a lack of credible research results in humanities. In the following years one could observe the emergence of various movements in literary studies which attempted to distance themselves from the type of research carried out by celebrated literary theorists, and which promoted a revival of interest in a technical, systematized study of literature, and a return to concepts such as human universals. Neo-Darwinists have tried to apply evolutionary psychology to produce a quasi-naturalistic theory of literature as a human adaptive tool. Developments of cognitive sciences have led to a resurgence of interest in poetics and narratology, as well as to the study of reader response, including the role of emotions and memory in the consumption of literature. Finally, one can observe that in recent years various post- or anti-theoretical attitudes have emerged, along with a renewed interest in broadly conceived aesthetics. Thus, if we were to conceive of “the crisis of theory,” without the socioeconomic context and in terms of a purely intellectual phenomenon, it would at most involve a certain sense of stagnation and a lack of progress of theoretical thinking that resulted in the emergence of the aforementioned methodologies that emphasize their separateness from what is standardly called Theory.

Some of the new approaches to literary studies acknowledge that Theory is in a state of crisis and emphasize their fundamental separateness from Theory’s aims and methods. As one of the key figures in contemporary literary aesthetics, Peter Lamarque claims, “[i]t is widely assumed, even among its strongest supporters, that the heyday of Theory is past” (Lamarque 2009, 10). Literary studies have definitely reached an interesting state, since the supposedly miserable status of Theory has been acknowledged even by many of its famous representatives, as one can read in the preface to the 2003 *Critical Inquiry* Symposium entitled “The future of criticism” during which the luminaries of literary theory, such as Stanley Fish, W.J.T. Mitchell, Homi Bhabha, Wayne Booth, Fredric Jameson and J. Hillis Miller debated over the uncertain future of the journal, literary studies and the humanities in general. Some of the suggestions for the participants’ papers included ideas such as the end of “the great era of theory” which now enters “a period of timidity, backfilling, and (at best) empirical accumulation,” backing off “from earlier sociopolitical engagements and the sense of revolutionary possibility,” and turning to aesthetics, as well as some new challenges to humanities that “go well beyond the resources of structuralism and poststructuralism” (Mitchell 2004, 330–331). If this appears to be a brute fact, acknowledged even by Theory’s key figures, the next step should be to look for some possible causes and, perhaps, for some alternatives that might revitalize literary studies. Of course, the crisis of Theory, assuming it is justified to declare it at all, is definitely a tremendously complex

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phenomenon, whose causes and manifestations go well beyond any kind of intellectual speculations about the value of specific theories. Nevertheless, since the whole project may be put into question, it seems to be an appropriate moment to look back and evaluate particular programs for literature, and compare them with what the newly emerging approaches can offer to literary studies and how the latter refer to the research associated with literary theory. Although scholars working both in analytic philosophy of literature and in the emerging bio-psychological areas of the study of arts, often refer (mostly critically) to the work of literary theorists, one can hardly say the same about the latter. This particular cross-paradigmatic exchange has been rather scant so far, with one notable exception of Terry Eagleton's recent book (Eagleton 2012), where, on the one hand, he shares the analytic aesthetician's interest in the foundational questions of literary studies, such as the definition of literature, or the nature of fiction, and on the other hand, he retains his theoretical-continental philosophical background, pointing out to a potentially fertile area of intellectual cooperation. In any case, the emergence of new research programs, intellectual exchange and a dialogue between the old and the new are nothing extraordinary. Establishing the nature of relations between, broadly understood, literary theory and the newer approaches seems thus well-grounded and desirable.

There are, of course, different suggestions as to what exactly should literary studies look like after the collapse of the "Theory's empire." They range from Eagleton's plea for finding new topics and continuing the theoretical project, Harold Bloom's replacement of theoretical reading with aesthetic appreciation, Knapp and Michaels' insistence on the very practice of reading, to the literary Darwinists' fight for a paradigm change, to cognitive scientists' suggestion of embracing interdisciplinary, psychological studies and the analytic aestheticians' reclaiming of the concepts of the artistic work and of literature. This book will avoid any revolutionary claims as to the future shape of literary studies, focusing mostly on the last two areas from the above list, as they seem to be the most rapidly growing and the most promising areas of research. They both share the conviction that there exists a specific practice of reading texts as literature, which tended to be neglected in the heyday of literary theory. In Peter Lamarque's words, "the decline of Theory marks the revitalization of literature" (Lamarque 2009, 10). Hence, the following discussion of some of the developments in analytic aesthetics and cognitive literary studies will emphasize the need to get back to the practice, to reclaim the institution of literature as literature. It will attempt at criticizing some aspects of contemporary literary theory, but not in the sense of abandoning the theoretical project altogether, or trying to return to some mythical, pristine, pre-theoretical world. Theory has certainly had its failures and deserves a fair share of criticism, but it would be naïve to claim that in an area such as literary studies, one might posit a ban on

some specific critical or theoretical approaches, deeming them simply invalid.³ This question will be elaborated upon later on, as it definitely requires further clarification. I find it uncontroversial that literary theory has also had its merits, and has enabled a tremendous step forward for literary studies. Concepts such as “the death of the author,” or “the text” irreversibly changed the mode of thinking about literature. Any attempt at intellectually revitalizing literary studies should then be a step forward, that is, an attempt to expand and incorporate new approaches, rather than abandoning the attainments of Theory and dreaming of getting back to, say, nineteenth-century naïve, romantic vision of art. Here, acknowledging the role of aesthetics and turning toward the practice of reading will, thus, distance itself both from the aestheticist approach of, say, Harold Bloom and from the typically neo-pragmatist anti-theoretical, embracement of literary practices and institutions.

Theories and Theorrhea

Before trying to sketch how contemporary aesthetics can be relevant for literary studies, it is essential to specify how literary theory is understood here, and what aspect of theory is going to be the target of criticism. Given the staggeringly wide variety of contemporary literary theories, to which one critic referred as “theorrhea” (Merquior 2005, 234) as well as the palpable differences in the programs for studying literature that they offer, it is obviously difficult to give an all-embracing account of the different approaches. Hence, rather than following such a grandiose plan, I am going to attempt to distinguish those features of Theory that are most important for the discussion of aesthetics.

To begin, in his *Philosophy of Literature*, Peter Lamarque, an analytic philosopher of art, gives a brief, perhaps uncontroversial description of how to conceive of literary theory, which can serve as a good starting point for the following discussion:

Literary Theory, as a heterogeneous collection of “isms,” flourished in literary studies roughly between the late 1960’s and the late 1990s. A standard list of such theories would include: structuralism, feminism, Marxism, reader-response theory, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, post-structuralism, postmodernism, new historicism, and post colonialism [...]. Generalizations in this area are fraught with danger but it doesn’t seem too cavalier to claim that a feature of Theory, as a whole, was that it rejected the notion of literature as art [...].
(Lamarque 2009, 9)

The last comment concerning the alleged rejection of literature as art is perhaps not uncontroversial, and will be elaborated upon later, as at least at this point one might ask: rejected in what sense? It would

be altogether different if one claimed that literary theory rejected the possibility or the necessity of formulating such a Theory for literature in general, and if one stated that it rejected the notion of literature as art being relevant for Theory's research ambitions. Although possibly quite subtle, bearing in mind such a distinction is crucial for determining the relation between Theory and aesthetics, as, without a certain degree of clarity on the matter, one could not tell whether Theory and aesthetics are disparate, whether they compete or whether they might be called complementary.

Lamarque then quotes from the introduction to *Theory's Empire*, agreeing with its authors that what those specific theories had in common was both "turning away from literature as literature and an eagerness to transmogrify it into a cultural artifact (or 'signifying practice') [...]" (Patai and Corral 2005, 8) and he adds his own further comment:

It is a curious consequence of this stance that Literary Theory became increasingly remote from literature as such. Admittedly, this was not entirely unintended as Theory self-consciously adopted both an anti-essentialist and a reductive view of literature. The very concept of literature was thought to reside in a discredited "liberal humanist" ideology and in its place was substituted with the more neutral and supposedly value-free notion of "text" or undifferentiated *writing* (*écriture*).

(Lamarque 2009, 9)

The notion of the "text," which indirectly inspired most of the research programs in literary theory, ultimately goes back, via the concept of the sign, to Ferdinand de Saussure's pioneering work in linguistics, and it is precisely at his work that one has to look in order to understand the central premises underlying textually-driven Theory. One example of a disillusioned literary scholar struggling with Saussure's specter haunting his own discipline can be seen in Valentine Cunningham's essay "Theory, What Theory?" (Cunningham 2005, 24–41). Cunningham persuasively demonstrates how Saussurean linguistics directly influenced and still influences the textually-driven mode of thinking of many literary scholars, even if the textual project lost its positivist, scientific ambitions somewhere halfway through the twentieth century. Cunningham shows how literary theory, by introducing its fundamental notion of a text, liberated the literary work from the constraints of discovering and celebrating authors and their intentions, and made it possible to investigate texts as battlefields of various paradigms and ideologies that were to be unmasked using specific theoretical approaches. This was clearly inspired by Saussure's insistence that language is a system of signs quite autonomous from its use by actual speakers and their intentions. What was of utmost importance in the Saussurean paradigm was to study

language as a closed system of binary opposites with little interest in references. For de Saussure, the fact that people use it for communication was merely incidental and irrelevant for the actual study of language. Although the relation between the signifier and the signified was of a rather static nature for de Saussure, most literary appropriations of his views ran against that claim, focusing the arbitrary nature of this relation, and consequently, on the signifier exclusively. Thus, the idea of the arbitrariness of the signifier, though as Cunningham points out, this was not a Saussurean concept, as for him “it was always the arbitrariness of the sign” (Cunningham 2005, 29) became an *idée fixe* of post-Saussurean literary theory. If the point of focus is the internal difference, with a suspension of reference, than the predictable conclusion is “the endless inward-looking deferrals of meaning, *mise en abyme*” (Cunningham 2005, 29).

The result was the emergence of a myriad of post-structuralist schools of criticism with a tendency to point out internal aporias and infinite deferrals of meaning that were supposed to indicate the failures and internal inconsistencies of discourses and artworks. Truth be told, such claims often boiled down to claiming that concepts used within them have fuzzy edges and are never entirely definite (Derrida 1988, 123–124); an observation quite unilluminating if one recalls the 100-year-old essay by Bertrand Russell, where he compellingly argues that vagueness of meaning is ubiquitous in language, but it does not mean that all communication is necessarily unsuccessful (Russell 1923, 84–92). In his famous exchange with Derrida, John Searle remarked that to see grave philosophical implications in the fact that concepts do not have strict boundaries or that meaning is deferred in deconstructionist sense is to ignore the whole Wittgensteinian tradition and to repeat the mistake of a classical metaphysician, who thought that strong foundations are needed to ground concepts such as “knowledge” or “perception” in order for philosophy to do its own work (Searle 1994, 639).

Somehow contrary to Cunningham’s claims, some Saussurean-like assumptions about language and textuality can be also traced in other, pre-Saussurean approaches to language and literature. It might be assumed that textualist thinking in literary studies embraces, apart from structuralist and the varieties of post-structuralist thought quoted above from Lamarque, also some earlier methodologies, such as New Criticism and Russian Formalism, as all of them share similar concerns about the necessity to study texts as objects separated from their authors, and the context of their creation, focusing on their linguistic or ideological content. It is precisely this separateness that makes them textual. Such claim might be controversial due to the extreme vagueness of the concept of literary theory as such. If one looks at the contents of typical anthologies of literary theory, one finds all sorts of considerations on literature juxtaposed together: not only Saussure-inspired French Theory, but also

hermeneutics, reader-response theories, phenomenology, and various texts on arts and poetics going back to Aristotle. If literary theory is all of the above, then criticizing it or claiming that one is against theory seems pointless, as one possibly claims to be against any intellectual activity whatsoever. The ultimate vacuity of such an all-encompassing concept makes it useless in a reasonable philosophical discussion. All in all, the view that any philosophical position or any approach to the study of literary works comes under the category of Theory is too inclusive and problematic for theoretical debates to carry on. My understanding of Theory throughout the book is, consequently, limited to textualist and ideological approaches, as they are most representative of the field nowadays.

There are sound reasons for rejecting, as it might be called, the inflationist theory of literature. For one thing, even among academic circles, the term literary theory hardly ever refers to Aristotle, or, say, Roman Ingarden, and its use is, in fact, narrower. Moreover, reading recent criticisms of literary theory, such as those by literary Darwinists, analytic philosophers or some cognitivists, one gets the impression that what they criticize is usually the textualist French Theory, or any other methodology that bears affinity with post-structuralist thought or is characterized by explicit political motivation in its research. On the other hand, to generalize about the whole heterogeneous field of Theory regarding any issue, including the degree to which literary theory might be called “post-structuralist,” is a risky undertaking. Within each particular literary theory one can certainly find scholars that would be more textualist⁴ in the sense of a “strong” interpretation of Barthes, Foucault or Derrida, but this is not enough to generalize. Standard theoretical explorations of, say, putative unconscious conflicts of characters, gender representation or the work’s ideological stance do not typically require commitment to a strong reading of post-structuralist philosophy. The problem can be elaborated upon by investigating how it approaches the following two issues. First, what it really means that literary theory is post-structuralist and second, how theoretical claims relate to the actual practice of literary analysis. Regarding the former, post-structuralist theory can be understood as strictly based on a set of assumptions such as the “instability of meaning,” “death of the author,” “text” which are construed in its strong form. This is how it is interpreted by most of Theory’s attackers, including some analytic aestheticians (see Chapter 2 for more details). But it is clear that Theory-driven analyses of literary works are far from customarily celebrating occult renditions of Saussurean linguistics. Instead, post-structuralism in its more diluted form can be understood as rejection of the scientist ambitions of structuralism and of its conviction about uncovering single, true method of literary analysis along with an attack on pre-structuralist theories of naïve intentionalism, and accepting multiplicity of theoretical frameworks that may

be applied for analysis of literary works, but retaining particular interest in literary works as repositories of ideology. This is, indeed, the understanding of textualism that I am chiefly interested in throughout this book. Following that, I use the term “literary theory” in the abovementioned sense of contemporary Theories unless specified otherwise. This does not mean that phenomenological or reader-response research programs are of no interest, as they will be referred to separately throughout the book. They simply have little in common with the numerous movements within textualist and ideological Theory, which suggests that they require a separate treatment.

Apart from these preliminary remarks concerning the historical and ideological aspects of literary theory, it is essential to assess its broad, philosophical status. This leads to the second question, the one that covers the relation of theory to practice. I believe that much of the hostility toward Theory coming from science and analytic philosophy is due to different approach to language use. Analytic philosophers typically take notions such as “text” or “death of the author” as strict propositions, fleshing them out and offering potential interpretations of these claims. But the philosophical differences which result in the continentally-shaped mind of the theoretician being more attracted to Jakobson’s poetic function of language rather than to strict logical analysis, lead to frequent light-hearted treatment of language on the former’s side. This, along with Theory’s peculiar relation to practice leads me to claim that assessment of literary theory’s value must include references to the actions theoreticians take when attending to a literary work and not just a construal of their propositions. In other words, it is a matter of juxtaposing what literary theorists actually do with what they think they do and what words they use to describe it.

The relation between literary theory and, so to speak, literary practice is a problematic one, as it does not quite reflect the typical distinctions of philosophy that clarifies the assumptions of certain practice or science. Is Theory a body of knowledge not unlike that of a set of theorems and laws? Do different theories constitute different paradigms? Is the relation between literary theory and literature similar to that of, say, philosophy of science and science? Literary theory is partly all of the above, but never just one of them. The uniqueness of Theory among the disciplines of human knowledge is often emphasized by the typical pragmatist accusation (Knapp and Michaels 1985, 11–31) of it being a body of abstract, theoretical maxims that are separate from the practice of reading and which attempt to control it, as if from the outside. This seems to be partly congruent with Lamarque’s observation that Theory refuses to treat literature as literature, but it does not bring us any closer to determining what Theory is. Perhaps at least some of the controversies and current concerns about Theory result from this vagueness of Theory’s status and its relation to literature. For the needs of this

book, it would be helpful to start with a distinction between two general methods of how Theory can be, and is, used, and to show some possible inadequacies of one of these uses.

This basic distinction in the relation of theory to practice in literary studies concerns their normative and descriptive aspects and the degree to which literary theory is a blend of particular methodologies that urge certain practices and underlying descriptive assumptions, as in the standard understanding of philosophy of a discipline/practice. The normative is usually conceived of as the set principles that ought to be used in the critical enterprise (even when this seems to be in discord with the very practice), and whose establishment is necessary for the practice of literature, such as the Intentional Fallacy and the Heresy of the Paraphrase. It follows that one can extend the idea of the normative, perhaps in a slightly pragmatist spirit, to any specific research program, or to any specific literary theory, that sets its own goals as to the nature of its inquiry into literary texts, its goals and its methods, as well as its own definition of what a literary text is. To avoid the essentialist parlance, one might say that a given theory offers its own description of the aspect of the text that it deems of interest to its research program. This extension seems only natural, as any new theory, or any new research program in literature, attempts at focusing on, or emphasizing, a different aspect of the studied text. Thus, this function of literary theory might be called, with some reservations, the philosophy of literary criticism(s), or the metacriticism.

The descriptive aspect of literary theory would not be that of trying to lay down specific rules needed for the reading of texts, but rather to investigate the “foundational issues” (Lamarque 2009, 5) of the literary studies itself, and of the concept of literature as such, as well as its “methods, aims, presuppositions, modes of argument or evidence of reasoning, the status of its central claims and its basic concepts” (Lamarque 2009, 5), being thus closer to what might be called philosophy of literature. This logically implies that underlying all the diversity of approaches to studying literature there is a unity and agreement about at least some of literature’s crucial and defining concepts. This point also emphasizes the gap dividing the descriptive from the normative approach, since the latter would entail that formulating rules and principles precedes any valid critical practice, whereas the former would imply that some form of practice, or inquiry, already exists, and theory’s role is only to ponder upon its foundations (or lack thereof).

The distinction between the normative and the descriptive is, of course, not that clean-cut, i.e., analytic aesthetics might be said to contain both normative principles and descriptive content. This is a result of how the notion of analysis is typically understood in this philosophical tradition.⁵ The objective of analysis is to unveil the logical structure behind the concepts we use. This is achieved by means of breaking them down

into smaller units in order to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions of their application. In other words, to apply a certain concept to an object correctly means to ascribe it to a relevant category. In the famous Russellian example, the necessary and sufficient conditions to successfully apply the concept of a bachelor are manhood and unmarriedness, and in order to be classified as a member of this category, a candidate has to meet both of them. Similarly, analytic work in aesthetics focuses on determining the logical structure behind the concepts that are used with reference to art. This, obviously, includes the concept of art itself, and virtually all the jargon used when discussing art, ranging from artworks, interpretation, aesthetic intentions, aesthetic properties, fiction, taste, evaluation, etc. On the whole, however, on the axis of descriptive vs. normative, philosophy of art scores definitely higher in the direction of the former and literary theory more in the direction of the latter.

As it was mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, there exist many applications of a concept such as “literary theory.” The same might be said of “aesthetics.” One of the standard meanings of it might be something akin to artistic principles, program or artistic forms used in a specific genre or by a specific artist, as when talking about “the aesthetics of camp” or “the aesthetics of Sarah Kane.” Another common use of the term refers to beauty and its perception in general. These meanings, however, are of little importance for the main argument of the book due to their overwhelmingly broad scope. The more general understanding of “aesthetics,” along with its relation to aesthetic experience and value, and to the notion of the “artistic” are explored in Chapter 4. Unless stated differently, throughout the book “aesthetics” is going to be used as an equivalent to “philosophy of art” in the sense of an inquiry into the foundations of the practices surrounding art which aims to clarify the use of certain concepts applied in the practice, as well as to investigate the logical structure behind them. Of course, there is also a narrower meaning of “aesthetics,” such as in “aesthetic experience,” “aesthetic attitude” or “aesthetic properties.” As Noël Carroll suggests (Carroll 1999, 156–159), these refer to the audience-related aspects of art. In this sense, “philosophy of art” might be said to be object-oriented, while “aesthetics” is receiver-oriented. Overall, following the use of these concepts by analytic philosophers, “philosophy of art” and “aesthetics” will be used interchangeably, while “aesthetic experience,” etc. will be used with reference to audience-oriented aspects of art.

Even with this succinct summary of my assumptions about art-related terminology, one can easily envisage the scope of work done in analytic aesthetics, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. First of all, analytic aesthetics cannot be called a methodology of studying art in the sense that Marxism or feminism can. That is to say, aestheticians are not interested in studying the contents of art through the lens of specific

theories and methodologies per se. Nor can aesthetics in this sense be equivalent to the normative aestheticism that urges scholars, readers or critics to enjoy the type of art for art's sake attitude. The program of merely clarifying and ordering the concepts that are normally employed in specific discourses is obviously modest in comparison with literary theories' ambitions that usually aim at using specific, pre-established body of claims to explain and to study art outside of its basic, tangible context. These ambitions are sometimes muddled with something akin to the analytic program, as doubtlessly movements such as hermeneutics, formalism, structuralism or deconstruction definitely both contain analytically based claims about literature's foundations and sometimes encourage very specific reading strategies and broad research programs.

Taking these differences into consideration, analytic aesthetics clearly cannot have the ambition to replace literary theory; it can, however, prove to be useful regarding the basics, or what contemporary literary theorists often reluctantly call the essential questions of literature. One frequent way of criticizing literary theory is pointing out the lack of consensus about the most rudimentary concepts and issues surrounding literature. Discussions concerning meaning, interpretation or intention have often been too vague, with Theorists jumping to hasty conclusions, and considering the debates closed far too early, as some critics point out (Hogan 1996, 1–11). This is precisely the area where literary analytic aesthetics might possibly come in handy.

One more important issue which will be elaborated upon later on, but which perhaps needs to be at least indicated at this stage, is the relation between philosophy, as a body of abstract knowledge and practice, as understood in aesthetics. Whereas most literary theories have often called for some alteration of the way works of literature are standardly read and interpreted by common readers (most readers hardly ever read with Marxist or feminist theoretical frameworks in mind), often being wary of acknowledging and studying the tangible practices and institutions that we normally take to be part of appreciation of literature, analytic philosophy of literature might be called rather conservative. If the literary theorist is suspicious of any allegedly "normal" and established principles governing what is acceptable in interpretation and appreciation, or in other words, suspicious of the possibility that a non-theoretical, non-ideological practice can exist, the aesthetician, in a way, reverses this relation, acknowledging the existence of a certain social and material set of practices which are privileged over any set of theory. Thus, the philosopher's job is merely to demonstrate in what ways the concepts employed in these practices are logically interconnected.

A suspicious literary theorist might wonder whether the aesthetician is not in the grip of bourgeois ideology, unaware of the sociohistorical constitution of both art and the practices that surround it. Isn't their insistence on appreciating the work of art, or celebrating the artist's

creativity a step back in the intellectual history, returning to some pristine, pre-theoretical, pre-Barthesian world, where one is a passive recipient of the pleasures of the work, unaware of the indeterminate nature of the text? For one thing, it is true that analysis, as understood by the aesthetician, is embedded in the set of practices and conventions deeply rooted in the modern sociohistorical reality. It is also a fact that certain modes of appreciating art have developed historically and are chiefly characteristic of modern Western societies. The same might be said about the social institutions that make up the artworld, such as galleries, museums, universities, publishing houses, as well as critics, and, of course, artists. Analytic aestheticians are well aware of the fact that analyzing the artworld is necessarily local. The most dominating theories of art in the analytic tradition are those that stress the impossibility of an ahistorical definition of art. But the fact that certain practices developed along with the birth of the bourgeois society does not necessarily put the whole business into question for the aesthetician, as she is interested in merely describing the conditions that are necessary for actual humans in contemporary context to enjoy art aesthetically. This is a typically Western bourgeois preoccupation, but so is that of a student, of a professor, of a French intellectual or of an author of a PhD thesis. The fact is not directly relevant to the logical analysis of the use of language. This insistence on analyzing language in terms of its actual use in a social context is clearly the merit of late Wittgenstein's philosophy which favored the idea of language as a game, and meaning as use, over the positivist vision of language as a mirror image of the world, whose logical structure can be studied autonomously.

Similarly, restoring the concept of the work to literary studies need not entail any return to biographical studies, or to some nineteenth-century upper-class aestheticism. As this will be elaborated upon in the following chapters, I will only mention that one of the most outspoken critics of Barthes' textualism among the aestheticians, Paisley Livingston, claims that he is not advocating a "return to the kind of literary scholarship Barthes and others wished to replace" (Livingston 1993, 91) and the attempts to show "ways in which some of the textualist's intuitions may be reframed in a reasonable and constructive manner" (Livingston 1993, 91), simply because it is altogether "very difficult and costly" (Livingston 1993, 91) to reject the notion of the work in its entirety. This overall anti-metaphysical bent, the unwillingness to remove philosophical debate from tangible human action, to some extent typical of all analytic philosophy, can be appealing; nevertheless, at least one major possible threat to the felicity of the whole project can be indicated, and that is, predictably, the notion of practice, or institution. Some literary theorists, most notably Stanley Fish, have encouraged their own versions of the theory that literature is an institutional, or rule-governed practice, but their definitions of the concept appear to be problematic.

The cornerstone of Fish's institutionalism, the notion of interpretive communities that govern and delimit the range of possible interpretations, or uses, of literary works seems dangerously close to framework relativism, typical of, e.g., Kuhn's scientific communities, or Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity. To summarize Fish's argument briefly, interpretations are always already predetermined by reader's own assumptions and expectations concerning possible meanings. In his account, textual meaning is not discovered, it is always created by the readers, or produced by their assumptions, and interpretations are always self-confirming, that is, readers' assumptions always produce what they in advance aimed to produce. This does not mean, however, that interpretations are unconstrained in the "anything goes" type of attitude. The range of possible interpretations is always regulated by the professional communities of readers who share similar reading strategies. On the other hand, it is more accurate to say that they think they share these strategies, for according to Fish, we can never break free from our pre-established beliefs, whether they refer to textual interpretation, or ascribing intentional states to other minds. So powerful are our assumptions and beliefs that we can never really understand or assume the role of a member of a different community. As we can only project our meanings, different communities become, in fact, impenetrable and autonomous. Donald Davidson's famous attack on Kuhn's notion of scientific communities and Sapir-Whorf thesis on linguistic relativity, a view which he calls conceptual relativism where "reality itself is relative to a scheme: what counts as real in one system may not in another" (Davidson 1973, 5), seems to apply to Fish's theory, too. As Davidson argues, the very fact that proponents of framework relativism talk about disparate frameworks and paradigms proves that one is able to recognize a set of ideas as different and separate from one's own. If we were prisoners of our own assumptions, we would not even be able to recognize the existence of other frameworks. A staunch defender might say that other frameworks are acknowledged as separate in some sense because our own framework permits labeling them like that in the first place. But then, the notion of the framework, or the community, is vacuous, as positing its existence makes no difference for a theory of meaning. Consequently, although Fish's basic observations about the role of social institutions and pre-established conventions that govern the creation and reception of art seem plausible, his overall institutional account seems to be severely flawed.⁶

One can expect that the validity of the concept of institution, or other art-related concepts, would be debatable in the work of analytic aestheticians. After all, it is deceptively easy to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions behind concepts such as "bachelor," as the practice/institution governing its use relies almost solely on the everyday communication of speakers of English, and as such remains uncontroversial. It

is an entirely different business, however, to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions of concepts such as “art” or “artwork” and to determine the rules and the nature of institutions regulating the creation and reception of art, finally pointing out what exactly is this privileged practice whose logical structure the philosopher only clarifies.

Getting back to the distinction into normative and descriptive, the point of logical analysis is to eventually formulate a set of normative definitions and principles that help to clarify and regulate the practices surrounding the aesthetic appreciation of literature. This normativity, however, refers to an entirely different aspect of literature, than that of, say, Marxism, for it does not necessarily encourage reading through the lens of a very specific body of theories that elucidate given aspects of literary works. It is mostly concerned with the rules and procedures involved in appreciating a work as art, rather than to explore its contents with specific ideological issues in mind.

This last observation is essential, as it points to the fact that the most prominent aspect of literary theory is precisely its insistence on seeing literature not as literature in the aesthetic sense, that is to say, not as an object or a form of inquiry that is already established in some convention, or, broadly speaking, an institution, but as an area that constantly needs to be redefined, re-studied, challenged and re-discovered, using various theoretical and critical tools. At the same time, it would be naïve to suppose that a given literary theory is able to distance itself from the descriptive dimension and refrain from making general claims about literature in the aesthetic sense. A lack of proper distinction between the arbitrarily established research program and a mere inquiry into the philosophical foundations of literature as art might lead to serious confusions and basic misunderstandings in the relation between literature and Theory. Thus, to clarify the nature of my own inquiry, I want to stress that any objections to literary theory’s claims will only refer to its descriptive aspect, or its attempt at formulating a philosophy of literature which would be coherent and congruent with the actual practice of reading (regardless of whether it refers to ordinary readers or to competent literary critics) in order to be rewarded with a properly defined aesthetic pleasure.

To reiterate, conceiving of literary theory as simply philosophy of literature would be highly problematic, perhaps even paradoxical, for it is precisely the concept of literature as an aesthetic category that most contemporary literary theories rejected. The cornerstone of literary theories probably from structuralism onward has been the supposed liberation of art from the constraints of aesthetics, such as reading for appreciation. Thus instead of talking about “works,” literary theory has introduced the allegedly value-free notion of the “text,” which, supposedly being a neutral, non-ideological concept, enabled literary scholars to conduct various types of researches. To the majority of literary theorists,

this meant studying literary works as linguistic, or, broadly speaking, cultural artifacts, in the sense of a repository of certain beliefs which can be unearthed using specific theories.

Such approach might encourage a reductionist view of literature in which there really is no difference between literary works and shopping lists, as, being merely “texts” or cultural artifacts, both are equally subject to a theoretical reading. Nothing need be wrong with such a research program unless it simultaneously tries to produce a comprehensive, reductive philosophy of literature. In a hypothetical situation, a reductionist philosopher might attempt to explain the contents, and the workings of literature exclusively within an arbitrarily established framework, e.g., literature as a special use of language, as a semiotic code, as a free play of signifiers, as a semantic-syntagmatic structure and as a reflection of certain social forces and ideologies, but in reality one can hardly ever entirely dispose of the constituents of the logical structure behind the application of the concept of “literature.” Any Theory-fueled reading of a literary work will always contain at least minimal considerations about possible meanings, intentions, functions of a given element of a work, about the context of its creation, about it being a success, or a failure; all that makes up the aesthetic concept of literature. In this respect, a radical, reductionist literary theorist can only pretend to entirely abolish the concept of literature, which might simply be buried deep underneath a given theoretical framework. By replacing the concept of “literature” with that of the “text,” and thus, by trying to dispose of the putative object of their own description, a radical reductionist initiates a paradox of rejecting the existence of literature prior to formulating some normative principles about it. Claiming that J.G. Ballard’s novels and J.G. Ballard’s phonebook are the same type of value-free text, and equal objects of literary studies is illusory, as the latter could never provide enough material for elaborate research. As a result, the paradox, or confusion concerning the fundamental questions of literature is often the consequence of Theorists making pronouncements about the “nature” of literature, at the same time contesting the very concept of literature, mixing their claims about “works” and about the theoretically and arbitrarily determined “texts.” This schizophrenic attitude is probably at least partly responsible for much of the confusion and misunderstandings that arose in theoretical debates.

The idea of re-including the notion of a literary work of art into theoretical debate, and the following explorations into aesthetics will, thus, refer directly to the need of re-establishing a systematic philosophy of literature that will acknowledge the existence of literature as a certain rule-governed institution and practice. As it was indicated, specific theories, understood as separate research programs for literary texts, will not be targets of any criticism. This is motivated by a basic observation concerning the general idea of textual meaning. Since literary texts are

not natural objects whose properties are directly, observably accessible, there cannot be any single, natural approach to textual analysis. In fact, investigating textual meaning is always a stipulative activity, whose aims and methods need to be established in advance before it is even possible to talk about meaning. There cannot be “the meaning” of a text, as that would imply some ontological necessity resulting from seeing texts as natural kinds. In this sense, I am entirely in agreement with Patrick C. Hogan who writes that

it makes no sense to argue about what meaning really is. The question of “meaning” is merely a question of stipulation, in the sense that “meaning” is simply what one stipulates it to be – authorial grammatical intent, readers’ associative response, or whatever.
(Hogan 1996, 3)

No such assertions can be said to constitute the “real meaning” of a work, as “it makes no sense to speak of ‘the meaning’ of a given work. Rather, it only makes sense to speak of some particular sort of meaning of that work—for example, conscious authorial moral aim” (Hogan 1996, 4). This does not mean, however, as pragmatists such as Rorty or Fish would make us believe, that any inquiry into literary meaning is purely arbitrary, or without any limitations. As it will be argued later, there are many conditions under which one can conduct an inquiry into literary texts *as* literary texts, just as there are some conditions regarding determining general meaning in language. For example, as Hogan and others have persuasively argued, it is impossible to determine meaning in language which would be entirely non-intentional and which would presuppose some form of linguistic autonomy (Davidson 2005a, 89–109; Davidson 2005b, 143–159; Grice 1989, 213–223; Hogan 1996, 43–94; Knapp and Michaels 1985, 11–31).

This is yet another important point grounded in the posited division into (normative) literary theory and into (descriptive) philosophy of literature. An inquiry into literary texts where scholars attempt to describe and identify the interplay of certain ideologies or where they use the textual material to illustrate certain concepts (as in Marxist, psychoanalytic, gender, feminist, etc. theory) is perhaps the hallmark of textually-driven literary theory but it is not necessarily connected with philosophy of literature. In other words, these types of inquiry do not primarily investigate literature in the aesthetic sense, and their findings (in the sense of specific research outcomes or specific interpretations) are, therefore, usually of little interest to scholars attempting to establish a systematic philosophy of literature. The findings of these types of research might be (and indeed, often are) tremendously important for cultural studies, but they are not constitutive of the concept of literature *per se* (Lamarque 2009, 10–11). This does not mean that such approaches restrain from

making claims or judgments on the, so-called, essential questions of art, and this is precisely the level where a hypothetical polemic or agreement between the Theorist and the aesthetician is possible.

To sum up this part, since meaning is stipulative, it is always up to the scholar to determine the aims and methods of their inquiry, thus expounding some type of meaning (aspect) of the analyzed text that they want to emphasize. This does not mean, however, that stipulation is limitless. There are simply certain institutional rules that set the limits and the framework for interpretation of both literature as literature and literature as a cultural artifact (text). Outlining the former is going to be the main point of the rest of this chapter, as the latter constitutes a different type of inquiry that is not directly relevant for discussion of literary aesthetics.

Analyzing literature as a cultural artifact has been the chief preoccupation of literary studies since the advent of normative, textual literary theory. It is obviously a valid and important form of inquiry, but it has also certainly led to the marginalization of seeing literature in its primary, artistic, function, and has become increasingly remote from the typical reading experiences, eliciting accusations of it being a cookie-cutter theory that only cuts any demanded shape cut of the literary texts' dough. These accusations come from many diverse sources (Graff and Di Leo 2000, 113–128; Livingston 1991, 11; Swirski 2008, 298) and others. The literature-as-literature and the literature-as-cultural-artifact approaches need not be in opposition, though, as they are simply constituted by different stipulations of meaning pursued in their distinct types of inquiry. As it was mentioned earlier, analytic philosophy of literature describes, by analyzing the critical practice, the underlying, unifying concepts or the necessary conditions of considering a text literary, in the sense of it being highly valued artistically (and not, for example, literary in the formalist sense of “literariness”). Hence, the connection between the two is parallel, rather than that of opposite paradigms. One might say that in some respects, the relation is hierarchical as, for the aesthetician, the notion of a literary work is logically prior to that of a text that is subject to theoretical investigation. But this is not always the case. Some contemporary theories (e.g., feminist or post-colonial ones) seem to be closer to appropriating some elements of the concept of a work, that is taking interest in its selected extratextual constituents, such as the sociohistorical context of its creation or the person of the author. Other theories favor looking at works exclusively as impersonal texts/artifacts of a given culture trying to analyze how they relate to the dominant discourses within that culture. If they set their research goals in a way that makes little use of the artistic qualities of literary works, treating them on equal with hairstyles, leaflets or TV commercials, one cannot say that they are in any sense secondary to aesthetics. Thus, my point is simply that the cultural concept of literature has been unjustly overemphasized,

and the artistic concept of literature, unjustly marginalized, even though this marginalized aspect is precisely the most fundamental and constitutive of literature.

Finally, one might ask whether any preoccupation with (descriptive) philosophy of literature can actually benefit the practical side of literary studies, or perhaps such activity would be superfluous. After all, if, as it was provisioned earlier, considerations in philosophy of literature leave most of the theoretical projects virtually intact, then why bother? Perhaps the answer is deceptively simple. The role of specialized branches of philosophy standing behind specific types of inquiry or activities (e.g., philosophy of mathematics, art or science) is always to clarify the discipline's assumptions, central questions, problems, aims and methods. And although literary theories have always attempted to ask and answer questions in these areas, their underlying textualist assumptions impeded giving satisfactory answers. Outlining what such answers might look like, according to contemporary analytic philosophy of art and literature, is going to be the main point of the rest of this chapter.

Analytic Philosophy of Art?

At first glance, the juxtaposition of literature with analytic philosophy might look absurd. After all, how can a school of rather specialized, technical philosophy which focuses mostly on logic, mathematics and the hard sciences, and embraces scientific naturalism and a positivist program, contribute anything interesting to the realm of humanities? Interaction between literary studies and various areas of analytic philosophy has, indeed, been rather scant and highly selective (Swirski 2010, 11–13). Apart from some, mostly critical, appropriations of J.L. Austin or H. Paul Grice's work in philosophy of language (Fish 1980, 1989; Hirsch 1976; Petrey 1990), there was only some limited interest in the works of Thomas Kuhn, and one volume of essays on Donald Davidson (Dasenbrock 1993). In fact, most literary scholars would probably agree with Jacques Derrida who resolutely stated that "analytic philosophy has little to do with the humanities" (Derrida 2002, 29). Curiously, though, analytic philosophy has seen a blossoming of interest in literature, as more and more books and articles devoted to philosophical problems of literature were published in the last two decades or so. Analytic philosophy of literature has expanded immensely and there does not seem to be a reason why departments of literature should ignore it altogether, especially in the days of rather uncertain status of literary theory. I believe, thus, that both the conviction about analytic philosophy being irrelevant, and the underlying assumptions about its positivist and scientist nature are erroneous, and they probably stem from a gross misunderstanding of how analytic philosophy developed and changed throughout the twentieth century.

To begin with, the very idea that analytic philosophy endorses a scientist program and is chiefly preoccupied with issues in logic and in the hard sciences can in no way refer to school of thought in its entirety. Such labels would be appropriate, perhaps, for the early twentieth-century ambitions of philosophers such as Russell, early Wittgenstein, A.J. Ayer and the members of the Vienna Circle who pursued the related programs of logical atomism and logical positivism, trying to establish secure foundations for reliable, scientific knowledge, and reach the basic, logical facts that constitute the world. These philosophers indeed claimed that the only reliable source of knowledge comes from the natural sciences, and any claims that cannot be broken down into simpler, verifiable, observational sentences refer to nothing in particular in the empirical world, and are thus meaningless. Their chief method of philosophical investigations, logical analysis, was supposed to be a tool for dissecting natural languages in order to uncover the underlying logical structure of either scientific statements, or everyday expressions, and to clarify and discipline our use of language, as well as to determine the fundamental, empirical facts about the world.

This, obviously, limited the area of interest of early analytic philosophy, as such programs frequently led to condemnation of entire areas and activities central to human concerns. Explorations in religion, art, ethics and in the whole realm of humanities were considered meaningless, as there was no possibility to reduce them to simpler, objectively verifiable empirical statements. For example, Rudolf Carnap of the Vienna Circle infamously deemed Heidegger, and supposedly, most of the continental tradition of thought, meaningless in his aptly called essay "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language," and A.J. Ayer formulated an emotivist approach to ethics, theology and aesthetics (Ayer 1936; Goodrich 1983), according to which all statements concerning human conduct, the religious experience and beliefs, as well as any comments on art do not relate to any objective, verifiable reality but only express the current emotional attitude of the speaker. As a result, humanities could, at best, pretend to be meaningful, but, in fact, they were always referring to non-existent objects.

Even though such an approach might have been typical of the early analytic philosophy, in the post-war era the intellectual mood changed dramatically due to a devastating criticism that came, as if simultaneously, from various sources internal to the Anglo-American tradition of thought. The logical positivist project has since been largely abandoned mostly owing to the work of would-be famous philosophers, especially by Karl Popper, who rejected the possibility of verification of scientific hypotheses, by the later Wittgenstein who, among other things, questioned both the Cartesian subjectivity inherent in most of empiricist philosophy and the metaphor of language as a mirror of reality, and by Willard Quine who launched a pragmatist attack on the so-called

dogmas of empiricism, by which he meant the possibility of reducing all statements to that of immediate, empirical experience, and the distinction between analytic (a priori) and synthetic (empirical) propositions. These criticisms had a tremendous impact on analytic philosophy, leading to the rejection of many of its early assumptions, including the very possibility of analyzing language in order to reach the most fundamental, atomic facts about the world. Not only has this changed the overall approach to central philosophical questions, but it has also finally opened those areas of inquiry which used to be either marginal or ignored altogether, such as politics, religion, ethics and aesthetics. Of course, such a paradigm shift posed new questions about the nature and the definition of post-positivist analytic philosophy that have never been satisfactorily answered. Thus, some of the continental philosophers prefer to talk, in a typically historicist manner, about post-analytic philosophy, and even analytic philosophers themselves seem to be certain that “it is not possible to define analytic philosophy in terms of some specific set of logical, metaphysical or scientific ideas or concerns” (Macarthur 2014, 8), since those who are usually put under this label no longer share any specific program, aims or suppositions. It is also not uncommon to claim that analytic philosophy is “simply a matter of a certain style of writing displaying an overriding concern for argument, drawing distinctions and clarity of exposition” (Macarthur 2014, 8), although such claim is still far from being uncontroversial.

At any rate, if the above considerations decisively prove anything, it is probably the fact that at least some of the literary theorists’ prejudice against analytic philosophy seems to be groundless.

From Wittgenstein to Indiscernibles

It is perhaps true that, as Macarthur indicated, there is no single, unifying principle, or a set of assumptions that would characterize contemporary analytic philosophy, especially after the analytic appropriations of such, supposedly non-analytical philosophers as Hegel (by a variety of analytic scholars, including Arthur Danto, Peter Singer or Robert Brandom), Heidegger (by Ernst Tugendhat), Marx (by the so-called Analytic Marxists) or Freud (Richard Wollheim). But the Anglo-American tradition has not developed in an intellectual vacuum, and its own history of ideas definitely influences the prevalence of some philosophical stances over others. For example, on the one hand, contemporary analytic aesthetics retains the anti-idealist character of early analytic philosophy, but it also accepts the anti-empiricist and anti-positivist assumptions that have dominated the analytic tradition since the demise of neopositivism. It would be almost impossible to find some followers of R.G. Collingwood’s idealism, or A.J. Ayer’s positivist emotivism among analytic philosophers of art today. Neither do analytic aestheticians endorse

the views of symbolic, textual autonomism or indeterminacy that are typical of broadly understood continental aesthetics. Perhaps the only significant analytic philosopher who wrote on aesthetics and held a stance similar to continental textual autonomism was Nelson Goodman, but his influence on contemporary aesthetics was rather scant.

The general approach to art, and thus, literature, which seems to be the most prominent in analytic aesthetics, and the one which is endorsed in this book is perhaps ultimately rooted in Wittgenstein's later philosophy or/and in pragmatism, as they both have had a significant, and often indistinguishable, influence on contemporary Anglo-American thought. This might sound controversial or far-fetched, as neither Wittgenstein nor pragmatist aestheticians seem to be particularly revered in analytic philosophy of art. Indeed, Wittgenstein never developed a systematic program for aesthetics, and other aspects of his work (especially the family resemblance theory) is often criticized as problematic, at least when applied to art (Carroll 1999, 206–224). The purely Wittgensteinian, anti-essentialist position in aesthetics, put forward by Morris Weitz, who endorsed the view of art as an open object based on family resemblance, used to be fashionable in the 1950s but has long been in decline. Nor do any of the major pragmatist philosophers writing on art, such as Dewey, or Rorty appear to be extensively discussed. Richard Shusterman, whose early work was leaning toward analytic philosophy, but who later became more involved in pragmatist aesthetics, is present mostly through his earlier work on art. The above applies mostly to discussions of art in the narrow institutional sense. Dewey's aesthetics is much more than that but it is not fundamentally in opposition to analytic aesthetics and his works tend to be discussed when analytic aestheticians take up the broad sense of aesthetic as sensual experience. It is more a matter of analytic philosophy of art being more focused on philosophical aesthetics concerned with art in the narrow sense.

Assuming that there is, then, any affinity between Wittgenstein, pragmatism and contemporary analytic aesthetics, it has to be of a more complex, indirect nature. If it was not Wittgenstein's work on aesthetics, it was possibly the general mood of post-war philosophy that abandoned both positivism and the search for ideal language. It is this turning toward the practice of using language, toward social institutions and toward seeing language as a social practice, a game (perhaps being the analytic analogy to Bakhtin's speech genres), brought about either by later Wittgenstein, or by pragmatism, which immensely influenced the post-war Anglo-American philosophy, and consequently shaped the general orientation of its branch devoted to the study of art. Contrary to continental aesthetics, analytic aesthetics is not focused on emphasizing the fragmentary, destabilized character of the artistic work (text), nor does it aim at unveiling hidden rhetorical aspects of texts, or subverting its ideological frameworks. Analytic philosophy of art is different

from continental explorations of art in its concern with the surface-like (Danto 1986, 23–69) tangible practice of creation and reception of the works of art by and through social institutions. This does not entail that all analytic philosophers necessarily literally subscribe to, say, George Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art, but in comparison to the continental tradition, this shift toward actual practice and social institutions is clear.

Analytic aesthetics is not an area of inquiry that is entirely separate from considerations in other areas of philosophy. Indeed, some elements of analytic philosophy of language, such as speech act theory, questions of meaning, intention and interpretation permeate aesthetics. The same holds for the philosophy of mind, science or history. Such a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to art, typical of analytic philosophy, implies a certain hierarchy of research. Thus, philosophy of art in general would be focused on problems common to all branches of art, such as questions of the role of intention, the broad definition of an artistic work and the nature of the aesthetic experience. Under this broad umbrella term come, yet again in a typical analytic fashion, more specialized branches of aesthetics devoted to different arts, such as philosophy of literature, music, film and visual arts. Of course, these “branches” are not entirely separate as they always necessarily share some related philosophical questions.

As it was already mentioned, aesthetics has always been present in some form in the analytic tradition, albeit marginally. The demise of positivism was followed by an extraordinary flourishing of those areas of philosophy that had previously been dismissed by analytic philosophers. The post-Wittgensteinian, pragmatic, institutional nature of aesthetics is clearly seen in the work of one of the major, and the earliest figures in its post-war period, namely Arthur Danto. Danto tried to approach both the problem of the works of art not being natural objects, and the issue of indiscernibles, that is, objects which are indistinguishable in visual, or empirical terms, but of which one is a work of art, and the other is not. An example might be Marcel Duchamp's famous sculpture “Fountain” which consists of an ordinary urinal. If the work of art cannot be distinguished from an ordinary object, then, perhaps it is impossible to develop a theory of art that would define an artistic work in purely observable, or intrinsic features. As an alternative, Danto introduced the notion of the artworld, that is to say, an institution embracing both the social practices of creating, displaying and perceiving art, and the knowledge of artistic theories, history and conventions. Hence, as Lamarque puts it, following this line of thinking, works of art can only “become art – and acquire their art-related properties – in virtue of their embeddedness in some kind of social institution” (Lamarque 2009, 58). In yet other words, art cannot be defined without reference to social practices, contexts and history. Danto's own example of an indiscernible was Andy Warhol's display of Brillo soap boxes, and he commented on it saying:

What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain theory of art [...] without the theory, one is unlikely to see it as art, and in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of the history of recent New York painting [...] It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible.
(Danto 1964, 581)

Danto's artworld anticipated the later institutional theory of art which was put forward by George Dickie. In one of its many variations, the theory stated:

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).
(Dickie 1974, 34)

Dickie's theory is far from being universally accepted among analytic aestheticians. It has drawn a lot of criticism (Carroll 1999, 224–240), and has also been in decline, yielding its dominant position to various historical definitions. Institutional and other theories of art, with emphasis on literature, will be discussed later on, but for now it will suffice to say that even though the institutional theory does not dominate the analytic philosophy of art, most analytic aestheticians are still chiefly preoccupied with analyzing the actual functioning of art among various social institutions, following the Wittgensteinian primacy of use/practice. Again, perhaps this preoccupation is worth emphasizing only when contrasting analytic and continental aesthetics; otherwise, calling the whole approach as having an “institutional bent” would be, at most, confusing. The institutional theory of art/literature, as developed by analytic philosophy, is not the same as, say, sociological idea of institution. It is definitely closer to Stanley Fish's notion of rules and conventions to which he alluded in his later works. In Peter Lamarque's words:

The claim of one version of institutional accounts of literature is that the very being and nature of literary works depend on an “institution” in a manner analogous to that in which a chess piece or an item of currency depends on a corresponding game or practice. Certain consequences follow immediately. One is that there would be no literary works without the institution; literary works are not “natural kinds,” just finely wrought stretches of language independent of specific purposes and actions. They are “institutional

objects.” Thus, secondly, the existence of literary works depends on a set of conventions concerning how they are created, appreciated, and evaluated; in other words, on attitudes, expectations, and responses found in authors and readers. A third point arises directly from the chess/currency examples. It is a feature of chess and currencies that there are multiple ways of instantiating the formal roles of the pieces in each case [...]. The institutional account of literature places no restrictions on the form that literary works can take [...]. To participate it is enough to know and conform to the conventions. (Lamarque 2009, 61–2)

Even if the views presented here do not fit the institutional theories exactly, one can definitely say that the perspective presented has at least some “institutional bent,” in the sense that it acknowledges that aesthetic appreciation of literature, which includes interpreting and evaluating, is a skill to be mastered and displayed in specific conditions, rather than naturally or arbitrarily, and that a proper philosophy of literature cannot exhort to radically alter the conventional practices, or to make pronouncements about the nature of art which would deny some activities or some works the status of art, contrary to how these concepts are applied in practice.

Institutional Account of Literature

Probably the earliest monograph on philosophy of literature written in the analytic tradition was Stein Haugom Olsen’s 1978 *The Structure of Literary Understanding* (Olsen 1978). Deeply rooted in the Oxford philosophy of language of the time, it encourages the view that, contrary to the formalist, or structuralist claims, literature cannot be conceived of as an object, but rather as an act, an utterance embedded in social practice. The book is at times a little outdated, as it devotes a substantial amount of space to criticizing the long-abandoned quasi-romanticist expressivist theories of art. Nevertheless, it immensely influenced the work in analytic literary aesthetics, sketched some key concepts and ideas that inform research in aesthetics, as well as developed and applied the institutional approach to art to literature. Perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate the distinctness of the analytic aesthetics, half of the book is devoted to rebutting formalist, structuralist, expressive and cognitive (in the general sense) theories of art, all of them being rather popular and relevant at the time of the book’s publication.

The first theory that Olsen rejects is what he calls semantic theory of literature, and what possibly could also be called formalist theory, according to which, what makes literature distinct from other discourses is a special use of language. Olsen calls this feature semantic thickness, or suggestiveness, and his description of it bears some similarities to concepts such as literariness, or Jakobson’s poetic function of language.

According to Olsen's rendition of the semantic theory, the difference between literary and ordinary use of language is that in the latter language serves a non-linguistic purpose, pointing beyond itself and drawing reader's attention to something essentially non-linguistic. In the former, as Olsen states, what makes the literary use of language dense is its self-directedness, "[i]n literature language draws attention to itself and not to something beyond to which it directs attention" (Olsen 1978, 12). Just as with any formalist approach, although it is undeniable that the bulk of literary works demand that their readers be highly focused on their formal aspects, formalism as a general theory of literature must fail, or as Olsen puts it in the analytic jargon, "semantic density is neither a sufficient, nor a necessary condition for something being a literary work" (Olsen 1978, 13). Indeed, if one takes the opening sentences of a work such as Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, "Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title, but it meant a lot to Cohn," they do not contain, as Olsen compellingly argues, "any particular semantic density, paradox, irony, ambiguity or whatever one wants to call it" (Olsen 1978, 13). Yet, not only is the style widespread in literature, but this particular passage is a part of a highly celebrated literary work of art in spite of the fact that it does not manifest any poetic, or semantically dense features whatsoever. Ambiguity or self-directedness of the language does not constitute the purpose of interpretation and appreciation in themselves, but, as the above example demonstrates, serve broader, artistic functions, and actually do point beyond language.

Moreover, all of the aforementioned semantically dense elements may and do appear in ordinary language use no less frequently than in literature. As such, the concept of semantic density cannot form a basis for a distinction between literature and non-literature. One can only make a judgment on the existence or non-existence of a semantically dense element by a prior knowledge of the context of an utterance. It cannot, in Olsen's words, "turn a passage into a literary work, or guarantee that it is part of one" (Olsen 1978, 13). Finally, semantic density is unable to account for some structural features of a literary work, such as the multiple relatedness of characters, events and objects that clearly have little to do with linguistic features, but they still constitute bulk of the aesthetic qualities of given works.

Olsen claims that the underlying formalist fallacy is akin to treating works of literature as objects, just like in the concept of the verbal icon, which will unveil its own contents to anyone willing to apply to it a close reading method. As Olsen correctly observes, this can only be done if the reader knows in advance how to approach an artistic work, what to look for, what to expect, how to place specific passages in broader artistic context and how to construe the interconnectedness of the work's elements. In his words,

the literary work supplies the material on which he bases his judgment, but what is given in the work is given only for the reader who looks for it and has the right categories at his command in dealing with literary works.

(Olsen 1978, 16)

Similar is Olsen's attack on the structuralist theories of Todorov and early Barthes. The structuralist idea that literary work is analogous to a sentence in the sense that one can "see it as a hierarchy of semantic units the meaning of which is a function of lower-level semantic units and their interrelation" (Olsen 1978, 18) is doomed to fail precisely because it rejects the institutional basis of literature and confuses the social practice of everyday use of language with the social practice of creation and reception of literature. If members of a linguistic community have "clear and reliable intuitions" (Olsen 1978, 19) concerning the meaningfulness of a sentence and about the function of its constituents, readers and critics do not have a clear, immediate idea of the constituents of a literary work. The nature of linguistic communication makes it possible for the linguist to systematize the speakers' intuitions "by help of a set of minimal units [...] and combination rules" (Olsen 1978, 19) to make the knowledge possessed by ordinary speakers explicit. However, expectations of competent readers analogous to that of language users cannot exist in the consumption of literature, for there are no regularities in the form of structure of literary works akin to that of a sentence. When one approaches a poem or a novel, one cannot observe predictable structural/semantic units larger than a sentence, at least not such that would have a phrase- or word-like repeatability between individual works similar to that in sentences, and consequently, as Olsen states, the sentence analogy is "diluted to a vanishing point" (Olsen 1978, 20).

Olsen only briefly mentions semiotic theories and does not consider them fundamentally different from the structuralist ones; in fact, he calls structuralism a "branch of the much-heralded science of semiology" (Olsen 1978, 19). He quotes Barthes' analogy of a critic's beginning an analysis of a new, unknown literary work to that of a linguist beginning to decode an unknown language (Olsen 1978, 20). The analogy, however, according to Olsen, does not hold, as the linguist knows in advance that they are "studying a system of structural units" (Olsen 1978, 20) where structural differences actually underlie differences in meaning. This is continuously confirmed during the observation of the language users and by interacting with them, as language is used to refer to tangible objects in the material world. But to claim that the same assumptions about meaning are relevant for literary studies and thus that they inform literary research cannot be proven. The argument is clearly circular.

But perhaps a supporter of structuralism might argue that one should not understand the sentence analogy literally, but more generally, as an indication that structuralist theory encourages systematic research, rigorous, technical terminology and a search for regularities in and across literary works. Unfortunately, one cannot call it a weaker version of structuralism, for there is nothing distinctly structuralist about it. Looking for regularities and structures is a cornerstone of any research, and literary studies have known it at least since the times of Aristotle. Unless one shares very specific assumptions about language with structuralist linguistics, one cannot be called a structuralist.

Olsen sees the failure of structuralist theory in reifying the concept of a literary work to the extent that a structuralist sees it as an object with inherent qualities that can be objectively studied from the outside. This cannot be done, as Olsen suggests, because an inquiry into establishing the structure of a work will always yield arbitrary results. Commenting on Jakobson's and Levi-Strauss' famous analysis of Baudelaire's *Les Chats*, he writes that "[i]n any text, one can always describe an indefinite number of structures both concerning language and content" (Olsen 1978, 22). The whole work of the critic is to make a judgment on which of these structures might be relevant for the artistic dimension of the work, which requires from them an aesthetic competence. Where there are no firm intuitions (contrary to the ordinary language use) "as to the relevance and meaning of the structures" (Olsen 1978, 22) the structuralist approach produces arbitrary results.

There is, however, at least one variety of structuralist theory, the one propagated by Jonathan Culler, which, by stressing the importance of literary competence, seems to be closer to Olsen's institutional theory. Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* (1975) was published around the time of Olsen's work and, consequently, is not discussed by the latter. Still, it might be possible to reconstruct Olsen's hypothetical stance on Culler's theory. There are passages that might be called convergent with Olsen's theory, where Culler alludes that linguistic competence is not sufficient for understanding literary texts and that their proper interpretation requires extra-linguistic knowledge:

both author and reader bring to the text more than a knowledge of language and this additional experience – expectations about the forms of literary organization, implicit models of literary structures, practice in forming and testing hypotheses about literary works – is what guides one in the perception and construction of relevant patterns.

(Culler 1975, 111)

One of his objectives also seems close to the anti-metaphysical approach of analytic philosophers who insist on studying the tangible actions involved in appreciating art:

One need not struggle, as other theorists must, to find some objective property of language which distinguishes the literary from the non-literary but may simply start from the fact that we can read texts as literature and then inquire what operations that involves.

(Culler 150)

Unfortunately, the very fact that Culler uses notions such as “literary competence” or “literary institutions” seems to be the only similarity, for how he understands them and what use he makes of them, differs radically from Olsen’s approach. As a follower of structuralist theories, Culler is chiefly interested in the abstract, depersonalized structures that, in his account, make up the institution of literature. What is important in interpreting individual works is only their contribution to understanding universal reading strategies. In his account, literary competence is equivalent to the reader’s familiarity with historical genre conventions: the literary *langue* that enables the generation of new readings. For Culler, to read a text as literature means to naturalize it, that is, to determine how it relates to historical genre conventions, to decode it and to ascribe it a place in the abstract literary structure. His idea of poetics is, thus, to map all the historical genre conventions, or reading strategies, so as to have a comprehensive, scientific account of the institution. Interestingly enough, by indicating that to be called literary, a text must necessarily refer to what has already, historically, been accepted as a literary text, it might be said that Culler attempts to combine historical and institutional theories, both of which are present in contemporary analytic philosophy of art, and whose relation will be discussed in the following chapters. For now, it suffices to say that perhaps it is Culler’s structuralist framework that makes his account flawed and incongruent with the tangible practices he wishes to study.

Culler’s insistence that literary works refer exclusively to abstract, historical structure, puts it at risk of an infinite regress. For one thing, naturalizing a chain, a sequence of conventions cannot be infinite, and the final level of naturalizations that, for Culler, is invulnerable to further naturalizing, is irony, which distorts the standard meaning generation of conventions and refuses any definite closure. The claim seems far-fetched, but its biggest flaw is perhaps that, by eschewing a final closure, it subverts the idea of determining a stable, certain map of conventions, as they turn out to be quite fluid. Similar problems might be observed on the other end of the chain of conventions. If, as he quite correctly observes, conventions can be operative, in the sense that they can actually help to familiarize that which is unknown only if they stay unnoticed, then creating a comprehensive map defuses their workings. It is as if the historical process of naturalization accelerates so that new conventions and ways of naturalization are expected to emerge. The project would, thus, be infinite on its way forward, as any emergence of

new conventions changes the relations within the historical structure. Moreover, the very act of naturalizing conventions is always already an act of thematizing them. By doing so we do not innocently describe conventions, but we defuse them. This implies that by merely being aware of conventions we are transported to the level of irony where the very idea of structures, differences, references and codes is thematized and, thus, put into question. Such an act always marks a reshuffling of any current structure of conventional relations. As a result, the structuralist synchronic ideal of a stable structure becomes elusive and seems to go against Culler's original project, perhaps lapsing into post-structuralist flux of meaning. Culler alludes to that when he writes, "the study of any set of semiotic conventions will be partially invalidated by the knowledge which results from that study (the more aware we are of conventions the easier it is to attempt to change them)" (Culler 1975, 293). Although this seems to be a serious flaw regarding his original aims, Culler does not acknowledge it as such. It seems clear, however, that, contrary to what his theory promises, Culler cannot provide us with a purely descriptive and finite account of the conventions that constitute the institution of literature.

To develop this critique in the spirit of analytic aesthetics, it might be said that, even though Culler is perhaps right to insist on the necessity of ascribing works to certain traditions and conventions, if they are supposed to be called literary, or artistic, in the first place, this condition is not sufficient to accurately describe literary appreciation. His structuralist perspective underestimates the role of individual works, but it is precisely individual works that serve as the basis of enjoying and appreciating art. Determining conventions and localizing some form of a historical context are not aims in themselves, but they only serve as means to read a text aesthetically. Of course, untutored readers (or trained readers, for that matter, depending on the aims they set for themselves) might approach texts looking for all types of information, or gratification, but if one looks at those readings (e.g., those of literary critics) that emphasize artistic evaluation and the judgment concerning the quality of a work, then recognizing conventions is only part of the whole enterprise. Moreover, one can wonder whether a knowledge of strictly depersonalized, extracted conventions can sufficiently benefit one's ability to judge on a work's quality. Perhaps, when comparing depersonalized structures, it cannot. My own illustration of this claim is indebted to Danto's discussion of indiscernibles: suppose that a competent reader is presented with a text that, upon reading it, appears to challenge a known literary convention. One would not be able to properly evaluate its quality without knowing the context of its creation and ascribing it to a proper author. If the text was plagiarized, it clearly would not constitute a successful candidate for appreciation. Similarly, if one decides to publish *Ulysses* under one's own name, it would be merely a fraud, and

not a separate, genuine work of literary art. Although the “creation” would have the same textual structure and the same references to historical conventions, the structure itself is not sufficient to properly evaluate and locate it within the artworld. Such an object might be, of course, put on a display in a gallery, and then actually constitute a unique work of art, but it definitely would not be a literary work.

All in all, I believe that the analytic notion of competence is superior to Fish’s and Culler’s, as it avoids the confusions of both rival theories. In the analytic account, competence would be equivalent to being introduced to the procedures, rules and conventions that make up the literary institution. In order to become a competent reader, one need not be a literary critic, or a professor, but one must follow certain procedures, one must acquire the skill, along with a relevant art-historical knowledge to be able to appreciate something as art.

Olsen’s insistence that it is impossible to construe a universal grammar of literature that would account for all the conventions, procedures and the scope of literary meanings, suggests that the procedures that constitute the literary institution can only be quite general in nature. But before elaborating on that, it is important to clarify the difference between two ways of how the notion of institution is used with reference to art. On the one hand, this means the procedures involved in understanding and appreciating art. On the other hand, it refers to institutions in the social sense. Within the network of artistic social institutions, a literary work would be understood as a purposeful linguistic creation which the author displays as a candidate for appreciation in front of the informed audience (or which the informed audience appropriates this way), i.e., the artworld: the critic, the scholar, the competent reader and other institutions that deal with the evaluation of art. When thinking of a literary institution in the non-social sense, it refers to the body of procedures and conventions that lead to a work being aesthetically appreciated or not, remembering that such procedures are rather general and cannot guarantee the generation of an extensive literary grammar beyond the level of individual works.

The abovementioned purposefulness of literary creation, largely ignored by structuralist theories, is the cornerstone of the analytic institutional theory. Olsen is ready to admit that a literary work, in its unity, is “a molecular structure of meaningful or artistically significant elements” (Olsen 1978, 164), on the condition that the structure, or its underlying grammar, can rarely go beyond specific works. The existence of the structure is only posited in the dynamics of reflexive intentions by “the reader’s assumption that the producer’s intention was that it should be so construed” (Olsen 1978, 164). The precise ontology of these intentions, that is, whether they can be considered actual, hypothetical, partial, etc. is not important here, as the point is that all of them are determined conventionally by a community of readers. The competent reader who wishes to read aesthetically, begins with a simple supposition that the work was

designed as a unity, where every element, every passage, should serve some aesthetic function, or, relate in a coherent way to other elements of the work. The reader begins by segmenting a work in a process which, in Olsen's words, "ideally [...] is exhaustive" (Olsen 1978, 83), that is, in ideal conditions no element of a work should be "outside the structure which the reader tries to impose on it" (Olsen 1978, 83). As an example, Olsen proposes four categories according to which one might describe the functions of specific passages when the segmentation is initiated: their subject, tone (as in an attitude toward specific topics), status (concerning their attribution to characters or narrators) and stylistic features, though, as he admits, "it is not always possible in practice to separate these four aspects of passages, and it is very rarely necessary in actual analysis" (Olsen 1978, 84). Deciding what function a specific passage serves, e.g., claiming that it illustrates the imaginative nature of a character in the story, must be further integrated into overall explanation of the whole work which would emphasize the multiple interrelatedness of its constituent elements, unified with a postulated common theme. For interpretations to be plausible, the institutional constraints require that both on the level of analyzing individual passages and on the higher-order interpretation of the whole work, the reader is able to account for the segments' status, taking into consideration specific criteria. These include completeness (showing how the aforementioned four aspects of a segment function in it, and how they can contribute to a higher-level description), correct recognition of the aspects of a given passage (determined by the knowledge of conventions, or by the conventionally attributed intentions), comprehensiveness and consistency (leaving as little as possible resistant to interpretation) and discrimination (the ability to ascribe multiple artistic functions to a segment).

Evaluation is a second-order procedure to which one is committed after making specific interpretive judgments, a distinction that perhaps distantly echoes traditional hermeneutic notions of "subtilitas intelligendi" and "subtilitas explicandi," or Hirsch's "meaning" and "significance." The difference would be that in the hermeneutic tradition, one does not merge meaning with the reader's purpose, thus its focus is not on the aesthetic merit of the text. Again, in practice, interpretation and evaluation are hardly ever separate, but logically they are bound in a hierarchy. The value judgments that Olsen suggests are present in the procedure include deciding on the precision of the posited artistic significance of given passages, as well as their coherence, relevance to posited (interpreted) theme, their complexity and interest, in the sense that it can contribute something to the convention to which it is ascribed, as well as that it can be said to communicate something which is of general human interest. This also means that evaluation and value judgments in an artistic sense permeate the practice of interpretation even at the most basic level of interacting with a text. Whatever segment of a work one

comes to read and interpret, the action entails speculating about its possible artistic function and about its success or failure in communicating something in the context of the whole work and other works. Moreover, value judgments refer to whole works but also to its specific elements. The reader evaluates the work not only in how it succeeds at this internal level, but also according to their cultural background, knowledge of the world, knowledge of the historical context of its creation, and the knowledge of how it relates to other works and conventions. Their individual judgment as to the artistic merit of the work is not finite in any sense, as its status is further dependent on the judgments of other members of the artworld, and is subject to historical reassessments.

The ultimate goal of aesthetic reading is to experience aesthetic pleasure, which the adherents of institutional theories consider non-reductive, in the sense that the very fact that one can successfully apply the institutional procedures, that one can successfully impose such a structure on a candidate for appreciation, and that the work actually responds to it, or rewards it, is an end in itself. But just like with the descriptions of specific passages, a fully autonomous aesthetic enjoyment, in the fashion of Kant's disinterestedness, could only be an ideal model at most. In reality, aesthetic judgments and the pleasure derived by a competent reader would perhaps always be muddled with all kinds of transient personal preferences or contingent facts about the actual way the work was read, and, of course, the vague and unmeasurable level of literary competence.

What is striking here is perhaps the fact that analytic aestheticians, contrary to many followers of the formalist-structuralist tradition, marginalize the widely discussed notion of the meaning of a text. For the analytic aesthetician, meaning is intimately tied to the interpreter's aims, and there cannot exist a single meaning, or an underlying structure, separate from human interaction; an observation which is perhaps congruent (although in a different vocabulary) with Barthesian post-structuralist insight about texts and works. To reject the abovementioned approach to a work of art merely means not to read it aesthetically, that is, with a purpose of ultimately experiencing aesthetic pleasure, but with a different objective. In other words, for analytic aestheticians, textualist literary theories privilege semantics over aesthetics. They focus on interpretations and meaning, rather than on appreciation.

I suppose that Olsen's idea of appreciation, which he sees as something that literary critics and competent readers do, is not particularly revolutionary. After all, the investigation into what literary critics do has been around at least since the times of David Hume and I take it that there is a basic consensus regarding what competent readers do, how they produce interpretations and evaluations. In this respect, Olsen's work is not particularly original: one might see it as bearing some resemblance to, say, *New Criticism*. There are, however, several important differences. I will have more to say about the relation between *New Critics*, analytic aesthetics

and textualism in the next chapter, but for now, it suffices to say that New Critics face the same problems that semantic/formalist theories do, by overemphasizing the role of the text and textual conventions. Moreover, New Critics do not place their discussion in aesthetics proper, which leaves them removed from discussing related philosophical issues in other arts. They do not make use of a notion such as “artworld,” which is indispensable for understanding contemporary art. Finally, they do not distinguish between reading, research, interpretation and appreciation when it comes to art, which leaves the status of their analysis rather confusing.

Likewise, I have some doubts about the institutional theory itself, which I am going to explore throughout the book. I do not believe aesthetic appreciation is entirely a matter of following conventions, that it is an activity composed of entirely arbitrary procedures as in chess rule-book. Nor do I believe one can easily separate understanding and evaluation, as evaluative judgments seem to be tightly related to even simplest construal of meanings. I am convinced, however, that Olsen’s institutional theory is a good starting point for further discussion as it is clear and coherent, and a good example of an analytic outlook on art, acknowledging the importance of the aesthetic level of experience and research of artworks.

The above is, of course, only a starting point, a brief summary of the literary institution; and in the following chapters the notion will reappear and will be updated and revised, when discussing specific issues in aesthetics, their relation to post-structuralist theories, the historical development of art as well as the relation between literature and some developments of cognitive sciences. The analytic notion of the institution is of course a narrow one, and in order to describe the literary institution as a practice in the broader sense, one cannot ignore the fact that narrowly defined institutions and the logical structures behind language use do not exist in a vacuum, but are located both in certain sociohistorical contexts and are consumed by human minds which function within a framework of embodied cognition.

Notes

- 1 For example: Stein Haugom Olsen, *The End of Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Colin Davies, *After Poststructuralism: Reading, Stories, Theory* (London: Routledge, 2003); Nancy Easterlin and Barbara Riebling (ed.), *After Post-Structuralism: Interdisciplinarity and Literary Theory* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993); Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (London: Penguin, 2004); Wendell Harris (ed.), *Beyond Poststructuralism: The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Reading* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), and many others.
- 2 One might think of not only conservative literary critics that have always rejected the developments of structuralist theories, but also of neopragmatists who heralded the end of theory in the early 1980s.

- 3 This tendency to purge literary studies seems to be typical of many scholars associated with Darwinian Literary Studies.
- 4 This question is elaborated upon in Chapter 2.
- 5 The following part of the paragraph uses arguments from Noël Carroll's *Philosophy of Art*.
- 6 More elaborate critical discussions of Fish's institutional theory can be found in: Reed Way Dasenbrock, "Do We Write the Text We Read?," in *Literary Theory after Davidson*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 18–37.

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2 Literature and Art

Before Theory

Before moving on to discuss in detail some tenets of the analytic philosophy of literature, one crucial point has to be addressed, namely the relation of analytic aesthetics to those “literary theories” which do not fit the definition of Theory which I laid down in the preceding chapter. Specifically, those that predate the emergence of post-structuralist and of some ideological approaches to literature. To recapitulate briefly, the need to delimit the understanding of the concept of Theory was motivated by the fact that when it is used, discussed or criticized nowadays, the concept hardly ever refers to, say, the work of George Poulet or Rene Wellek, but precisely to Theory in its contemporary forms of various post-structuralist and ideological approaches.

Moreover, when Theory is used by scholars of those provenances that often resolutely distance themselves from literary theories (e.g., analytic aestheticians, cognitive critics, Darwinian literary critics), they mean precisely ideological and post-Saussurean approaches to literature. The idea that the hallmark of literary theories is their rejection of the literary aesthetic dimension, as expressed in Lamarque’s words in a quotation in Chapter 1, is clearly representative of the analytic perspective on literary theories. But even if we accept the distinction into aesthetics and Theory, one can easily notice that a number of scholars elude simple classification: New Critics, formalists, phenomenological critics are all standardly included in Theory anthologies, but in their research into the nature and into the workings of literature they acknowledge the need to study its artistic character. One of the bones of contention is, of course, a disparate understanding of what art is and how to study it.

As it was indicated, the aims and the scope of research conducted by analytic philosophy of art is rather narrow and cannot be easily said to challenge or compete with literary theories. The reservation that philosophy of literature is concerned with the study of the logical structure underlying our use of concepts and that it primarily addresses the essential questions about the nature of the concept of art and serves a function only subsidiary to the actual practices of the artworld: the

critics, the authors, the academics, the competent readers, the publishers, etc., means that its inquiry can never actually explain or illuminate the meaning and value of specific works, that is, it is not equivalent to literary criticism. Nor can it be particularly appreciative of seeing literary works as meaning generation machines, necessarily encouraging multiple and fragmentary forms of research into their actual content, hidden ideological commitments or their existence as cultural text, all of which is commonly accepted in contemporary literary theories. The analytic aesthete narrows the scope of their research by claiming that in the logical order of our use of concepts, literature is an artistic category, a linguistic artifact to which a specific artistic value is attributed. Their research is to determine the conditions under which literature and concepts related to its reception and appreciation are used. Thus, analytic aesthetics and literary theory can serve, at least to some extent, complementary functions. Analytic philosophers of literature tend to emphasize that one of the key tenets of textualism is rejection of aesthetics and conversely, some textualists see aesthetics as an unilluminating and naïve celebration of an author. Whereas I argue that neither need be true, it is important for the sake of the argument to cross-examine some central ideas of analytic philosophy of art with those approaches to literature that sprung before the age of Theory, so as to show that analytic philosophy of art can more effectively deal with some philosophical challenges and does not mark a return to some quaint idea of aesthetics.

We cannot forget, however, that the name “literary theory” is often attributed to some approaches that intended to study the workings of literature as art, and which in most cases, predate the post-Saussurean and ideological approaches. Hence, if analytic aesthetics can be said to contribute something to contemporary literary theory, it has to be shown as distinct and more productive than those, crudely speaking, pre-theoretical aesthetics. Otherwise, the call to re-include aesthetic categories in literary studies will be merely a naïve dream of returning to the pristine, pre-theoretical world of art. In what follows I shall briefly comment on some problems of the phenomenological, hermeneutical and New Critical theories of art.

Phenomenological Art Theories

In the early forms of phenomenological criticism, as represented by Poulet and the Geneva School, what was perhaps considered the chief value of literary art was that it enabled encountering and merging with a different consciousness. If, as phenomenologists observed, consciousness is always already directed at something and presupposes the existence of a subject and an object in a unified act, then art, and especially literary art, constitutes the space which is created both by the consciousness of

its author and of its reader. As Poulet suggested in his "Phenomenology of Reading," to read literature is to experience the other consciousness in oneself. To identify it one has to look for its traces, to find that, as one critic observed, one's own consciousness becomes, in another critic's words, "filled with objects that are at once dependent upon it, i.e., clearly the result of its own intention, and yet recognized to be the thoughts of another" (Ray 1984, 10).

In congruence with the principles of phenomenological reduction, one investigates only the phenomena appearing in one's consciousness, ignoring all sources of information about the empirical author, biography or historical context. Nor can the work be equivalent to an autonomous verbal structure. It is rather an event during which the reader animates it, being absorbed in a different consciousness which leads one to a state where "a work of literature becomes (at the expense of a reader whose own life it suspends) a sort of human being, a mind conscious of itself and constituting itself in me as the subject of its own objects" (Poulet 1969, 59).

The problems with such aesthetic theory are severe. To claim a possibility of objectively constructing other consciousness from scratch by identifying its traces is essentially expressive of a belief in Cartesian subjectivity and as such prone to falling into the pit of solipsism. After all, the consciousness experienced by the reader seems to be an artificial construct that does not exist apart from a single act. As some critics noticed, such form of analysis "is inevitably self-referential" (Ray 1984, 57–59), as the original consciousness, in fact, never appears in its described configuration outside of the imaginative act of reading Poulet postulates. As a result of accepting such Cartesian assumptions, it is never possible to differentiate between the actual authorial consciousness and that of whatever the reader intends it to be, and there is no way to distinguish the reader-author dialogue from the reader's imaginative monologue.

Moreover, the idea that literary works or whole artistic oeuvres can be unified by positing a stable authorial consciousness whose private inner experiences can be accessed through the language of the text is hopelessly naïve and goes against the grain of the greatest achievements of the twentieth-century philosophy of language, be it continental, as in the case of the followers of de Saussure or Bakhtin, or analytic as with Wittgenstein. Their greatest merit was to notice that language is necessarily public and autonomous and cannot be said to express strictly private mental states of individual Cartesian subjects.

Finally, phenomenological criticism is blind to most aspects of the actual reader's (be it expert or naïve) practice and artistic appreciation. Ascribing value, enjoying the form, placing the work in the artistic tradition and acknowledging its unique character is nowhere to be found in Poulet's theory (Lawall 1968, 74–135). Similarly, the hunt for the

consciousness of the other does not seem to be the chief preoccupation either of the trained readers or the ordinary consumers of popular literature.

A much more sophisticated theory of phenomenological literary aesthetics was put forward by Roman Ingarden, although some of its central claims also remain objectionable. Contrary to Poulet, Ingarden acknowledges that the literary work exists as a relatively autonomous skeletal structure, so to say, which the reader animates by filling its spots of indeterminacy, by concretizing it in the act of reading. As Eagleton spitefully commented “rather in the manner of those children’s picture books which you colour in according to the manufacturer’s instructions” (Eagleton 2008, 70).

The relation between the reader’s imaginative, creative reading and the intended form of concretization (which should be controlled by the structure of the work) is, however, again paradoxical. As Ingarden himself admits, “the first reading provides the reader with just that supposedly intuitive aesthetic concretization of the work and provides him with guidelines for what can and should be sought in an analytical investigation of the work” (Ingarden 1973, 283). So, specific concretizations are simultaneously given to the reader and at the same time bring the literary work into givenness. Individual concretizations of the work are, then, at the same time the reader’s own creation. In the end, it seems impossible to distinguish the creation of the imaginative critic from the recreation of the work itself. On the one hand, the realization of the aesthetic object requires active participation of the reader who can supply the aesthetic factor “independently of the work of art, but he can also be moved to supply it by certain qualities of the work of art” (Ingarden 1973, 295). If, however, the work fails to do it, and the reader delivers it on her own, then it is “a pure creation of the observer, however much it may appear in the aesthetic object” (Ingarden 1973, 283). The question how to discern the two seems to be left without any answers, leading one critic to claim that Ingarden’s theory of reading “may be as much a tribute to the reader, as to the work” (Ray 1984, 45).

Another intentionality-related problem with Ingarden’s ontology of art is his discussion of aesthetic experience and aesthetic object in “Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Object” (Ingarden 1961). Briefly, Ingarden claims that the object of aesthetic experience is not identical with the physical object that we might intuitively call the artwork, e.g., a sculpture or a painting. In his famous example, Ingarden says that Venus of Milo can be regarded as an aesthetic object which evokes aesthetic experience thanks to it having (among other aesthetic properties) a property of being “uniformly colored” (Ingarden 1963, 293), or as a physical object which evokes purely sensual experiences such as observing “a dark stain on the nose” (Ingarden 1963, 292), a property which we deem aesthetically irrelevant. According to the intentionality thesis,

every type of experience has a separate object, and consequently, the two aforementioned attributes do not belong to the same object as they are tied to different experiences.

But such a distinction turns out to be either false or uninformative. If such an intentional ontology is not easily falsified by cases of illusion or imagination (does the experience of thinking about unicorns entail their existence in any interesting sense of the word?), then how can it enrich our understanding of the ontology of art? To point to an entirely separate mode of existence of aesthetic objects is clearly to multiply unnecessary entities. Paradoxically, Ingarden's ontology might be more appropriate when discussing other arts and the problem might be the case of his bad choice of example. The identification of the sensory-experienced objects with the aesthetic objects is necessarily strong in most cases of traditional painting and sculpture and the artworld has always been particularly sensitive about detecting art forgery as well as distinguishing between copies, replicas, reproductions or pastiches, emphasizing the unique status of the original object.

The case is not the same, however, with literature, film, performance and contemporary visual arts. It is clear that when we talk about the work of literature or a film we do not mean a unique physical object. We experience and appreciate these works regardless of their form; a literary work might be printed, spoken and recorded or it might be a hypertext or an e-book. A film can be recorded on celluloid, on VHS tape or digitalized in multiple data storage formats. These types of art may, then, indicate that Ingarden is right to posit the existence of ontologically separate entities: the aesthetic objects. But his theory becomes again highly problematic when it comes to contemporary art and the indiscernibles mentioned in the first chapter. If a urinal or a box of soap is absolutely indistinguishable from ordinary objects we encounter in a lavatory or in a store, but still we consider them valuable art when they are placed in a network of art-related institutions, then Ingarden's ontology can in no way account for this fact, as it would have to paradoxically claim that there exist ontologically separate objects whose physical and aesthetic properties are indistinguishable. As a side note, indicating this problem with theories of art was perhaps partly the point of the famous comment about the contemporary status of art made by Benjamin in his "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (Benjamin 2007, 217–253). Benjamin claimed that due to technological progress, artworks have lost their aura of uniqueness and authenticity and that art would, thus, become liberated from the ritualized institutions that used to govern it and become open to politics. But in reality, no radical change in our approach to art, authenticity and creativity has appeared. Not every urinal is a work of art. Similarly, suppose someone were to replace the original closing credits in a film with one's own name and

then distribute it. One would obviously not create a work with a status equal to the original, but rather commit plagiarism.

The above also applies to literary works, as the famous example of Borges Pierre Menard story indicates (Borges 1964). In short, Menard is a fictional twentieth-century author who composes a work which is identical with Cervantes' original but which can elicit a different type of interpretation and critical commentary. This can perhaps lead to construing Borges' point as a rather banal claim about language: a particular token of a sentence type can have different meanings depending on the context. The real point is, however, more nuanced and more relevant to aesthetics. We would not see Menard's work as having the same qualities as the original, since informed appreciation depends on a proper identification of the object in question. The original Don Quixote and Menard's creation share the same textual-linguistic tissue, but they constitute entirely different works, precisely because a body of linguistic tokens is not equivalent to the notion of the work. The latter must include extra-linguistic elements, chief of them being the work's relation to the artistic tradition. It is precisely the work, and not the text, that is the object of informed appreciation, and consequently, Menard's and Cervantes' works cannot have equal artistic value.

Perhaps a staunch defender of traditional, pre-Duchamp art might argue that indiscernibles and most contemporary art is not real art. But that would mean presupposing in advance a theory of art that ignores the actual practice surrounding artworks and institutions and marginalizes a large portion of what has become generally accepted as art since the twentieth century. As opposed to institutional theories, Ingarden's ontology simply cannot successfully account for most art.

The problems of Ingarden's overall theory should not, however, overshadow the merits of his work. As Iseminger, an analytic philosopher of art, correctly observed (Iseminger 1973), Ingarden is entirely right both to posit a distinct type of experience, the aesthetic, and to distinguish between aesthetically relevant and irrelevant properties. It is also perfectly understandable that we use the notion of the "aesthetic object," but it is not always valid to claim its separateness from physical objects. Ingarden distinguished between mere physical objects, artworks and aesthetic objects. Artworks potentially have aesthetic qualities, but they can be truly manifested only in the aesthetic object which is the concretized artwork. However, this distinction still leaves us with the problem of the aesthetic value of indiscernibles or Borges' Menard story. The notion of an institutional object, as presented in the previous chapter, seems to offer a more comprehensive solution. On the other hand, Ingarden's discussion of the ontology of the literary work and its strata is well worth exploring through the analytical lens, and one can definitely find multiple common grounds with analytic aestheticians in this area. One of the reasons that Ingarden's work has not been widely discussed

in Anglo-American aesthetics and that it lacks a proper historical recognition is clearly due to the rather late translations of his works. Although written in 1930s, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* and *The Literary Work of Art* were first published in English in 1973 and in 1979, many years after the emergence of both Wittgenstein-inspired anti-essentialist aesthetics and the institutional theories of art. Sadly, a serious discussion of how his work could inform or interact, or in some cases, be translated into analytic jargon would clearly require an entirely separate book.

Wellek and Warren

One important “pre-Theoretical” theory of art I wish to briefly discuss is the one laid down by Wellek and Warren in their *Theory of Literature*. Although the publication of their work probably marks the first use of the phrase “literary theory,” which they, nevertheless, sometimes understand as “poetics” (Wellek and Warren 1949, 7), both the aims and the method of their research differ significantly from what “Theory” has been engaged with for the last couple of decades. Still, their objectives, that is, to unite poetics, criticism and history of literature in a coherent system of principles and procedures that inform the practice of literary studies do not seem to be very different, at least at first glance, from those of, say, Lamarque and other analytic aestheticians. Their method and their objectives are obviously closer to those of analytic philosophy of art than any of the other aesthetic theories that are sometimes included in the umbrella term of “literary theory.” Wellek and Warren’s work is apparently under the influence of the structuralist linguistics of the Prague School and the Russian formalists, though phenomenology remains another important predecessor (Creed 1983). Even though the ambition to lay down the principles for a systematic, rigorous, scientific study of literature is also indebted to the early twentieth-century formalist and structuralist theories, Wallek and Warren remain critical of purely formalist, language-internal definitions of literature and their remarks at times parallel those of Olsen (as quoted in the previous chapter). Nonetheless, there are reasons, though, to think that Wellek and Warren ultimately offer a narrow theory of literary aesthetics which, contrary to analytic aesthetics, is incompatible with bulk of the research carried out by literary theorists from 1970s onward.

A systematic study requires, according to Wellek and Warren, a methodology entirely separate from those of other disciplines, a methodology which is literature-specific (Wellek and Warren 1949, 8). Thus, in order to carry out systematic, scientific literary studies one has to formulate and clarify all the principles and norms that enable it, by analyzing poetics, literary criticism and literary history, three constituents of literary studies that remain in mutual interdependence. In congruence with

the formalist theories, they claim that the study of literature must be “super-personal” (Wellek and Warren 1949, 8–10) and go beyond the study of the idiosyncratic, of the individual response (as in the affective fallacy), and that it cannot focus on the psychology or the biography of the author (as in the intentional fallacy). The literary work itself is the sole object of scientific study. Unfortunately, Wellek’s and Warren’s scientific ambitions are fraught with serious difficulties from the very beginning, starting with their definition of literature.

Wellek and Warren criticize those definitions of literature that they deem too narrow, such as an aestheticist belles-lettres definition, or too inclusive, such as a definition that would encompass the whole of the written language. Instead, they propose that a proper definition is that of “imaginative literature” (Wellek and Warren 1949, 11–14), that is, a category which includes, say, fiction and poetry, but does not limit itself only to the established canon of the classics. Though it might sound intuitive and commonsensical, the definition is far from clear and, as they do not elaborate on it in the introductory part, but return to it throughout their book, it becomes more confusing.

In some passages they are clearly reifying literary text, stating that literary works simply possess certain objective features, such as beauty and the ability to evoke aesthetic pleasure (Wellek and Warren 1949, 241), and when they claim that literary works are artifacts in “which the aesthetic function is dominant” (Wellek and Warren 1949, 15). In other passages their claims resemble evaluative definitions of literature, where the concept is reserved for the works characterized by “complexity and coherence” (Wellek and Warren 1949, 122). Sometimes, they write as if they believed that literature is characterized by special use of language, which again resembles the formalist theories of Jakobson’s poetic function and the concept of literature as density of certain stylistic features. Literary language, for them

abounds in ambiguities; it is, like every other historical language, full of homonyms, arbitrary or irrational categories such as grammatical gender; it is permeated with historical accidents, memories, and associations. In a word, it is highly “connotative.” Moreover, literary language is far from merely referential. It has its expressive side; it conveys the tone and attitude of the speaker or writer.

(Wellek and Warren 1949, 12)

As I indicated in the previous chapter, linguistic definitions cannot account for the fact that we do appreciate minimalist literature and treat its choice of linguistic features as a conscious artistic design. Moreover, at times, Wellek and Warren seem to be criticizing the shortcomings of a purely formalist theory of meaning in a way that resembles Olsen’s institutional account, stating that certain stylistic and aesthetic features

can only be accessible to trained readers (Wellek and Warren 1949, 249). Some passages suggest that stylistic features are not enough to judge a work valuable and they are only relevant “in terms of their aesthetic function and meaning. Only if this aesthetic interest is central will stylistics be a part of literary scholarship” (Wellek and Warren 1949, 183). Regrettably, they do not clarify the relation between literary competence and the features of “literary language,” so the reader is left to accept two incompatible positions about the nature of literary art.

The cornerstone of Wellek’s and Warren’s outline of the systematic study of literature is their distinction into the extrinsic and intrinsic study of literature. The latter forms the core of literary studies and encompasses all the procedures applied to the work itself by the scholar. The former, consisting of all the extratextual aspects of research, is only germane to literary studies in a very limited sense, as in establishing proper historical context, searching for source texts, authenticating manuscripts and compiling bibliography. Apart from that, any research that encourages reading a literary work through the perspective of the author’s biography, putative psychology, social conditions that might have shaped it or by focusing on the philosophical ideas it expresses or on the propositional content is strictly forbidden, as it necessarily derails the discussion of the actual work and extorts the use of methodologies alien to literary studies.

Following Ingarden, Wellek and Warren claim that the intrinsic approach consists of analyzing the five strata constituting the literary work, from the sound stratum, through the fictional world of the narrative, to the metaphysical, in order to find a coherent theme that would help to unify all the elements of the work in an aesthetically pleasing way. The stages of the activity of the scholar are description, interpretation and evaluation. The former two involve focusing on the stylistic features of the work, as well as on the images, metaphors and symbols that the work might be said to contain. Then, the scholar analyzes the fictional world of the work, its tone, setting, characters, narrative structure, etc., and ascribes the work to a relevant genre. The overall evaluation of the work should, again, be concerned only with the work itself, disregarding any extratextual factors. Although they reject the formalist’s criteria of aesthetic quality, such as defamiliarization, the novelty of artistic means and perspectives that the work offers, what they offer is quite similar: good work of literature is able to evoke aesthetic pleasure owing to its internal complexity. As they say, “the value of the poem rises in direct ratio to the diversity of its materials” (Wellek and Warren 1949, 254).

Regrettably, Warren and Wellek’s outline of the systematic literary study does not become clearer, as their argument is developed on rather vague assumptions. As one critic correctly observed, just like the concept of the literary works and their mode of existence, some of the key concepts regarding their theory of literary art, such as “beauty,” “value”

and “aesthetic pleasure” remain vague and unexplained throughout their book (van Rees 1984, 523). Inspired by Ingarden’s work, they claim that specific readings are only concretizations of the works which exist as sets of highly specific norms and conventions that control and guide the reader. Not only are they fraught with the same difficulties as Ingarden’s theory discussed above, but also their discussion becomes even more vague, taking into account various remarks of formalist or institutional flavor scattered throughout their text. Nowhere can the reader find out about the source and the nature of the norms that make up the literary work, or the sensitivities and connoisseurship required of competent readers and critics.

The sharp distinction into the external and internal approaches to studying literature is also disputable, as the existence, understanding and evaluation of literary works evidently requires some extratextual knowledge. This is of course the hallmark of later post-structuralist theories that indicated the impossibility of locking literary works in a definite, autonomous structure. Such conclusion of Warren and Wellek’s discussion is inevitable, but it is something they are unwilling to admit.

Taking into consideration all the reservations and problems with definitions that Warren and Wellek have, it would be naïve to think that their work serves only a modest descriptive purpose of the actual procedures applied in literary studies. What they offer is a normative approach that unsuccessfully attempts to envisage a rather arbitrary idea of literary studies. Their problems result from a misguided idea of the object of a systematic study. As Warren’s and Wellek’s discussion demonstrates, the concept of “literature” is not consistently used with a single, unified underlying definition. This trivial observation entails the somewhat arbitrary nature of any definition and a research program built around it, a conclusion overlooked by Wellek and Warren. Clearly, as the concept of “literature” is and always has been applied to a variety of phenomena, one has to specify which of the uses and why one is interested in exploring. Wellek’s and Warren’s use of the concept, that is, the one used by a professional academic readers in the first half of the twentieth century, is inevitably limited to a local perspective of a contemporary, Western, middle-class academic. This already hints at the fact that the definition they are after would primarily refer to the concept of “literature” as used by the institutions of the artworld that have developed in the Western world and not to, say, how literature is understood and consumed by average readers of popular romance or how myth and storytelling used to function in ancient or primitive cultures. Such perspective is, roughly speaking, implied in the analytic institutional definitions of art, but it is not explicitly verbalized and carried to its conclusion by Wellek and Warren. This is not a trivial point, as Wellek and Warren’s work is ambiguous about the relation between the academic, professional reading and ordinary reader experience. Institutional theories are clear about the

need to include the concept of the artworld in the network of procedures involved in appreciating art where an informed experience of a literary work requires something more than just knowing the language in which it was written. It is not spontaneously, directly accessible. In other words, it is altogether unclear in Wellek's and Warren's work whether what they offer is an artificial, academic construct, a naturalizable phenomenon or something altogether different. The status of what they present is unclear and this mirrors the conceptual confusion over "reading" and "research" present in their work.

Consequently, if one analyzes the logical structure behind the actions and the procedures of the artworld, it does not take much to discover that "literature" is part of art, that it is an aesthetic category. But then, aesthetics, understood either as a normative theory of beauty or as a philosophical analysis of the conventions and procedures of the artworld, can in no way be called an exact science. Reading, interpreting and appreciating art is an activity people engage in. One can study their actions and the content they communicate to each other with the help of psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, cultural studies and so on. But when one outlines and clarifies their use of concepts, such as "artwork" and "value," one refers specifically to philosophy and its methods and not to a vaguely defined "research" or science. After all, if the aim of Wellek's and Warren's literary theory is to outline and to clarify what professional readers already do, then their work is that of a philosopher of literature. It is altogether unclear how their outline of a systematic study of literature differs from the work of a literary critic or a competent reader, both of whom are, ideally, acquainted with artistic tradition and with the conventions of reading. Similarly, one is not sure what the aim of their systematic study is. If the task of a literary critic is to formulate judgments regarding the work's value and its success at evoking aesthetic pleasure, using their knowledge of traditions and conventions, then it seems to be indistinguishable from Wellek's and Warren's description of the work of the scholar. If the two are equivalent, then, it leads to a claim that the aim of study is evaluating, commenting upon works which is entirely motivated by a drive toward experiencing aesthetic pleasure and not just accumulating knowledge. The difference between a scholar, a critic and a competent reader is, thus, obliterated to the point of them being indistinguishable and redundant, leading to further questions about the status of the research they outline. This is, however, quite a predictable conclusion if one, perhaps unwittingly, limits the definition of literature to its solely aesthetic function, to a practice of professional critics and audience whose primary aim is to experience a specific form of enjoyment through art and not to conduct a systematic research for its own sake.

To do justice to Wellek and Warren, one might say that many of their remarks about the nature of art are potentially very valuable insights,

even if in their particular discussion they prove to be vague. Some of them include: their insistence on the need to focus one's reading on the actual work; their distinction into the intrinsic/extrinsic approaches as primary and subsidiary operations contributing to a proper appreciation of art; their insistence on appreciation being a skill to be mastered; or when they write that meaning and value of works is shaped by the history of their criticism. On the whole, if one rejects their plea for a rigorous, perhaps scientific study of literature and their aesthetic absolutism which suggests that reading for aesthetic pleasure is the only acceptable approach to literary art, then one might say that their work is an early attempt at exploring philosophy of literature, as it is understood in analytic tradition.

To sum up and to clarify some of the points I have made so far: surely, "literature" is a concept that historically has denoted various phenomena; similarly, "to read and to enjoy literature" can refer to a variety of strategies and experiences of readers. If one is, however, to investigate, using the analytic methods, the logical structure behind the contemporary use of art-related concepts, one discovers that they relate to the actions of the persons representing the institutions of the artworld. Literature is, then, considered as a branch of art, and the logical primary function of art (if we accept that there is something that distinguishes the concept from others) is to evoke specific type of enjoyment when appropriate procedures are applied to it. Such understanding of literature is necessarily the one that has developed in the last few centuries in the Western world. The aesthetic is the logically primary understanding of literature, if we are to hold that there is something that actually makes it different from, say, jokes, political speeches or stories told when meeting friends.

But if literature *per se* is simply regulated by conventions of reading, one cannot have an entirely separate science that studies it in its aesthetic sense, as Wellek and Warren imagined, any more than one can have a science that studies the conventions of chess. To study the structure of concepts and procedures behind a given activity is the role of philosophy. Thus, to study what literature in the aesthetic sense is, as it has developed in the Western world, one needs to turn to philosophy of literature, *i.e.*, to literary aesthetics in the narrow sense.

However, if literature serves multiple functions, historically, socially, psychologically and politically, one needs to move beyond the narrow aesthetic sense of literature as a body of revered works to understand them. This is, of course, the major achievement of post-structuralist theories: the ultimate acknowledgment of the multifunctional and multi-level existence of literature as a space open for a variety of discourses. Despite the existence of rather commonly accepted differences between the continental and the analytic traditions of thinking about art, in what follows, I will try to demonstrate how analytic aesthetics can intertwine

with more contemporary literary theories and their beyond-aesthetics approach, and to suggest that eventually that it is not entirely easy for literary theories to completely dispose of some art-related concepts and practices.

Works and Texts

As I indicated in the previous chapter, many analytic aestheticians share the contention that the one common denominator of contemporary literary theories is the rejection of aesthetics. One way in which this is allegedly reflected is the fact that literary theorists often tend to read literature as cultural texts, that is, as value-free products of a given culture which they analyze in terms of certain beliefs or values, cultural practices and institutions which the texts manifest or challenge. Literature is, then, put in a broader framework of a cultural product, no different than an advertisement, a music video or a TV political debate, which is studied by means of a variety of ideologically-oriented methodologies, such as Marxism, feminism, post-colonialism, new historicism and queer theory. Alternatively, for some theories, the study of literature might not necessarily consist in using methodologies with strong ideological investments, but which, still, according to many analytic aestheticians, tend to ignore exploring aesthetics in their research while applying methodologies from other disciplines, e.g., structuralism and semiotics.

The claim that literary theories reject aesthetic considerations is, however, dubious and requires some clarification. One of the meanings of the concept of “aesthetics,” as used by analytic philosophers, is the philosophical investigation into the nature of art, and as such, it is not equivalent to the type of research carried out by literary theories. The question that remains, then, is to determine the relation of literary theories to the philosophical investigations into the nature of literature. For one thing, the aforementioned theories clearly employ methodologies taken from other disciplines, but to claim that they at the same time reject any philosophical claims as to the nature of literature leads to a clearly absurd conclusion that they carry out their researches without any assumptions as to what literature is. There is one sense in which the literary theorist’s approach to philosophy of literature appears deficient, and that is the attempt to define literature purely in Theory-internal terms, as it is most apparent in the formalist-structuralist tradition which sees literature as a specific use of language. As it was claimed in the previous chapter, the concept of literature, that is to say the aesthetic category, is not reducible to other phenomena. This is why the aforementioned theories fail to explain literature as a deviation of language or code use, as simple empirical evidence suggests that some highly valued literary works tend not to deviate significantly from ordinary language. Similarly, one is bound to fail if one attempts to define literature as an expression of the ideology

produced by the dominant social class (how to differentiate it from other manifestations of ideology?), etc. The failure to define literature does not mean, however, that the literary theorist fails in their overall research or that they do not make use of the aesthetic understanding of art at all.

The analytic aesthetician's contention that the theorist's research is not, ultimately, oriented at studying the artistic nature of literature is then true, but it tacitly assumes that the theorist does not make use of the artistic understanding of literature at all, which is not necessarily the case. To explore this issue, it is prerequisite to have a closer look at the fundamental concepts of literary theories and analytic aesthetics: the text and the work.

The most famous elucidation of the notion of the text, which at the same time marks the transition from the scientist ambitions of formalism and structuralism to post-structuralism and ideologically-oriented studies is, doubtlessly, the one laid down by Roland Barthes in his "From Work to Text" (Barthes 1977b, 155–165), one of the essays that serve as the cornerstone of post-structuralist literary theories.

To summarize what I take to be well-established facts, for Barthes, the notion of the work is inevitably tied to most forms of literary research carried out before the emergence of post-structuralism, and, as such, it is severely deficient and outdated in relation to post-Saussurean linguistics. He sees works as static, closed and strictly related to individual authors whose genius they allegedly manifest. They are easily classified, have stable identities and meanings, and induce pleasures of merely passive consumption.

The text is its precise opposite. It eludes simple taxonomies, its meaning is paradoxical and infinitely deferred. It is not a static object, but a dynamic process with no clear beginning or end. It has a plural meaning and is not tied to any particular agents or institutions; it belongs to the sphere of intertextuality, where texts always refer to one another and are composed of other texts, as never-ending strings of citations.

Unfortunately, Barthes is fundamentally unclear about the status of his discussion. Is it just a description of what literary studies look like, or started to look like in 1971? Or is it an altogether normative claim, a plea that there are serious reasons to transform literary studies in the fashion Barthes invites? For one thing, neither academic literary studies, nor the everyday practices that constitute the production and consumption of literature, seem to be significantly informed by purely textualist, agency and context-free approach. The essay does not leave us a clear clue as to which of the two he might be leaning, as, on the one hand, Barthes admits that the work-oriented criticism had dominated literary studies, a state which surely should be altered, but on the other hand, the possibility of the work-oriented criticism is in itself an illusion, as it is invalidated by contemporary knowledge about language,¹ and thus, his discussion might be called purely descriptive. But on the other hand,

by acknowledging the existence of a rift between the nature of language and what literary critics actually do, he appears to be formulating a normative claim.

In the opening sentence of another seminal essay, the “Death of the Author” Barthes writes that “over the last few years a certain change has taken place (or is taking place) in our conception of language,” (Barthes 1977a, 142), a change which, by blurring the strict boundaries between disciplines, invites interdisciplinary research, and, thus, a dynamic approach to literary studies. The change to which Barthes alludes is clearly the insight of structuralist linguistics without its early scientist ambitions: language exists as a structure autonomous of its actual users and their putative intentions; it is a closed, self-referential system of infinite deferral of signifiers and uncontrollable, open-ended action. If this is the true nature of language, then the type of criticism proposed by structuralists or New Critics is impossible, it is an illusion. Language is uncontrollable and the only thing we can do is to acknowledge that by making a transition into post-structuralist criticism.

But if we were to accept that this is the philosophy of language that Barthes really urges, and whatever readings he invites to produce, they are unrelated to historical contexts and actual actions of authors and audiences, then such approach must produce arbitrary research results and yield literary studies problematic. Such is the claim voiced by Paisley Livingston, an analytical philosopher of art, in his aptly called “From Text to Work.”

Livingston correctly observes that if we were to take Barthes’ depersonalized vision of texts literally, then it is hard to imagine any consistent or perhaps any intelligible practice concerning their use. Suppose one would actually attempt at radically depersonalizing and decontextualizing all the literary works that exist, turning them into an anonymous string of textuality. The result would be incomprehensible babble, impossible to understand even at a rudimentary level of linguistic, dictionary meaning. Moreover, for it to be really revolutionary, the type of intertextual interaction that Livingston takes as Barthes’ stance promising “maximum semiotic freedom” (Livingston 1993, 92) seems to be resting on a rather trivial assertion which Livingston construes as “every textual item X is ‘somehow related to’ every other textual item Y” (Livingston 1993, 93). Surely, as Livingston points out, such construal demonstrates that Barthes’ intertextuality thesis is “trivially true and totally uninformative” (Livingston 1993, 93). After all, any item in the universe can be said to be somehow related to any other item in an infinite amount of ways. There would be no point in arguing that texts are somehow special in this respect. Though such reading renders Barthes’ thesis trivial, I suppose it is not altogether unjustified. Barthes’ discussion is not exactly a paragon of clarity: claims that “the Text is always paradoxical,” (Barthes 1977b, 158) or that the key feature of the

signifier is its infinity (Barthes 1977b, 158), or that textuality is metonymic in nature and entails “the activity of associations, contiguities [and] carryings-over” (Barthes 1977b, 158) that coincide “with a liberation of symbolic energy” (Barthes 1977b, 158) are all quite vague and not thoroughly explained.

Livingston’s subsequent discussion leads to pointing out problems that seem to be left unsolved by the textualist stance as described above. Some of the questions to which answers remain unclear would include the following. How would one actually parse the strings of language to remove all the extratextual elements? We are still left with the old problems of whether to remove footnotes, author’s directions or introductions. And how to merge the texts in one string? How to actually identify the string of intertextual quotations if all the historical contexts and indicators of agency have been removed? How to posit that what appears to be a string of linguistic signs is meaningful if we have deliberately removed all of its contextual markings? What units should one choose to begin the intertextual investigation? Should one split the texts into sentences, paragraphs and then look for similarities? What would be the meaning produced in such a procedure apart from completely arbitrary decisions made by readers? (Livingston 1993, 95–98).

If such a strong version of textualism puts into question the very possibility of reading and analyzing literature (or any other cultural artifact, for that matter), then perhaps what Barthes might have been suggesting was a weaker formulation of its tenets? After all, there is nothing controversial in observing that texts are created in reference to other texts, that they borrow and quote and remain in dialogue with one another, or that sometimes one can notice striking similarities between quite distant texts. The really important question, then, would concern the purpose of encouraging such activities. One can surely choose some passages from Hegel and juxtapose them at random with pop music lyrics, but in most cases this can be treated either as mere fun or some transgressive artistic performance. It cannot, on principle, always tell us something interesting about Hegel or pop music. Moreover, the very fact that one enjoys the intertextual whirl of signifiers in the manner described above already presupposes that there is a mode of distinct existence of Hegel’s works and other objects. The segments selected for comparison indicate that some form of indexicality was applied and a given segment of a work was identified as separate from others. Unless, of course, the whole point is still a metonymic play with random associations as in the stronger interpretation of Barthes’ textualism, but such activities are, as Livingston correctly points out “ill-suited to teach us anything about either the aesthetic or the sociopolitical issues that lead us to take an interest in texts in the first place” (Livingston 1993, 93). I believe, thus, that an intelligible version of textuality is not really a self-referential system of signifiers, as it clearly refers to historical contexts. But if so, there would be

nothing that much revolutionary about Barthes' intertextuality. It would be just a new term for an old claim that works are created in relation to history and tradition and that authors draw heavily from the work of other authors. As Livingston aptly summarizes it, "the revolution is in actual practice more terminological than conceptual" (Livingston 1993, 93). In the end, it is obvious that Barthes' essay contains multiple references to authors, filiations, periods, etc.

To have an intelligible discourse at all, it is altogether impossible to entirely dispose of indexation, creation context and some assumptions about agency, all of which are associated with works and not with Barthesian texts. The pre-Barthesian static work of art that manifests the genius of the individual is surely an illusion, but so is the radical textualist position that Barthes might have encouraged. Still, it goes without saying that both Barthes and other literary theorists have produced analyses of art of considerable insight while placing themselves in the textualist tradition.

Barthes' textualism, along with his death-of-the-author thesis, are clearly related to his broader semiologist outlook which proposes to study cultural artifacts as arbitrary sign systems organized according to the principle of the binary opposition of meaning, forming a structure which is not immediately perceptible and largely autonomous in respect to the intentions of the individual agents operating within it. Needless to say, applying this approach to the study of the sign systems of wrestling, cooking, fashion and many other cultural phenomena has proven successful, illuminating the workings of a larger structure hidden beyond the seemingly individual decisions and actions. What is objectionable in Barthes' approach is his insistent claim that sign systems remain always entirely arbitrary and can never have any relation to, say, natural human predispositions. Indeed, any talk of "human nature" is rejected by structuralist discourse, as it tends to reduce all cultural phenomena to arbitrary cultural constructs. This produces a rather strong stance which I believe requires reconsideration in light of the progress made by cognitive linguistics (and consequently, other cognitive sciences) which stresses the embodied character of language and cognition in general.

As I argued in Chapter 1, following Olsen, applying Barthes' semiology to literary studies is, however, more difficult than applying it to the study of, say, popular culture or myth, as the latter phenomena are abundant in easily perceptible repeatable patterns and schemas and tangible interactions between parties within the sign system. But, as I suggested in my discussion of Olsen, there can be no such simple code for art, no universal grammar that would successfully encompass all literature and explain why certain works are valued more than others. Thus, to posit the existence of such a structure and to identify its minimal units in a given work is often doomed to produce purely arbitrary results. As it seems regarding his quarrel with Raymond Picard, Barthes himself was

not entirely immune to this ailment, producing a similar type of analysis in his famous treatment of the works of Pierre Racine.

To summarize the well-known facts, Racine remains one of the central figures of French literary canon and is celebrated by more traditional literary scholars, such as Picard, for his mastery of the conventions of the neo-classical drama, observing the rules of the unity of time and space, and writing his works in prose and later transcribing them into Alexandrine twelve syllable rhyming couplets. All of that, along with the common view that Racine's tragedies touch upon the topics of universal human concern, such as love and jealousy and are influenced by his austere Jansenist theology are completely irrelevant for Barthes. To uncover the real meaning of his works, that is, its unconscious structure, he proposes to see them as expressions of conflicts related to the murder of the father in the Freudian primal horde, summarizing the main crux of Racinian tragedy in the following way, "the catastrophic alternative of the Racinian theatre; either the son kills the Father, or the Father destroys the son: in Racine, infanticides are as numerous as parricides" (Greenberg 2010, 262). Although Barthes considers his outlook to be semiological, as in his famous formula describing the fundamental type of relationship in Racine, "A has all power over B. A loves B, who does not love A" (one might wonder, though, whether there is anything particularly semiotic in the above formula) (quoted in: Davies 2004, 13), his analysis seems to be largely psychoanalytic and anthropological. It might indicate that in this case semiotics makes, again, more of a terminological rather than a conceptual difference or that it just indicates a very broad attitude with little bearing on particular literary analyses.

One important point that Barthes makes is that we cannot say that Racine's works are really consciously designed, as he was only able to jot down the images hidden deep in the human unconscious. Obviously, one may point out that even if the putative Oedipal conflicts in the unconscious were really the material, the fabric for Racine's work, it cannot in any sense explain why this particular rendition of them remains valued higher than others. Neither can it invalidate the whole conscious artistic design of the form and content of his works or answer why this particular theory is the best to explain Racine. Perhaps a staunch defender of structuralist Marxism could argue that Racine's work expresses the beliefs of a privileged social class and that is why it is valued highly (though, in fact, Jansenists were always in a position of an oppressed group). Of course, it remains to be demonstrated how Jansenism informs the beliefs of contemporary privileged classes, as Racine is still considered an esteemed writer, or how the circulation of his works was correlated with, say, the development of capitalism, etc., though I doubt one can convincingly demonstrate any of the above.

On the other hand, Barthes' work on Racine continues to be discussed by very diverse Racine scholars that acknowledge its merits (Greenberg

2010; Hogan 2013). I do not feel to be in a position to assess the value of Barthes' essays in relation to the history of Racinian criticism, but it goes without saying that psychoanalytic-anthropological analysis of cultural artifacts itself constitutes a well-established practice which is able to produce informative results. This does not mean, however, that it cannot fall victim to misuse. I have already mentioned one problem regarding Barthes' analysis and that is his attempt at rather crude reductionism of aesthetic creation and appreciation to the language of psychoanalysis. This is reflected in his own comment on Racine where he states that

it is that about which there is nothing to say and about which there is the most to say. It is then, definitively, his very transparency which makes Racine a commonplace in our literature, a sort of degree zero of the critical object, an empty place, but one which is eternally offered up to meaning.

(quoted in Davies 2004, 15)

The above might indicate that Barthes follows the stronger interpretation of the textualist thesis where it is literally claimed not only that aesthetic considerations are irrelevant, but also that the text itself is completely blank unless filled in with a given Theory. I find it hard to imagine, nevertheless, how Barthes' analysis could have proceeded without assumptions concerning indexicality and agency, without positing symbolic and metaphorical dimension to Racine's plays, without establishing the relation between form and content, without identifying meaningful segments within the text, without some form of discrimination and evaluation regarding meaning of a given segment, and finally, without trying to elucidate a theme that unifies Racine's works, all of which are signs of understanding and interpreting a text on an aesthetic level.

Another problem with Barthes' analysis seems, unfortunately, again related to the stronger interpretation of textualism and brings into mind his remarks about the metonymic and associative nature of textualist research. This is visible in Picard's attack on Barthes where the latter is accused of rather careless language use, obscurity and unwillingness to provide any definitions for the concepts he applies (Davies 2004, 10). Specifically, Picard pinpoints Barthes' pointless abuse of language:

no one has the right to see an evocation of water in the formula *to return to port*, nor a precise allusion to respiratory mechanisms in the expression *to breathe at your feet*... no one has the right to say either that Titus... is acting and making theatre... because he says to Paulin: 'I propose a more noble theatre': the term *theatre* has nothing to do here with the idea of a dramatic representation.

(Davies 2004, 16–17)

I can only concur here with both Picard and Livingston who emphasize that apart from having purely humoristic or transgressive dimension, such associative juxtapositions where any textual, or linguistic, unit is somehow related to any other textual/linguistic unit are quite unilluminating.

Interestingly enough, several scholars looked at Racine's works from a psychoanalytical or Marxist perspective before Barthes, most notably Charles Mauron (1957) and Lucien Goldmann (1964). The latter's work is of particular interest here, as I consider it to be superior to Barthes' when it comes to the declared methodology and the account of the relation of aesthetics to, what we might call today, literary theory-motivated research that Goldmann offers. As a Marxist scholar, Goldmann studies the underlying material conditions of the seventeenth-century France, which he thought shaped the Jansenist tragic vision of the world that was verbalized by Pascal and Racine, claiming that Jansenism had a particular appeal to a social class of legal nobility who saw their socio-political position reduced and felt powerless in their relationship with the king, in a manner quite analogous to the Jansenist powerlessness of individuals in their relationship to God (Cohen 1994, 3–11).

Contrary to Barthes, Goldmann's subtle, interdisciplinary analysis does not declare aesthetics non-existent or irrelevant. He openly claims that his theory of the world vision which he develops in relation to Jansenist theology, "obviously cannot replace either textual analysis, general aesthetic appreciation or historical research" (Goldmann 1964, 313). He adds that sociological analysis of literary texts goes along aesthetic, textual and other considerations (Goldmann 1964, 313). Goldmann envisions the ways in which his sociological analysis² can contribute to aesthetic appreciation of art by means of a detailed analysis of:

the different world visions that prevailed at a particular time, throw light upon both the content and the meaning of the literary works that were then being written. The task of what one might call a "sociological aesthetic" would then be to bring out the relationship between one of the world visions and the universe of characters and things created in a particular work.

(Goldmann 1964, 313)

In contrast, aesthetic analysis focuses on the relationship between the constructed universe and the specific artistic devices that the writer uses (Goldmann 1964, 316). Although Goldmann's sketch of these levels of analysis and their relation is rather concise, he insists that both types of analysis are complementary and, more importantly, he sees them as levels of explanation within the larger, overarching general aesthetic analysis (Goldmann 1964, 316). I consider Goldmann's vision of an informed, literary-theoretical analysis where rejection of aesthetics is

neither desirable, nor possible, as essentially correct and in tune with my own considerations on this topic. I will return to this issue later on throughout the chapter.

Barthes' semiology can, though, clearly have another application in literary studies, albeit slightly less grandiose than the one he envisioned for himself when studying Racine. In other words, it is possible to use Barthes' semiology in literary studies without necessarily producing arbitrary results that tend to ignore the aesthetic character of literature, e.g., the relation between form and content or historical context, while retaining some of the ideological motivations that often inform his works. One approach to semiology which might help us to illuminate literary works without ignoring their aesthetic nature can be to analyze the underlying sign systems within a fictional narrative, provided that a given work actually rewards such an approach, that is, one cannot on principle claim that every work will yield non-arbitrary and interesting results from using this method. One neat illustration of applying semiotics in a way that illuminates the broader meaning of a work or an oeuvre might be an analysis of the alimentary practices in Eudora Welty's fiction. The hallmark of Welty's work is the portrayal of the communities of women in the antebellum Mississippi whose identity is largely constituted by the practices surrounding preparation and consumption of food. What underlies the food-related norms, conventions and traditions is a semiotic system based on identity oppositions, rules of exclusions and rituals not unlike the one proposed by Barthes. If we accept that what is central to Welty's stories is the description of the dynamics concerning the constitution of one's identity and excluding otherness inside the community in terms largely dependent on the alimentary sign system, then consequently, a detailed exposition of its workings definitely elucidates the aesthetically significant theme of Welty's fiction.

The alleged paradox of textualist literary theory being able to produce valuable analyses of literature and other phenomena might be resolved by indicating that most contemporary literary theories do not necessarily mean the text literally as a self-referential and infinitely deferred set of signifiers, but rather make use of the notion of the cultural text, or the cultural product, which may be said to cover all the meaningful artifacts of culture. Such approach does neither entirely reject assumptions of agency or establishing contexts of creation, nor does it favor unconstrained individual interpretations of cultural artifacts, as only those readings that fall into some of the methodologies considered germane to cultural studies are accepted. Needless to say, it is prerequisite that Marxist, feminist or post-colonial theories acknowledge individual cultural texts as placed in proper contexts and associated with specific agencies. All of that might suggest that Peter Lamarque is entirely wrong in his claim that literary theories reject studying art as art, that is, that they reject aesthetics. But the suggestion surely requires further elucidation.

For one thing, if the primary function of consuming literary works is to induce aesthetic pleasure in an informed audience, then literary theories surely reject aesthetics, as their preoccupation is not just consumption but studying art in specific frameworks. Literary theorists do not just read for pleasure or do not ponder upon the nature of such pleasure, but study the cultural role of literature with appropriate methodologies. Nor is literary theory equivalent to analytic aesthetics as the latter's sole aim is to investigate the conditions under which art-related concepts are used. But it is still something altogether different to claim that literary theories promote an entirely value-free approach to the study of cultural artifacts. It is in the nature of cultural studies to be equally interested in the products of sophisticated art as in the popular culture or everyday practices, but, as it was suggested in the above discussion of Barthes' textuality, to treat culture as a uniform, undifferentiated text, a dough out of which the scholar cookie-cuts whatever she wants is an illusion. Identifying contexts, agency and distinguishing between artifacts is a necessary condition for establishing an intelligible discourse. Thus, to study literature as a cultural text is to study the work of art in a given network of cultural practices. This implies that although literary theory and aesthetics remain distinct, literary theory does, more or less tacitly, make use of some aesthetic categories. Aesthetics lies at Theory's foundations and some of the procedures involved in theoretically driven research rely heavily on the former. Yet, there is a point in which Theory and aesthetics diverge and the former moves beyond the narrow understanding of literature into the study of culture.

If the relation between Theory and aesthetics is more complex than that of just being entirely separate, then Lamarque's simple assertion that theories are unrelated to aesthetics is wrong. To demonstrate how aesthetics informs the theoretically driven research both on the general level of outlining aims and methods of such a study, and on a particular level of understanding and interpreting individual artifacts, I will refer to what I find a representative description of the aims and methods of the study of cultural texts, as reflected in Richard Hoggart's "Literature and Society," and later juxtapose it with Olsen's outline of the conventions of aesthetic reading mentioned in Chapter 1. Richard Hoggart is one of the earliest advocates of cultural studies who has emphasized the need for literary studies to move beyond the narrow area of classics or high-brow art and embrace popular culture as a legitimate field of academic inquiry. Although at times criticized precisely for accepting the notion of value as crucial to cultural studies (Owen 2008), his position today as a founding figure of Marxist-inspired British cultural studies (along with Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall) is uncontested.

In his essay concerning the relation of literary studies to the study of culture Hoggart makes two central assertions. One is that it is not possible to fully understand the functioning of society "without appreciating

good literature” (Hoggart 1966, 225), the other is that the type of analysis specific for literary criticism can be used to help understand many other cultural artifacts which do not belong to the established canon of high art.

The first assertion acknowledges the aesthetic function of art as something essentially different from mere historical documents or statistical data which is of interest to social scientists. Instead, good literature, according to Hoggart, can be a source of a separate, intuitive or poetic knowledge which enables us to re-experience or recreate the actualities of life in say, different societies, social groups or epochs, and to study minds, attitudes and behaviors of individuals belonging to given societies. Good literature can depict the social dynamics in a unique way, as it recreates the experience of life as a whole, “of the life of emotions, the life of the mind, the individual life and the object-laden world” (Hoggart 1966, 226). Good literature portrays the immediacy and complexity of life and the “sense of a texture of life as it is lived” (Hoggart 1966, 233). Although Hoggart’s remarks clearly do not exhaust the definition of good literature, they do hint at his acknowledgment of, say, literary canon and its value for the type of research carried out in cultural studies. So, it would not be, I believe, far-fetched to extend Hoggart’s thesis and claim the position of the canonical, of the good art in cultural studies should be retained because in some respects it might serve as a richer study material without which the understanding of social life would be incomplete.

The other assertion is that the methods of literary criticism are applicable to cultural studies. It is important to emphasize here that literary criticism is predominantly interested in the aesthetic analysis of a work, that is, in formulating judgments about its value, its merits or flaws, its originality (in relation to literary tradition), evaluating the relation between form and content and so on. For Hoggart, transposing the methods of literary criticism to the study of popular culture is twofold. First, it can provide a detailed analysis of the rhetoric and the form of a cultural text, that is, the qualities of its style, the tone, the manner of addressing the audience. Second, it can help us to understand larger meanings, “to make content-analysis more subtle” (Hoggart 1966, 242), to identify the structures that tend to re-appear and repeat themselves in various cultural texts, “myth, archetype, pattern, theme” (Hoggart 1966, 240). Only literary criticism can help us draw attention to “individual words and images, to syntax, to stress, to the movement of each passage” (Hoggart 1966, 243), and consequently lead us to form some assumptions about authors, audiences, art and social class, etc. By accepting the autonomous character of art and the importance of identifying the intrinsic qualities of a work, Hoggart concludes that the aesthetic literary criticism is “an essential adjunct” (Hoggart 1966, 242) to social scientific analysis of popular culture, and thus, to cultural studies

as a whole, and, as we might add, to most contemporary literary theory motivated research.

Accepting Hoggart's assertions makes it, however, even more problematic to agree with analytic philosophers in their claim about literary theory's rejection of aesthetics. To elaborate on the problem, let us turn again to the outline of the literary institutions presented by Olsen and Lamarque which I discussed in Chapter 1. I suggest that both the aesthetic analysis, or the reading of a competent reader, and the analysis motivated by a given literary theory proceed along the same rules up to a point where those interested in experiencing the aesthetic pleasure or evaluating the artistic qualities end their treatment of the work and the literary theorist proceeds further. This is a view which both Olsen and Lamarque are apparently opposed to, but I will try to demonstrate its validity using their own discussions.

According to the proponents of the institutional definition of literature, there is no intrinsic difference between an ordinary and a literary use of language. Classifying an utterance as literary or non-literary is a matter of decision regarding the utterance's purpose and the expectations it might reward when specific procedures are applied to it. But if understanding and interpreting an utterance will always already "rest on evaluative factors" (Lamarque 2009, 145) that is, the decision concerning the meaning of a given passage will be intertwined with ascribing it an artistic significance within the whole work, then how can the allegedly value-free textualist interpret a work at all? One might, surely, liken it to some mechanical cookie-cutter procedure where a literary theory is arbitrarily superimposed on a purely linguistic tissue, but it might occur to be either caricature, as it perhaps is in Barthes' treatment of Racine, or blatantly impossible, as Livingston's discussion of textuality suggests. If, however, literary theorists, as I tried to show, do not necessarily treat literary texts in a way which might sound like a radical understanding of textuality, then evaluative judgments must also inform their construals of meaning.

One of Olsen's examples illustrating the role of expectations is that of the fog in Dickens' *Bleak House*. If, as Olsen claims, we were to assume that Dickens was writing a historical book on the weather in some parts of England, our perception of the descriptions of fog would be different than if we assumed it was a novel. In the latter case, if a competent reader or a literary critic wants to approach the text aesthetically she attempts to link the fog to other thematic and structural aspects of the whole text and to look for its possible symbolic meaning (Olsen 1978, 46). But why would such a procedure be alien to the work of a literary theorist? Surely, Dickens' works tend to invite the type of socially oriented literary theories, e.g., the Marxist ones. But in order to proceed into a detailed, Marxist-oriented analysis, one has to first construe the proper, artistic meaning of the text, including its themes and symbols,

otherwise there would be nothing in particular to study. When Terry Eagleton writes that “the figure of the oppressed child [in Dickens’ works] is the most powerful indictment one can imagine of society’s heartlessness” (Eagleton 2012) he is clearly demonstrating a proper, aesthetic knowledge of the themes and symbols that permeate Dickens’ oeuvre; he knows what is artistically important in the work. Only after, implicitly, as it often happens, interpreting the work in its aesthetic sense is Eagleton able to carry on with his Marxist theory motivations and put the work in a broader framework, claiming for instance that “Dickens is famous for denouncing the evils of industrial capitalism, but his theatrical, flamboyant prose also reflects the energy of a middle class that is still riding high” (Eagleton 2012).

In another passage, Olsen compares two critical commentaries on Dora’s death in *David Copperfield*. One of the cited critics sees her death as serving no artistic purpose in the work and, thus, as a flaw in the novel. Another critic, however, notices that Dora’s death was a result of an ill-fated pregnancy and “an illustration of her failure to comply with the requirements imposed upon her by the adult world,” (Olsen 1978, 147) interpreting it as a part of a broader theme of the story that seems to successfully account for the deaths and miseries of other characters. For Olsen, the latter interpretation is better as it is able to persuasively and intelligibly account for the function of more segments in the work and resonates well with the posited theme of the whole work. But what is most important here is the tacit indication that value judgments are bound up with meaning construal and interpretation. The latter interpretation might perhaps invite another Marxist commentary in the long run, but it has to be compatible with the basic aesthetic interpretation so as not to produce arbitrary results. The former interpretation of Dora’s death is given no aesthetic function and deemed a random, irrelevant event and consequently it cannot serve as a basis for an in-depth theory-motivated analysis. Without aesthetics, the type of research carried out by literary theories is not possible.

Similarly, Lamarque is entirely correct to assume that there is a difference between purely textual meaning and work meaning, but he is mistaken in his claim that the literary theorist’s use of the word “text” is on principle equivalent to his own. He illustrates the text meaning/work meaning distinction quoting, after Monroe Beardsley, the famous lines from Mark Akenside’s poem written in 1744:

Yet by immense benignity inclin’d
To spread around him that primæval joy
Which fill’d himself, he rais’d his plastic arm

(quoted in Lamarque 2009, 153)

Contemporary textual meaning of the passage might suggest that the word “plastic” refers to a synthetic material, while if we remain in the sphere of the work and acknowledge the historical context of the poem’s creation, then “plastic” will be equivalent to “strong.” But again, the extent to which Lamarque’s textual meaning is representative of how the notion of the text is used in literary theory is unclear. Surely, to read “plastic” in the twenty-first century meaning of the word might be symptomatic of the work of some deconstructive or broadly post-structuralist critics, but it is hardly a defining feature of the “cultural text” approach I outlined above, as it is doubtful that such “analysis” can be productive in any sense.

Surprisingly, and somewhat contrary to his claims about anti-aesthetic nature of literary theories, Lamarque discusses three distinct interpretations of *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Othello*, calling one of them “traditional humanistic” (Lamarque 2009, 150), and the others “materialist reading, and feminist criticism” (Lamarque 2009, 150). Lamarque acknowledges all of them as legitimate aesthetic analyses that “have much in common” (Lamarque 2009, 150) including identifying general themes of the works, formulating interpretive statements supported by cited passages and making an overall attempt to “generalize across the work as a whole, to draw together aspects of the work under broad unifying concepts” (Lamarque 2009, 150). The paradox is that by acknowledging the aesthetic dimension of feminist or materialist readings, which are normally associated with the research typical of literary theories, Lamarque undermines his own insistence that such forms of criticism reject aesthetics. Again, this foregrounds the problem of Theory and practice to which I alluded in the previous chapter.

When one looks at post-structuralism’s seminal texts, it is not hard to get the impression that they urge a radical break from the established practices of attending to literary works. But when one looks at theorists’ publications that are supposed to explain their practice in a non-extravagant way, as in guides and introductions to Theory, things get trickier. Take Jonathan Culler’s *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Culler 2000). Not only does Culler insist that literature has a natural aesthetic function (Culler 2000, 32–33) and that proper experience of literature involves both the effects of properties of language and of special attention to a work (thus opposing both formalist and reader-oriented reductionism) (Culler 2000, 55), but he also acknowledges the importance of rhetorical figures, genre conventions and canon for understanding literature. He concludes that literature “is a speech act or textual event that elicits certain kinds of attention” (Culler 2000, 24). When it comes to the role of contexts and institutions, he says “[m]ost of the time what leads readers to treat something as literature is that they find it in a context that identifies it as literature” (Culler 2000, 24). There is clearly a textualist flavor to what Culler claims, but overall

there seems to be a lot of space here for constructive exchange between, at least some, literary theorists and philosophers of literature.

A similar case is Lois Tyson's *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide*. Instead of voicing bombastic claims about textualism or authors, Tyson actually claims acquaintance with literary theory "increases (...) appreciation of literature" (Tyson 2006, 4). In what follows, apart from outlining the theories themselves, she offers readings of *Great Gatsby* through the lens of each Theory. Her psychoanalytic reading emphasizes the fear of intimacy and unconscious repetition of harmful patterns of behavior among the novel's characters; her Marxist illustrations examines commodification in Gatsby's world; her feminist analysis predictably explores women's place in relation to ideology, violence and patriarchy; post-colonial reading highlights the construction of otherness within the story and so on. There is no need to quote the examples at length, as it is fairly clear that Tyson's readings rest on proper recognition of the literary work in question as a literary work with full understanding of its art-historical context, the themes, plot and characters it develops, etc. In other words, Tyson's Theory-fueled readings are higher-level detailed explorations of particular aspects of the novel which rest on a lower-level recognition of the novel's aesthetic dimension and its recognition as a work of art.

To sum up what I have been arguing in this section, there are at least two broad ways of assessing the status of the foundational texts of post-structuralism, that is, the foundational texts of contemporary literary theories. One way, which I shall call the strictly analytic method, is to treat those texts as putting forward very specific propositions which are then supported by rigorous and clear argumentation. What this approach proves (as in Livingston's example above or in Lamarque's example which I am discussing in the next section) is that the very idiom of post-structuralist writing necessitates that at least a few hypotheses about the content of the posited proposition be made. Simply speaking, the peculiarity of much of the French Theory's style of writing does not easily submit to the dry language of analytic philosophers. Such analysis clearly demonstrates that, say, Barthes' arguments rely on sweeping generalization and remain unclear on some crucial issues, suggesting that most of the postulated propositions are themselves severely flawed and do not stand up to close scrutiny.

The other way is to emphasize how these texts have actually been appropriated by literary scholars and what type of studies they inspired. This perspective is clearly more charitable and some of the examples I cited throughout the chapter suggest that the textuality thesis, or the death-of-the-author thesis, should be treated metaphorically. If what literary theories suggest, then, is that authors have no final word on the meaning and value of their creations, as both are determined institutionally by competent readers and scholars, and that what they communicate

is always established with reference to other works, or that inasmuch as by creating a work they express their individual intentions it is also the language, the culture, the social-class background, the commonly shared beliefs and ideologies of a society that speak through them, then none of the above should be hard to swallow for the analytic aestheticians. In fact, most of it is what the institutional or historical definitions of art openly claim, which goes against the claim that literary theories and analytic aesthetics are incompatible. As I argued, some aesthetic assumptions must inform the literary-theoretical research for it to be intelligible and productive in the first place.

But discussions over the content of the propositions put forward by Barthes or, as I am going to demonstrate in what follows, by Foucault and Derrida, do not end with a claim that what divides literary theories and analytic aesthetics is just a matter of idiom. The problem runs much deeper. The ambiguity of the propositions one puts forward and a lack of clarity regarding the argument that supports it is clearly an obstacle when it comes to thoroughly exploring the status of the foundations, the aims and the methods of the discipline. The lack of a commonly held idiom regarding the basic concepts underlying literary studies makes it difficult to determine, say, whether Barthes' "écriture" is similar to Foucault's "author function," or whether the "scriptor" is equivalent to a hypothetical, or maybe implied author or simply to an institutionally determined meaning of a text. And even if some of the answers were "yes," then there is no point in using a variety of concepts strongly tied to the individual authors' idiosyncratic style (which is somewhat ironic in post-structuralist context), rather than establishing a common idiom. The lack of a commonly shared idiom regarding the basic concepts one uses in literary studies is perhaps one of the reasons why debates over the discipline's foundations have become rather stale. Moreover, both the lack of uniform conceptual standards regarding the discipline's bases and the apparent disparity between the often bombastic and provocative claims and the actual practice of the literary research is what has drawn a lot of both internal and external criticism toward the discipline itself.

Surely, there was an important theoretical debate over the role of intentions and the discipline's foundations inspired in the 1980s by the neo-pragmatists. Then, there was a famous engagement between Umberto Eco, Jonathan Culler and Richard Rorty in the early 1990s (Collini 1992). But what was its outcome? Did these discussions inspire any further cooperation? Have any subsequent generations of scholars managed to thrive on them, to develop the propositions and arguments in any productive sense? I reckon that the questions remain open but what the aforementioned debates definitely demonstrated is their participants' lack of agreement over the most basic concepts used in literary studies. Perhaps this is one of the most plausible interpretations of Lamarque's thesis that literary theory rejects aesthetics: that

debates over the aesthetic foundations of the discipline, such as defining a literary work, distinguishing between various types of intentions, determining the actual role of authorial biography in understanding and evaluating the work, discussing the nature of value, etc., have become marginalized or outright impossible.

As I have argued, there is no easy escape from the aesthetic foundations of literary research and analytic aesthetics can help to clarify their nature and the nature of the concepts and the procedures involved in aesthetic interpretation and evaluation of a work. The type of research inspired by contemporary literary theories is what develops from the basic aesthetic understanding of the work when one decides to carry on with one's research by placing the work, as a cultural text, in another methodological framework, e.g., one accepted by cultural studies. This is what marks the transition from a literary critic to a literary theory-motivated researcher. What it implies is that literary theories and aesthetics form a hierarchy with the former being its top element, and consequently, that the underlying aesthetic assumptions may somewhat limit the scope of a theoretical research: one cannot, on principle, say that applying any literary theory whatsoever over any given literary text will always yield interesting results. This alleged arbitrariness of theories is the main point of the "cookie-cutter" argument sometimes raised against literary theory (Graff and Di Leo 2000, 113–128). But if a literary theorist has to first determine the basic aesthetic meaning of a text, it means that some texts will more naturally encourage and reward applying only specific literary theories, e.g., realist novel may encourage some Marxist-oriented theories, Angela Carter may encourage feminist readings, *Conan, the Barbarian* might be interesting when read through a Darwinian lens, but there is no guarantee that any Theory applied to *Conan* will produce informative analysis of the work. Literary theories are prone to arbitrary readings or bad readings which may, for example, leave out large portions of the text unexplained, but this might be equally true of any reading whatsoever and cannot be a valid argument against theories in general. The conclusion is that informative use of literary theories in analyses is an instrumental approach that acknowledges the aesthetic basis of a work, which constrains the possible arbitrariness of literary analysis. Literary works will simply not reward applying just any Theory one wishes to apply to them.

Authors, Scriptors, Intentions

When discussing the relation between works and texts, it is inevitable that one has to take a stance on the role of authors and their intentions in the critical practice. Ignoring or marginalizing empirical authors, their lives and their intentions is considered a staple of much of the formalist-structuralist tradition, including also New Criticism,

semiotics, post-structuralism and the more recent ideological approaches to literature. There is, however, a substantial diversity in the approach to authorship within the formalist-structuralist tradition itself. Whereas the earlier approaches sought to eliminate the author precisely in order to establish the literary work as an autonomous object of study, be it Wimsatt's and Beardsley's verbal icon or Levi-Strauss' crystal structure of the text, with the advent of post-structuralism, literary theory has both accepted the author's irrelevance and questioned the stability and autonomy of the text. Such a move has, of course, stirred a lot of controversy over literary theory's status, some of which I mentioned in the first chapter. As with the debate over works and texts, analytic philosophers of art place themselves vis-a-vis post-structuralism when it comes to establishing the role of authorial intentions, but as it was evident in the aforementioned debate, one should be suspicious of the existence of such dramatic binary oppositions, especially when the two opposing camps voice their claims in their own tradition-specific jargons which without detailed analysis appear largely incongruent with each other. As post-structuralist anti-intentionalism is a counterpart to the textualism outlined earlier in this chapter, it implies that many of the arguments used in the work-text debate will be applicable here, too. Nevertheless, I will attempt to focus only on what might be added or elaborated upon, rather than repeat what has been said.

Historically, and on a charitable reading, the biggest merit of post-structuralism was to plea to move beyond narrow aesthetic considerations (or perhaps beyond aestheticism) in literary studies and pursue more politically-motivated type of research concerning literature and culture. But if the case was merely for promoting a given type of research, it would be of little interest for philosophy of literature, as one might encourage whatever research one wants for whatever reasons one voices. What merits philosophical attention is the fact that post-structuralism has been promoting specific approaches to literature using philosophical arguments and not just issuing appeals.

As with the work-text issue, the banishment of the author seems to be a move necessitated by language itself, or to be more specific, by the Saussurean understanding of language. According to both structuralists and post-structuralists, if what we are presented with in a text is an autonomous linguistic structure which operates beyond the will of individual agents, then clearly authors are irrelevant for its analysis. Put in this way, the claim is surely counterintuitive and appears paradoxical, especially when the most outspoken proponents of the view, Barthes in his "Death of the Author," (1977a) and Foucault in "What is an Author" (1979) constantly refer to, say, Mallarme, the author, Saussure, the author or Balzac, the author. This of course indicates that identifying a certain amount of historical context and even researching some relevant biographical information is, in the end, indispensable in

literary studies, but it would be naïve to think this is a simple fact that invalidates Foucault's and Barthes' works and that they overlooked it. Barthes' and Foucault's discussions are, of course, subtler, granted that one is determined to plough through the demanding and at times obscure jargon they both use. A valuable example of post-structuralist thought being reformulated in analytic parlance and then critically discussed is the meticulous analysis of Barthes and Foucault in Lamarque's "Death of the Author: an Analytical Autopsy" (1990). Lamarque's essay is an excellent example of how analytic aesthetics sees its own relation to literary theories. At the same time, it accurately points out the strengths and weaknesses of post-structuralism's cornerstone essays, implicitly suggesting that literary theory occasionally has a tendency to operate on many discursive levels at the same time, exploring philosophy of literature, descriptions, prescriptions, politics and positing specific reading strategies in a way which may occur to be unclear or confusing.

In his discussion, Lamarque extracts from Barthes and Foucault what he finds to be their most prominent claims and juxtaposes them together to put forward four general theses that he suggests make up their argument: the historicist thesis, the death thesis, the author function thesis and *écriture* thesis. For each thesis Lamarque elaborates a couple of plausible interpretations which he then carefully discusses. The historicist thesis refers to the claim that authors are modern figures, products of contemporary society. Lamarque notes that there are at least three plausible interpretations of the thesis. The first would roughly imply that a certain conception of author, in the social sense of having a "legal and social status" (Lamarque 1990, 320) is modern and is inevitably connected with the development of bourgeois society in the Western world. As such, it is a historical claim which may or may not "stand up to close scrutiny" (Lamarque 1990, 320) and which by making a sweeping generalization, remains silent over the social status of authors in different cultures and different times. One useful distinction it introduces is the recognition that not everything written is authored, e.g., there is hardly any need to call one's scribbling on paper authored, but otherwise this interpretation has in itself little philosophical implication.

Another interpretation of the historicist thesis implies that a certain concept of criticism is a modern creation; namely, the author-focused criticism that allegedly came to power only after the formation of bourgeois society. Surely, literary critics' interest in authors' personal lives and their individual genius varied from epoch to epoch, but as with the previous interpretation, this does not necessarily lead to interesting philosophical implications. Contemporary literary criticism is definitely beyond biographical analysis. Moreover, one can easily imagine purely formalist criticism existing even when authors do have certain legal rights over texts.

The most interesting and the most problematic interpretation of the historicist thesis is that the modern invention of authorship was followed by a radical alteration of critical practice. This formulation of the thesis moves from the personal understanding of authorship to claim that a change in how texts were understood took place. Texts were no longer anonymous, but authored, which means that they were ascribed determinate meaning, unity, value, purpose, etc. By being tied to authors, they became constrained and limited (Lamarque 1990, 320). This is perhaps again a sweeping generalization, debatable, to say the least. If texts acquired unity, meaning and value at a given time, is it then really datable historically? When was the time that they did not possess these features? What is important is that both Foucault and Barthes seem to be leaning toward this interpretation of the historicist thesis, judging by how they develop their argument into what Lamarque calls the death thesis.

The interpretations of death thesis mirror those of the historicist thesis. Thus, the first one implies that the social role of authors either is or should be rejected, but yet again, it would be an ethical, political issue independent of philosophical arguments about literature. The second interpretation holds that it is the author-based criticism that either is or should be rejected. But if this is read as a voice against crude biographical criticism, then there is nothing revolutionary about it since it is nowadays commonly accepted that works of fiction should not be read through authors' biographies. The most daring interpretation of the death thesis is obviously the one related to the historicist understanding of the authored text. It implies that the notion of the authored text either is or should be rejected. The descriptive horn of the dilemma is easily falsifiable as one can hardly find a type of literary criticism that would ignore value, coherence, unity and at least some degree of determinacy of meaning, as they are bound up with the concept of literature itself. In this sense, the death thesis should be read prescriptively: that it is the concept of the authored text that should be rejected. It is important here to emphasize again that for Foucault the authored text is entirely impersonal, that is, meaning, value, unity, etc. are ascribed to texts without necessarily bearing any relation to actual authors. But if the authored text is a modern invention, an ideological construct superimposed on a linguistic tissue, then Lamarque's straightforward assertion that Foucault's thesis is normative requires further qualification. Foucault seems to be suggesting that the arbitrary nature of the authored text is what makes contemporary literary criticism a delusion. Attributing value, meaning and coherence to texts is a highly artificial procedure which selectively constraints a literary text; it is a procedure which, in Foucault's words, represses the natural "principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault 1979, 159). To reject the authored text is to finally admit its illusory character and to accept that texts and languages exist as unconstrained, unstable structures without a single meaning or purpose.

The stronger version of the death thesis is further supported both by the depersonalized understanding of texts and what Foucault calls the "author function." Author function is a property of certain types of discourse, which, obviously implies something more about the nature of texts than just stating that they are produced by agents. Lamarque identifies a few components of the thesis that help to clarify it. The first of them is the basic assertion that author function is different from the author-as-person. As Lamarque correctly observes, this is not to be construed as a notion similar to that of, say, implied author that is tied to an individual text and posited as yet another fictional voice within a narrative. The author function is something that may bind many works into a whole oeuvre or it can help to determine the nature of the work itself (Lamarque 1990, 325). An argument that, according to Foucault, should support the distinction into authors as persons and authors as function is that we tend to conceive of authors-persons as sources and proliferators of meaning, but we consider authored texts as highly constrained in this respect. But this is just an assertion behind which there is virtually no argument; as such, there is no reason to believe that we do not expect an "inexhaustible signification" (Lamarque 1990, 326) from a work, if we expect it from its author.

According to Lamarque, a more promising view of the thesis is to read it as suggesting that "having an author" is not a relational predicate which tells us something about the relation between a work and its author, but a monadic predicate characterizing a certain work. The thesis would thus signal a shift from "X has Y as an author" to "X is Y-authored" (Lamarque 1990, 326). The importance of such a move is easily demonstrable when one thinks of how a predicate like "Shakespearean" is not really referential (as a reference to Shakespeare, the person), in the same sense as the predicate "by Shakespeare," but it also serves classificatory functions. Contrary to the latter, the former predicate is non-extensional, that is, if it occurs that Shakespeare, the man, was really Bacon, it does not necessarily follow that the predicate is invalid. The observation is important but what it does indicate, as Lamarque correctly observes, is that the move itself is not necessary, as the relational predicates normally function as non-extensional, classificatory and fully extensional (Lamarque 1990, 327). Foucault's mistake is to assume that if authors' names serve classificatory functions, their referentiality is automatically eliminated.

Nevertheless, this appears enough for Foucault to posit the ultimate rejection of the author function, or the authored texts and embrace the unconstrained textualism à la Barthes. But the fundamental problem with the move is that in spite of the whole of Foucault's argument he still seems to be thinking about author function being really tied to the person of the author. This seems surprising as some of Foucault's earlier observations clearly, and quite correctly, suggested that author function

is entirely a matter of institutional decisions. To define a work as having certain value, meaning and coherence is a decision of the competent readers and critics, the artworld; a decision absolutely independent of any actual author's will. As Lamarque writes, "strictly speaking, authors have nothing to do with it; the authored-text, so-called, at least in its most obvious manifestation, is a literary work, defined institutionally" (Lamarque 1990, 328). What is more puzzling is perhaps Foucault's own insistence that literary analysis is still somewhat institutionally constrained despite the fact that his discussion of the author function clearly suggests that it is precisely the institutional constraint that has nothing to do with the will of individual authors or with a critical obsession with their lives and thoughts:

the author function will disappear, and in such a manner that fiction and its polysemous texts will once again function according to another mode, but still with a system of constraint – one that will no longer be the author but will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced.

(Foucault 1979, 160)

This fundamental ambiguity makes it difficult to establish what Foucault really proposes. A sympathetic interpretation of his argument might suggest that Foucault is simply pointing out the institutional nature of literary analysis; an analysis that is not constrained by author's will but by the communal decisions of the members of the artworld. If this is how Foucault's and Barthes' theses are to be understood, there is hardly anything revolutionary about them, especially when one compares them with the often pompous idiom in which the propositions themselves are put. A non-charitable reading will claim that what Foucault and Barthes are after is really the type of textualism discredited by, e.g., Livingston's discussion cited above.

Regardless of the validity of the proposition itself, one has to consider its practical dimension. In other words, looking back at the development of literary studies, and in accordance with the charitable understanding of Barthes and Foucault, it is crucial to see how the literary institutions actually appropriated their theories, regardless of what, say, Barthes, the author might have intended. Surely, Foucault and Barthes had a huge influence on literary theory and terms such as "text," "écriture," "author-function" have become part of theories' standard idiom, but I find it doubtful that behind the provocative rhetoric of textualism, one can always find the type of research which really bears no relation to agency, history or contexts and is virtually without any constraints in its wallowing in the infinite play of signifiers, as in the "God's plastic arm" example. This might be just a symptom of literary scholars' being more naturally drawn to poetic language, rather than to the dry, technical

argumentation of analytic philosophy. But, as I tried to show, the choice of perhaps excessively poetic language in philosophy of literature can lead to major confusions regarding the content of a given proposition. The lack of a clear, commonly accepted idiom regarding the fundamental questions in literary studies is an obstacle to the discipline's development, as its basic concepts, aims and the status of its research become vague.

The idiom of literary theories can sometimes run the risk of producing sweeping generalizations and false dilemmas. For instance, many scholars of the formalist-structuralist provenance seem to suggest that literary meaning can only be discussed in terms of the autonomous linguistic form and in terms of intentions that must necessarily be mental states of the real author. As the latter is obviously inaccessible, the only possible path of research is that of the structure. But the dilemma itself is false as it does not recognize the possibility of intentions and linguistic conventions existing in a relation other than that of binary oppositions. One example of insisting on the binary opposition of certain concepts which results in a confusing argument is evident on Derrida's side in his engagement with John Searle over speech-act theory (Derrida 1988, 123–124).

Derrida begins his attack on Austin by claiming that the very fact that written communication is possible in the absence of authors must be due to the fact that intentions are somewhat irrelevant to it. Instead, he proposes that communication is possible because of iterability, the repeatability of linguistic elements. Clearly, repeatability, or instantiations of token of specific types, is prerequisite for rule-governed systems of representation. But, as Searle suggests, it is perhaps better to think about texts in terms of their permanence rather than being instantiated, "the same text (token) can be read by many different readers long after the death of the author" (Searle 1977, 200). To claim that there is always a discrepancy between the verbal structure and the utterer's illocutionary intention is to think of intentions as lying behind the signs and animating them (Searle 1977, 202). This does not imply that intentions must be conscious or successful but it does imply that a sentence such as "on the twentieth September 1793 I set out on a journey from London to Oxford" (Searle 1977, 201) can only be meaningful in any sense as a possibility of an intentional speech act, "to understand it, it is necessary to know that anyone who said it and meant it would be performing that speech act according to the rules of the languages that give the sentence its meaning in the first place" (Searle 1977, 202). The sentence, thus, can mean absolutely anything in a given context, but its meaning is then still dependent, among other things, on the intentions (which might be successful or not) of the utterer.

Nevertheless, Derrida elaborates his argument stating that Austin's speech-acts must necessarily be unstable, as it is impossible that one has

a total command over a given speech-act, or that one can determine the strict contextual borders of a context that regulates the act's meaning. Consequently, all speech-acts are always already infelicitous as they are prone to change their meanings and elude determinacy when they become iterated, cited or used in a different context. This, according to Derrida, goes against the grain of Austin's contention that speech-acts can be serious or parasitic (as in fiction, lying, jokes, etc.), when they are not meant as actual speech-acts. If, then, what characterizes language is its iterability and citationality, then its inherent feature must be parasitism. Austin's distinction then must collapse.

On a sympathetic reading, one might interpret Derrida's words as an indication that parasitism and fictionality are natural phenomena in a language and that speech-acts can be successful only when they refer to a conventional code. But this can in no way overturn the role of intentions in written communication. On a non-charitable reading, however, Derrida can be said to have committed a fundamental logical mistake, in the sense that fiction can be said to be a parasite of non-fiction in the same sense as rational numbers parasite on natural numbers (Searle 1977, 205–206). The former is simply defined in terms of the latter. It is a logical relation and not an ethical judgment, and hardly anything follows from it. The non-charitable understanding is however reinforced in Derrida's further reply to Searle where he explicitly states that Searle's and Austin's distinctions cannot hold in any sense, as if there are no absolutely rigorous distinctions between concepts (say, fiction and non-fiction), then there really is no distinction whatsoever, and the whole business of elaborating on them is pointless:

what philosopher ever since there were philosophers, what logician ever since there were logicians, what theoretician ever renounced this axiom: in the order of concepts (for we are speaking of concepts and not of the colors of clouds or the taste of certain chewing gums), when a distinction cannot be rigorous or precise, it is not a distinction at all. If Searle declares explicitly, seriously, literally that this axiom must be renounced, that he renounces it (and I will wait for him to do it, a phrase in a newspaper is not enough), then, short of practicing deconstruction with some consistency and of submitting the very rules and regulations of his project to an explicit reworking, his entire philosophical discourse on speech acts will collapse even more rapidly.

(Derrida 1988, 123–124)

Derrida's claims are rather puzzling and seem to contradict the entire Wittgensteinian intuition that the lack of precise, definite borders between concepts is in fact of little philosophical importance. The insistence that distinctions must necessarily be rigorous in some absolute,

universal sense makes Derrida closer to traditional metaphysicians rather than to contemporary analytic philosophy.

The above applies to deconstruction in the broader sense of philosophical movement, or just to the assumption deconstructionists make, but deconstruction as a method of reading texts might, similarly, be closer to strict structuralist approach than to the ideological or “cultural text” approaches in literary studies I mentioned earlier. In fact, deconstruction does not seem to be a radical break with structuralism (Olsen 1987, 206), as it also acknowledges that meaning is constituted according to the principle of binary oppositions and that language is totally autonomous from speakers and their intentions. The difference is that at the same time, deconstruction accepts that such definition of language must lead to positing meaning as always arbitrary and uncontrollable, but does not see it as a flaw of the theory. The aim of deconstructive readings is, then, to point out the internal inconsistencies and demonstrate how the underlying binary oppositions collapse into each other. It is obviously possible to apply this method to the study of various cultural texts where one assumes that they are all underwritten by internally inconsistent conceptual hierarchies and one ventures to demonstrate the fact. I do not wish to deny that such an approach might produce valuable results, but as with structuralism, it is at a significant risk of producing results that are purely arbitrary, demonstrating nothing more than an endless repetition of deconstructionist assumptions. This is apparent, as Knapp and Michaels observed (Knapp and Michaels 1982, 733–734), in de Man’s analysis of Rousseau’s *Confessions*. Rousseau mentions that while working as a servant he stole a ribbon from his employers and when asked whether he knew the identity of the thief he said “Marion,” the name of his fellow servant. Rousseau insists he was not accusing her, just making a random noise that came into his head. According to de Man the particular significance of the passage is that it demonstrates the ultimate arbitrariness of language. Similarly, Derrida notes that Rousseau uses the term “supplement” in reference to reading and to masturbation, as supplement to speech and to sex, respectively. As a result, he claims, writing and onanism collapse into a one concept (Derrida 1976, 165). There is, of course, a possibility that “arbitrariness of language” is posited as a theme of a given literary work and then exploring it might be worthwhile, but to read all works as demonstrating this very fact is an altogether arbitrary and largely uninformative procedure.

As a digression, one might add that even if there is a risk that deconstructive textual analysis is fraught with arbitrariness, there is an undeniable positive historical role that it played in the development of literary and cultural studies. As Eagleton correctly observes, the ultimate motivations of deconstruction are political and its ultimate aim is to bring into light and dismantle the internal logic, the internal conceptual mechanism of thought systems, political structures and social

institutions (Eagleton 2008, 128). There is a sense, then, in which deconstruction and post-structuralism have managed to draw attention to the voice of those underprivileged or oppressed in the dominant ideological discourse of our culture and to help rethink the established views in humanities on what is valuable, serious or legitimate as an object of study. This has of course not only influenced the world of politics but also facilitated a change of perspective within the study of culture which has moved beyond the narrow aestheticism of contemplating the magnificent beauty of canonical masterpieces of art or other cultural artifacts deemed serious and respectful, and more or less acknowledged that, say, Ezra Pound's cantos might be as legitimate an object of study as TV series, reality shows, commercials, lifestyle magazines, female writing, minority writing, etc.

Getting back to the main theme of this section, many other discussions of meaning and intention in literary theory tended to be unclear because of its idiom or due to making rather strong statements without adequate philosophical argumentation. In a fashion similar to Derrida, the neo-pragmatists Knapp and Michaels, as well as Stanley Fish, asserted that intentionality is not really compatible with claiming that there can be literal or conventional meanings in language, an observation that startled some philosophers of language (Wilson 1992), although, contrary to Derrida, the neo-pragmatist conclusion was that textual meaning is necessarily identical with the author's intention. But what we take to be linguistic meaning of an utterance is what we in advance consider to be the meaning intended by speakers of a language with significant regularity; it does not imply say, that every token of the type "slumber" must always mean "sleep." The token may mean nothing or may mean something completely different depending on a context, but this does not mean that the type itself does not or cannot have an expected conventional meaning based on the frequency of its intended use.

The false dilemma which results from insisting on a strong distinction between intentional and conventional meaning is also typical of Umberto Eco's discussion of interpretation. At the heart of his theory of interpretation, Eco places what he calls "the intention of the work," the meaning of the text itself, distinct from the intention of the author and from the reader's intention, which guides the reader in construing its correct understanding. But, as some scholars noted (Hogan 1996, 1-8), Eco is fundamentally unclear about what the intention of the work really is. Does it acquire its meaning just from linguistic conventions? Is it literal meaning? If the text regulates, contrains and imposes certain contexts does that not point to some extratextual reality to which the work is tied? After all, Eco himself judged Derrida's interpretation of Peirce according to whether Peirce would have been satisfied with it (Eco 1990, 35). It will not suffice to say that the author, the text and the reader constitute a dynamic process of meaning production, for apart

from stating something rather obvious, such a process does not take into consideration the institutional framework of literature, or the type of competence required, and says nothing about the type of aesthetic meaning which is of interest to literary interpretation. To say that it is a textual meaning in a historical context is not enough.

On the other hand, neither strong intentionalism nor strong textualism looms in the art-related discussions of meaning and intentions in analytic philosophy, as to understand the former literally would be to hold a position similar to that of Humpty-Dumpty, and to understand the latter literally would be to fall into the caricature of the incomprehensible string of text. Analytic aestheticians accept that the type of meaning germane to literature falls somewhere between the two and that perhaps it is altogether clearer to use the term “authorial intentions.” Although almost every analytic philosopher can be identified as adhering to some form of intentionalism, there is no one, uniform theory of what those intentions really are. The proponents of hypothetical intentionalism will claim that attributing intentions to authors is entirely a matter of institutional decisions of the artworld and actual authors have nothing to do with it. As Livingston puts it:

the central thesis of which is that utterance meaning is determined by an intention that a member of the intended audience would be justified in attributing to the author on the basis of evidence that defines membership in the intended audience.

(Livingston 2010, 408)

Livingston enumerates other types of intentionalism: actualist, conditionalist, factionalist, partial or modest, none of which is at odds with Institutional Theory of Art and none of which claims that a work’s meaning is controlled by actual authors and their wills. All of them seem to be compatible with the type of research encouraged by Hoggart, Eagleton or other literary theorists who proceed from proper understanding and evaluation of literary works in their aesthetic sense to conducting more detailed studies in terms of the theoretical framework they choose. Hypothetical intentionalism, for instance, seems to be close to some of the propositions put forward by Barthes, Foucault and even Eco, but it is impossible to make a definite judgment on this matter due to the ambiguity of their works discussed earlier in this chapter.

Foucault ends his essay by enumerating a list of questions that scholars will finally be able to ask when they manage to move beyond author-based criticism (granted, of course that we are able to tell what he ultimately means by that):

What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself?

What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? And behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking?

(Foucault 1979, 160)

Except for the last one, all of the questions seem valid and they definitely hint at contemporary literary theory's preoccupation with politics, subjectivity, power, subversion, etc. What I am suggesting is that literary theory has clearly managed to ask and answer these questions, but what it also proved is that it is not altogether easy to confidently claim, as the last question suggests, that it makes no difference who is speaking. The lesson from analytic aesthetics is that the issue is more complex than Barthes or Foucault may have been suggesting. The case is not just that literary theories can carry out their preferred type of research without entirely killing off the author, but that perhaps some presence of the author is prerequisite for the research to be really informative.

As a final point, and since I have been mostly referring to institutional theories of art, I would like to briefly address Foucault's ideas on the workings of institutions themselves. Though he was not particularly outspoken concerning the institutions of the artworld, focusing on the political, penal, educational or medical ones, some important points arise that should be commented on.

Roughly, Foucault's key points were that relations of power and dominance are not (or not only) centralized, formed top-down and existing along the lines of intentions of those subjects striving to gain or retain their privileged position (as in traditional Marxist theories), but it's quite the opposite: power is mostly decentralized, dispersed, enacted materially and discursively (rather than just wielded or enforced) and it plays a crucial role in establishing subjects rather than the other way around. Moreover, power permeates all social institutions and is entangled with knowledge. Where does Foucault stand, then, in relation to the institutions of the artworld? Perhaps the question about the application of Foucault's theory to the artworld could be divided into two separate issues. First, does the theory hold true for the artworld? If yes, then second, does it pose a challenge to the very existence of the artworld or does it call for some alteration in its actual form?

Regarding the first issue, if Foucault's assumption about the relation of power and institutions is somewhere near the one concisely outlined above, then it is simply true according to his theory, as it merely makes a rather sweeping generalization about all social institutions, art appreciation being no exception. On the other hand, even without making a strong commitment to Foucault's theory it is certainly possible to see artworld this way. There is clearly a crucial power-knowledge aspect to an art critic or to a competent consumer of art. There is a very material

form of power embedded in art galleries and museums. Then, there is bottom-up power influence that artists have on the other two, constantly looking for new forms of artistic expression. There is a strongly exclusionary quality to practices of evaluation and canon-formation, particularly regarding the judgments of average consumers. And the whole thing might be seen as just perpetuating itself in Bourdieu's fashion: requiring a significant degree of cultural capital (or knowledge/power) to participate in it, it does nothing apart from reproducing the distinction-laden cultural capital for a particular social group. Finally, participation in the artworld typically goes along with some formal training obtained via education and the latter is very obviously a disciplining agency distributing power. All of that is surely pervaded with art-competent power that the artworld holds over what is within and outside of it.

We should, however, keep in mind, Lamarque's point that appreciation of literature is not an institution in the social sense but a practice and it is this very practice that I am particularly concerned with in my argument. One does not need to hold a particular social function (art critic, curator, professor of literature) in order to participate in the artworld. I should stress again that my choice for focusing on the institutional theories of art is purely heuristic: I suppose that for a continentally shaped literary theorist they are the most distinguishable in their approach to artworks within the body of the whole of analytic aesthetics which focuses exclusively on the tangible practices (institutions) involved in attending to art. Then there is a quality to any social institution or practice which perhaps might be called gravity. It is one thing to examine the fluidity and ubiquity of power relations in political, educational, medical or penal institutions or their whole discourses and another thing to look for it in the practices of appreciation of literature or, to use Lamarque's example again, in the rules of a game of chess. It might be an interesting mental exercise but not necessarily a very rewarding one. To trace power relations or historical arbitrariness and discontinuities along with sets of fossilized micro-practices that led to the formation of these institutions might be a valuable and progressive Foucauldian enterprise. But it would not necessarily affect the practice of appreciation unless, one assumes a strongly historicist stance toward its existence, reducing it to random outcome of social power relations shaped historically. This would have the potential to call for subversion or alteration of the practices of appreciation. I suspect, however, that such a strongly historicist thesis is false. Partly for the reasons outlined in this chapter and partly due to the part of my argument developed in Chapter 4. There is just too much affinity between the way we appreciate and understand art and other artifacts, narratives, verbal utterances and human behavior as a whole to see it all as wholly determined historically without any naturalist underpinnings. I will return to this point in Chapter 4, when discussing contingency of value.

Finally, and regarding the second issue I raised, does Foucault call for some alteration of the practice involving appreciation of art? Foucauldian genealogy of literature clearly shifts its attention from the artistic value of literature toward an analysis of mechanisms that historically led to sacralization of literature and “exposes the means by which sacralized literature, literary criticism, and literary theory fortify a power/knowledge formation that justifies hierarchy, commits violence in the name of morality and truth, and defuses possibilities for social change” (Quinby 1995, xii). Yet the project is not supposed to “kill off literature” (Quinby 1995, xii) and there are reasons to believe that the answer to the above question might be negative, though the material to support it is rather scant. One case which supports my view is Gary Shapiro’s discussion of Danto’s and Foucault’s respective approaches to Warhol’s art (Shapiro 2012, 199–214). For the sake of brevity I will not quote the essay at length, but re-phrase its main points. Both Foucault and Danto see Warhol as a breakthrough artist whose work signifies a dramatic shift in our understanding of art. There are, however, major differences in how both philosophers perceive his work. Danto is particularly interested in the problem of indiscernibles which Warhol explores, whereas for Foucault, the significance of Warhol lies in his extensive use of repetition, seriality, simulacrum and multiplicity. These differences arise from contrasting visions of art history. Danto sees art history in a Hegelian fashion where art gradually becomes philosophy, a process that ends in twentieth century with artists such as Warhol producing indiscernibles. Foucault offers a different periodization of Western culture and its dominant ideas; one that is marked by discontinuities, breaks and revolutionary changes. On the basis of that, Shapiro speculates about Foucauldian art history consisting of Renaissance emphasis on resemblance and analogy, classical era foregrounding representation, modernist explorations of self-knowledge and, finally, postmodernism with its removal of the human subject.

Clearly, such overarching periodizations are problematic and often do not stand up to close scrutiny but I will leave this matter to art historians to settle. For one thing, I suppose that such categorization of art history cannot be rejected a priori, on principle, as it recognizes all major trends within Western art from the Renaissance to postmodernity, albeit highlighting different aspects of them than, say, philosophers of art such as Danto. It is clear that Foucault’s comments on Warhol do show his clear understanding of the themes the latter explores along with recognition of his position in art history which, consequently, shows that Foucault attends to Warhol with proper art-historical attitude.

In an interview about the nature of literature, Foucault explores the tenets of desacralization, trying to undermine the use of literature as an overarching discourse, saying:

people wrote the history of what was said in the eighteenth century, via Fontenelle, or Voltaire, or Diderot, or La Nouvelle Heloise, and so forth. Or they regard these texts as the expression of something that, ultimately, could not be formulated at a more everyday level

(Foucault 1995, 4)

At another point, he admits he is not interested in studying literature in “its internal structures” (Foucault 1995, 6), but rather how, in a process of “selection, sacralization, and institutional validation” (Foucault 1995, 4) a discourse becomes literature. Looming here is, again, the radical thesis that rejects any artistic quality to literature apart from it being merely sacralized by appropriate institutions for power-reinforcing reasons. This might follow from Foucault’s words, but, actually, nothing necessitates it. In fact, when straightforwardly asked whether the criteria for elevating a piece of discourse to the level of literature are a matter of sacralization or are internal to the texts, Foucault openly says “I don’t know” (Foucault 1995, 5). The genealogical project calls for a shift of attention from “great works, period, and genre courses” (Quinby 1995, xv) toward critical reading, but it is precisely a shift, not necessarily a denial of artistic value. It does not seek to reject art canon, “examining the ways that a canon of great works is deployed to construct a dominant regime of truth” (Quinby 1995, xv) and does not aim at “formulating countercanons or expanding the existing canon,” (Quinby 1995, xv) which displays concern for how art is used for non-artistic purposes, presupposing the existence of an aesthetic dimension to art. The focal point of Foucauldian genealogy is the social validation of literature which may or may not go along with its artistic appreciation. The project does not even address issues of philosophy of art/literature, but presupposes their existence. Definitely, Foucault is interested in what contributes to social recognition of a literary work and not what is involved in the actual practices of readers attending to a work. Any project that makes us more sensitive to latent political and ideological content of art is valuable in itself, but it does not necessarily deny the existence of aesthetic level. To restate my general thesis here, it aims at a different level of analysis which at times makes use of literary texts, presupposing and taking for granted their artistic dimension and not automatically questioning it.

I take it that institutional theories of art highlight a certain skill involved in attending to a work and not on authoritarian position of a critic. The skill itself might be used to produce various interpretations and this is where, paradoxically, the dominant, controlling position of the author is replaced by that of a competent reader in a move that is congruent with Foucault’s suspicion about author’s role and with his plea for proliferation of literary meaning.

Moderately Naturalist Perspective on the Artistic Conventions

So far, I have attempted to keep my argument congruent with the Institutional Theory of Art as applied to literature. The theory, however, is not without flaws and serious objections against it have been raised. In what follows I shall address some of the major arguments against it and attempt to revise and update it.

The theory states that an artwork is whatever is considered an artwork by a member of the institutions related to art, the artworld. An artist creates an artifact as a candidate for appreciation with the intention that it be recognized as valuable and meaningful by a competent audience. Perhaps the most serious doubt raised against this brief formulation is that the theory is circular and not really informative. It tells us nothing about the reasons a member of the artworld might have for calling something an artwork and what the value and meaning might actually refer to. If the theory suggests that the members of the artworld have no reasons and no logic supporting their decisions, then why should a category such as art be of any interest to anyone? Moreover, it is not altogether clear who exactly is a member of the artworld and how and when they can legitimately confer the artwork status on an object. Finally, what is exactly the status of artifacts created within a culture that seems to have no artworld institutions? Can a solitary “artist” create genuine art?

Such objections have led some philosophers to formulate various historical definitions of art. Jerrold Levinson suggested that to be called an artwork, an object must be said to have some relation to what has already been acknowledged historically as art, “whether something is art now depends, and ineliminably, on what has been art in the past” (Levinson 2002, 367). Noël Carroll proposed what is called historical narrativism, where in order to identify something as an artwork, a relevant expert has to propose a narrative in which a given artifact is placed in an art-historical context (Carroll 1999, 249–265), that is, one can only judge something as an artwork against the background of artistic tradition and the artifact’s relation to it.

The above formulations of historical definitions of art are not dramatically distant from institutional theories. They both acknowledge the importance, the necessity of the institution’s operations for the existence of art categories as we understand them nowadays, but they add that the notion of the institution is itself insufficient in determining the meaning and value of art. Historical definitions, along with one more recent formulation of Institutional Theory which emphasizes the lack of a trans-historical criterion of art and the need to constantly reinvent the past meanings of art (Matravers 2000, 242–250) seem to be close to Gadamer’s historicism which stresses that making sense of art is a constant dialogue with the past that results in a fusion of the horizons of

expectations of authors and audiences. The difference is perhaps that Gadamer tended to be exclusively focused on the works of the classics, the canonical art, whereas analytic aestheticians make no such reservations.

It seems that for philosophy of art, the most interesting problems that lead to revisions of institutional and historical definitions of art arise out of contemporary visual arts where it is certainly true that any object can be put on display as a candidate for appreciation. While the major problems that stem out of contemporary art are of primary importance for those who attempt to formulate a general theory of art encompassing all of its types, the situation seems to be less dramatic in those branches of art that are by definition limited to a specific form, as is the case with the linguistic form of literature. This means that it is precisely the institutional theory, with its emphasis on analyzing the procedures and conventions of interpreting and evaluating a work, that is most relevant to a further analysis of literary works after the candidate has been granted the status of an artwork. If there are fewer problems with classifying a candidate for appreciation as literature, as its relation to past artistic forms is limited to variants of poetry, drama and prose, a literary critic simply has less to do when it comes to establishing a historical narrative that would answer why a given artifact should be considered literature at all. Another reason why the institutional, the procedural aspect of literature, should be highlighted is literature's frequent formal complexity. There is often much more content to construe, link and evaluate in, say, a literary narrative than in a painting.

According to the theory I have been arguing for, following Olsen and others, to interpret a work aesthetically one has to submit it under specific reading conventions. A competent reader or a literary critic uses their relevant background knowledge and begins reading with a set of expectations, identifying the work's relation to artistic conventions and tradition. The core element of the procedure, as Olsen claimed, is to divide the work into segments (whole passages, a sentence or part of a sentence) (Olsen 1978, 82) into units of meaning which then might be said to serve certain artistic functions in relation to other segments and, thus, in the context of the whole work. A segment can be attributed a subject, tone, attitude, status and style. Simultaneously, one looks for metaphors, images, symbols and recurrent motifs so as to unify the segments with a recurring overall theme. A work might be deemed valuable if a significant portion of the artworld agrees that applying the abovementioned procedure on it is rewarding, that is, it rewards the expectations as to the functionality and coherence of its overall theme and, thus, evokes aesthetic pleasure. The institutional theorist only hints at the fact, but it is clear that to be valuable in this sense, a work must also touch upon themes which are of general human concern, or rather, its rendition must somehow resonate with some contemporary aspect of general human concerns. For instance, when reading Dante's *Divine Comedy* we tend

to appreciate its role in the history of literary conventions as well as, for example, Dante's mastery of poetic forms. But of equal importance is the work's ability to comprehensively reflect the worldview of its times; its general concerns and topics of major interest. However, it is clear that if someone were to compose a similar work nowadays, and by similar I mean both the form and a thorough discussion of Thomistic philosophy as if one lived in the fourteenth century, the work would be considered unoriginal and uninteresting when set against the background of the whole Western artistic tradition, as it would not reflect contemporary concerns.

Although I have no quarrel with the basic understanding of the aesthetic approach to art as outlined by Olsen and others, what I find unclear about it is the status of the conventions themselves. Are they purely arbitrary? Are they a matter of a special type of attitude, aesthetic attitude that we take on when approaching art? The fact that their status is not explicitly stated in the institutional theorist's writing need not necessarily be the theory's flaw. After all, the philosopher works on his "segment" of discourse and need not worry about its external status. To think about these conventions as purely institutionally is enough for the philosophical discussion, and it is someone else's job to determine the status of the conventions.

One brief passage where Peter Lamarque discusses his understanding of institutional objects as opposed to natural objects is that the former need not be tied to a specific physical form; they acquire their meaning when placed in a network of practices. A given text or a given utterance may become a literary work when a rule-governed procedure is applied to it and when it yields rewarding results. Lamarque compares the procedures that constitute interpreting and appreciating literary works to chess. Apart from indicating that literary works, like chess, can take any physical form whatsoever, the analogy implicitly suggests that the literary conventions are fully arbitrary. Just as there can be an infinite number of board games with an infinite number of rules that govern them, there can be an infinite number of artworlds that argue for their own arbitrarily established reading procedures and their own criteria of value.

However, I believe there are sound reasons to reject the thesis that the rules and procedures that underlie the practices of the artworld are entirely arbitrary, and one of the reasons for holding such a belief follows from determining what conventions really are. One famous definition of conventions was offered by David Lewis (Lewis 1969). Lewis claimed that conventions are in fact solutions to problems of coordination within a population. In order to be a proper convention, the solution must be a preferred choice in relation to at least one other, equally good solution. Moreover, it must be a choice to which members of the population adhere to in new instances because it has already been adopted on some

preceding occasions. Placing Lewis' discussion of conventions in a literary context, Brian Baxter adds that at least two salient points follow. First, the claim that whatever people commonly agree to or whatever precedent-governed activity there is, we need to call it a convention, is an uninteresting understanding of the concept due to its excessive inclusiveness. Another thing is that if there is a history of established practice within a population, but the practice is clearly the best solution, then it is better to call it tradition and not a convention per se, "not all traditions are conventions, even if all conventions are (part of) traditions" (Baxter 1984, 223). This might be illustrated by Baxter's own simple example regarding the use of a drill and the colors of wires. The marking of wires in the drill is of course conventional and whoever wishes to use the tool has to master the convention. On the other hand, understanding "what the drill is for and how it achieves its aims" (Baxter 1984, 221) is not conventional in the sense outlined above. Surely, one might imagine a culture which has its own local set of magical beliefs as to how a drill functions and the beliefs might even be useful, or at least they might not interfere with the drill's primary use, but such a local set of beliefs will be proven wrong when, say, trying to repair a defect in a damaged drill. In fact, the arbitrariness of colors is also limited. There are infinite ways of conventionally dividing the spectrum of colors, but it will not be a convention that colors still "show certain relationships to each other" (Baxter 1984, 222): that some of them clash or harmonize or that some are aggressive, or that some colors can be produced by mixing other colors, etc.

The above entails at least two important claims regarding the status of literature. If literature, or art in general, is purely arbitrary, then one must find other activities which serve literature's functions equally well. One might argue that obviously there are such activities and they might encompass anything from mountain hiking, through computer games to pornography, but what is at stake here is the aesthetic use of literature. By definition, there can be no institution other than art that serves the artistic purpose. Such explanation is, however, uninformative as it merely shifts the point of concern from artworks to the artistic purpose which might itself be arbitrary. The only way to defend the non-arbitrary nature of art is, then, to argue that the aesthetic experience of art is not arbitrary. Paradoxically, institutional theorists such as Olsen and Lamarque emphasize the unique character of art and the pleasure it affords, implying that there is no other institution that would serve the function equally well. What they restrain from, however, is to explicitly state that the human interest in what constitutes the varieties of aesthetic experience: the delights of visual creations, the enjoyment of stories, sounds and films, is not altogether conventional; it is not that people simply choose to have these "forms of interest and delight" (Baxter 1984, 223). That they take part in creating art and enjoying it in

a specific way is a brutal natural fact. What this implies, as Baxter correctly observes, is that understanding and enjoying art is dependent not only on culturally specific conventions, but also on the ability to grasp the “natural facts about people, facts which are not necessary truths, but which form the basis of mutual understanding” (Baxter 1984, 223). So, to understand and to appreciate art aesthetically one must proceed with “shared strategies of interpretation” (Baxter 1984, 223) which rest on assumptions about shared human nature and experience.

Baxter is entirely right in pinpointing these tacit and overlooked assumptions lurking behind the institutional theories of literature. Culler’s institutional theory is based on his claim that humans are governed by a semiological imperative of trying “to make sense of things” (Culler 1976, 21–22), but such an imperative must itself refer to a natural fact about humans.³ This means that an intelligible institutional theory cannot produce a coherent account of literature without reference to natural facts about humans; it cannot be construed on purely conventional, linguistic or textual grounds. Similarly, Olsen acknowledges that valuable literary works must touch upon the questions of human concern but never elaborates on the topic. On the contrary, just like Lamarque, he openly claims that literary works cannot pretend to the role of stating actual truths about the human condition, although to acknowledge some reference to human nature⁴ is the only way to save institutional theories from the paradoxes of arbitrariness.

The above discussion hints at a necessity of a link between art and human experience in the thematic sense, but the interest in the solely thematic aspect of art is of minor importance within the Institutional Theory. A much more important question is the one regarding the status of the procedures that lead to aesthetic appreciation of art, such as the segmentation discussed by Olsen. When it comes to explaining the motivation behind a competent reader’s decision to establish a segment of a work as artistically meaningful, possessing certain stylistic features or being metaphorical or symbolic, the institutional theorists suggest that it is a matter of training regarding the conventional expectations that is able to ascribe artistic functions to segments of works. This is perhaps true, but there are at least two related issues that need to be clarified. First, are the specific reading conventions arbitrary? Second, how does one acquire literary or aesthetic competence?

The notion of “aesthetic attitude” is sometimes put forward to back up an affirmative answer to the first question. The proponents of the notion of aesthetic attitude suggest that there is a special, unique type of attitude that competent consumers of art take on to enjoy it aesthetically. Aesthetic attitude is responsible for disinterested perception of art as well as for the expectations and the conventions of aesthetic interpretation that might guide the consumer as to what they should pay attention to in a work. There are however sound reasons to reject the claim that

there is a special mode of attention reserved for art. George Dickie has famously argued that if one were to establish what the opposite, the interested attention, consists of, one invariably arrives at examples of mere inattention. Suppose that during a performance of *Othello* one spectator becomes increasingly suspicious of his wife's infidelity as the action of the play proceeds, or a moralist spectator who contemplates what moral effects might the play's performance have on the audience (Dickie 1964, 56–65). In both cases, the interested attention is mere inattention and one cannot say that the aesthetic disinterested attitude is in any sense different from the ordinary ability to pay attention closely. Consequently, when explaining the nature of the rules and procedures that govern aesthetic interpretation, it is not enough to refer to conventions of specific types of attitude required. If there is no difference between aesthetic attitude and being focused on a work, it means that the ability to locate metaphors, symbols and the general procedure of segmenting a work and ascribe those segments an artistic function must in the end also rest on some natural thought processes.

The second question I posed already suggests that there is no established way of acquiring aesthetic competence. There is no threshold above which one can claim to be literary competent. Acquiring a degree of literary competence is always intertwined with acquiring other cultural competences, or, it is always part of a general acculturation. This implies that there can be no separate category of literary competence which one might acquire, and that consequently, understanding and enjoying art and having expectations about it will always be intertwined with understanding other cultural practices, understanding other minds and with assuming a certain degree of commonality of human experience and human nature. Literary competence, just as cultural competence, can only exist as an open-ended spectrum with totally illiterate, non-acculturated and non-socialized individuals on its one end from which infinite degrees of competence spring. By suggesting that there can be no fundamental qualitative, only a quantitative, difference between understanding art and understanding other cultural artifacts, I am already hinting at the direction of my argument in the next chapter.

What I have argued throughout this chapter is that the initially claimed binary opposition between (analytic) aesthetics and literary theory does not hold. It is impossible that the two approaches are in opposition, in the sense of competing over their role in literary studies, as they tend to focus on different aspects of literary research. In reality, they are bound in a hierarchy where a valuable and informative research within a given literary-theoretical framework is possible only when a prior proper aesthetic understanding of a work has been achieved. My aim was, then, to trace the breaks and continuities between both approaches and outline how one can follow from the other.

Apart from that, I have tried to demonstrate that institutional theories of art have to explicitly include both the history of art and some appeals to natural facts, to human nature, so as to avoid the problems of arbitrariness, faced by, say, structuralist or post-structuralist theories (at least on some readings of the latter). An appeal to human nature is, of course, dangerous both in the political sense and in a sense of producing oversimplified, reductive accounts of human action both in the sciences and in humanities. What I will try to demonstrate in the third chapter is that just as one is able to trace a continuity between aesthetics and literary theories, one can outline the continuity between the procedures and conventions that regulate the creation and the reception of art and the processes of the ordinary human cognition, without falling into reductive accounts of the former. After all, there is no way to explain naturalistically the history and the cultural locality of the artworld, or, say, the universally acknowledged reputation of Shakespeare among literary critics. But if, according to the principles of embodied cognition embraced by cognitive scientists, “there is no difference in kind between the practices of literature and those of ordinary thought” (Hogan 2003, 87), or as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggested, metaphors are neither reserved to literature nor to ordinary language, but are central to the development of thought as such, then there must be a way to non-reductively outline the transition from everyday cognition to the aesthetic cognition of a work of art.

Notes

- 1 My understanding of Barthes’ argument would be that since it is established that language is an uncontrollable, autonomous and fluent structure of signifiers, any attempts to make it static and determinate (as with ascribing works to authorial intentions) are illusory. They serve certain pre-existing power relations in society, but they do not reflect what really happens with language.
- 2 I am inclined to replace his “sociological analysis” with “Marxist literary theory” or any literary theory, for that matter.
- 3 These natural facts can either refer to human biological constitution or to mere established observations about humans. Baxter’s own examples of natural facts about humans include human interest in colors, sounds, words, etc. (pp. 122–123).
- 4 I am well aware of the systematic abuse of the concept and its dangerous political implications. Here, I refer to human biological constitution, keeping in mind that whatever the bio-psychological component, humans also exist in specific cultural-historical localities which remain largely autonomous from the biological sphere.

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3 Literature and Minds

The main focus of the preceding chapters was to discuss the nature of the relation between contemporary literary theories (understood chiefly as variants of post-structuralism and cultural studies) and philosophical aesthetics (principally in the analytic tradition). As I argued, although representatives of both traditions tend to marginalize or reject the significance of each other's work, both areas of research seem to be bound up in a structure of hierarchical continuity. In other words, neither of the traditions can successfully claim to solely provide the paradigm for literary studies (or the comprehensive account of the nature of art/literature/text, etc.) as each of them relies on layers of assumptions taken from lower-level disciplines that influence the nature of claims and the scope of research of the higher-level disciplines in a non-trivial way, that is to say, not just acknowledging that there exist different disciplines but that they relate to each other in some form of dependence.

A closer analysis of the seminal post-structuralist essays on the notion of the "text" (such as Barthes' and Foucault's) reveals its close connection with the notion of the "work" as it has been developed in contemporary analytic aesthetics. Institutionally or conventionally determined intentions, meaning and indexicality, assuming a notion of a designed text and chronology, are all essential features of the notion of the work, but, more importantly, they are also prerequisite for the "text" to be comprehensible at all. Similarly, Richard Hoggart's discussion of the cultural text points to the necessity of using the tools of (aesthetic) literary criticism in cultural studies. Consequently, the success of the type of research carried out by textualist literary theories must depend on their application of basic aesthetic considerations so as to yield fruitful, non-arbitrary results. Aesthetics and textualist theories are not mutually exclusive, competing research paradigms, but form a continuous body where the former serves as a lower-order discipline providing foundations for the latter.

The multilevel nature of research in literary studies sheds some light on the possibility of formulating a single, general theory of literature. In the tradition that ranges from Saussurean linguistics, through formalism, structuralism, to post-structuralism, it was commonly assumed that

linguistics can provide us with an adequate paradigm for literary studies. Although post-structuralism denied that literary studies can take the form of one systematic and rigorous body of research, it still shared many of the textualist assumptions of its predecessors, most important of which was the belief that the study of language and literature and, consequently, the study of culture as such, can be absolutely autonomous from any considerations about humans, human action, human nature and human biology. Such research orientation was not only reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Diltheyan distinction into natural sciences and to so-called *Geisteswissenschaften* and C.P. Snow's discussion of two cultures, but it also claimed that culture does not form a continuous body with nature in a non-trivial way. To study artifacts of culture, it was claimed, we do not need to adhere to any notions of humans as biological organisms, as culture is a self-contained and self-referential entity that operates without any direct connection to nature and the material in biological sense.

Contemporary discussions in analytic aesthetics put some of these claims into doubt. First, it is extremely problematic to study literature in a way that is parallel to the type of research done in linguistics. The notion of a "work" does not have a simple equivalent in linguistics. Moreover, concepts such as rules of grammar or minimal units of meaning are hardly possible to identify with a high degree of regularity in each work. Understanding and appreciating a literary work requires making use of sets of assumptions that are not merely linguistic. A general theory of literature that posits the concept of literariness, understood as deviation from ordinary language use, must encounter problems related to the fact that many of the established and celebrated literary works do not necessarily seem to be deviated from ordinary language, or particularly rich in linguistic or artistic devices.

Although analytic aesthetics can provide foundations for the type of textualist research often carried out by contemporary literary theorists, neither aesthetics itself, nor a continuous body of aesthetics and textualism can produce a comprehensive account of literature that would include something more than accounts of how literature functions as a cultural discourse, or that would explore the philosophical problems around the questions of literary art. For what is then left unexplained is the question why and how humans use literature and what are its sources. Analytic aesthetics explores this really only partly as it emphasizes the need to study art in relation to human action and human institutions. The fundamental idea of research in analytic philosophy is to describe the necessary and sufficient conditions of use of certain concepts, which already implies a deep connection between this type of inquiry and observable or measurable human behavior. However, the most influential theories of art, as developed in analytic aesthetics (the institutional or the historical ones), tend to overemphasize the locality

and conventionality of art. The assumptions that procedures involved in appreciating art are purely conventional skills to be mastered, or that art cannot exist beyond the institutions of the artworld, are rather strong claims that tend to run parallel to the Saussurean project of studying language, and later also literature, as entities that exist independently of nature, and independently of other disciplines, or human biology.

As I argued in the previous chapter, the study of art behaviors must necessarily rely and depend on certain natural facts. Art cannot be said to be simply conventional in the sense that traffic organization is conventional, as people engage in art-related behaviors spontaneously and naturally. It is not a matter of choice that people decide to enjoy music or stories. Similarly, understanding what art conveys and what stylistic features it applies seems to be impossible without placing it in the context of human interests and of human predispositions. In this light, it seems unlikely that the process of cognizing and appreciating art is merely a local and arbitrary convention. If this is true, as I am convinced it is, then to understand literature more fully one needs to posit the existence of yet another level in the research hierarchy that I have been outlining here. If aesthetics relies on a lower-order research into human cognition, then aesthetics in the institutional sense is not entirely discontinuous with everyday human behaviors. Determining the nature of this continuity, or, in other words, the connection between the research into human mind and the research into art is the focus of this chapter.

Language and Cognition

In Chapters 1 and 2 I insisted that Saussurean linguistics has had a considerable influence on various literary theories and that contemporary approaches to Theory largely stem from post-structuralist reinterpretation of Saussure. As I firmly believe that it would not be too cavalier to state that some of the central concepts of Saussurean linguistics are quite outdated and mostly rejected by contemporary linguistic scientific community, I attempted to show how, in spite of this fact, the type of research into literature and culture espoused by post-structuralism-inspired theories is far from being discredited or inadequate. Nevertheless, Saussurean linguistics remains highly problematic as a general theory of language, mostly due to its conviction about the independence of language from all types of human action that normally make use of language: communication, expressing intentions, having expectations or thinking. Instead, for Saussure and his followers, language is seen as a closed, independent structure with entirely arbitrary connection to nature and to the world. Its actual use and its links to human activity were seen as accidental and irrelevant for the study of language. However, the above stance has been rejected almost universally by subsequent generations of linguists. Starting with the late 1950s, generative

linguistics has asserted linguistic nativism: that the ability to produce and understand language and complex syntactic structures is largely innate, that there exist cross-cultural linguistic universals, and that there exists a separate, autonomous faculty of the mind that deals with language processing. But an even more radical break with de Saussure came with the advent of cognitive linguistics in late 1970s and 1980s. Cognitivists, largely inspired by research in psychology, argued against the generativist claim that there can exist a special, autonomous module in the mind used solely for language processing. Instead, and this was congruent with relevant research in psychology, they claimed that linguistic ability is not separable from other cognitive processes. To understand how language functions it is necessary to frame it in the context of general human cognition: language and mind cannot be separated. This constitutes a radical break with generativism and, moreover, places cognitive linguistics even further from Saussure's rather simplistic vision of language as an arbitrary, dictionary-like structure where meaning is constituted solely on the basis of minimal phonetic differences.

The following paragraph is a summary of Fauconnier's (Fauconnier 1999) and Croft's/Cruse's (Croft and Cruse 2004) discussion of the fundamental claims of cognitive linguistics in a form relevant for my research. One central claim that Fauconnier makes is that language's primary function is "constructing and communicating meaning" (Fauconnier 1999, 96) emphasizing the central role of semantics, rather than, for example, syntax, in the study of language. To this Croft and Cruse add that linguistic knowledge is essentially conceptual (Croft and Cruse 2004, 1). This includes not only basic semantic representation but also syntax, morphology and phonology, as they all require comprehension and production as input and output cognitive processes. What immediately follows is that language processing involves the use of deeper mental structures that are correlated or "associated with their linguistic manifestations" (Fauconnier 1999, 96). Language itself carries relatively little information and involves what Fauconnier calls "backstage cognition," (Fauconnier 1999, 96) drawing on "vast cognitive resources," (Fauconnier 1999, 96) models, frames, connections, mappings, etc. Studying language, thus, must imply something more than just producing a self-contained "account of the internal properties of languages" (Fauconnier 1999, 102) but is indispensable in understanding "general aspects of human cognition" (Fauconnier 1999, 102). If there is no special faculty of the mind responsible for language use, then the latter is "in principle the same as other cognitive abilities" (Croft and Cruse 2004, 2). Croft elaborates on this point, adding that there is no significant difference in the organization and retrieval of linguistic and any other knowledge (Croft and Cruse 2004, 2). Similarly, using language is not significantly different from other cognitive tasks such as "visual perception, reasoning or motor activity" (Croft and Cruse 2004, 2). Surely,

language is a distinct ability that makes use of a unique configuration of cognitive abilities, but the set of these abilities is not unique to language.

The central claim of this chapter will be analogous to the claims of cognitive scientists. I believe that on a certain rudimentary level human art behaviors including production, understanding and enjoying art involve cognitive abilities that are in no way unique to art or literature. To a certain extent, art behaviors are not significantly different from other cognitive tasks. Art, thus, cannot be said to be easily separable from human interests, human minds, human rationality and general cognitive processes. This is not equivalent to saying that what the contemporary artworld deems valuable art is a matter of easily naturalized cognitive process, as I do not believe that philosophical aesthetics or the study of connoisseur art appreciation can be reduced to neuroscience, but it points to some foundations and conditions of how such decisions can be made. The following section deals with a research area that is at the intersection of linguistics, cognitive science, aesthetics and literary studies and which proves to be fundamental to understanding the relation between literature and cognition, that is, metaphor.

Metaphors and Poetics

In the recent decades, there has been a tremendous change in how we understand the role of metaphors. Metaphor has always been an important part of research into linguistics, literature, rhetoric or philosophy of language. In literary studies and rhetoric, metaphor has often been considered an ornament, an artistic device that is the staple of truly poetic language whose main function is to convey emotional experience and evoke a sense of aesthetic pleasure in readers. On the other hand, some idea of the cognitive aspect of metaphor was present from the beginning of poetics, as is the case with Aristotle. A proto-cognitivist account of metaphor was put forward by I.A. Richards in his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936). Richards adhered to a theory of art that saw metaphor as a medium of transferring emotional experience between minds. For this sort of communication to be successful it is crucial to use certain poetic or rhetorical instruments of which metaphor is the supreme agent. In this view, metaphor is definitely important in terms of its influence on the receivers of emotionally charged content and thus is essential to successful poetic language as it helps to conceptualize human experience. The point is, however, that before cognitive linguistics, the cognitive aspect of metaphor was not accounted for in a systematic, coherent way.

Likewise, metaphors have always attracted a significant amount of interest in philosophy. In both continental and analytic philosophy what seemed to be most interesting to philosophers was their ambiguity. Nietzsche (2000) famously called truth “a marching army of metaphors” thus pointing to a lack of any direct correspondence between reality

and human conceptual schemes. Post-structuralist philosophers found metaphors fascinating in how they challenge the concept of literal or fixed meanings in language (Derrida 1982). In quite a similar fashion analytic philosophers have tended to explore the significance of metaphors for truth conditional semantics. In other words, metaphorical expressions are typically false when one attempts to ascribe truth value to their literal meanings. Nevertheless, people normally use and understand metaphors as meaningful, but it is not entirely clear how to conceive of this meaning. Max Black (1954) and Donald Davidson (1984) famously argued that metaphors cannot have a referential function and, consequently, cannot have truth conditions. Instead, metaphors inspire the type of insight that enables us to perceive one thing in terms of another thing in a way that cannot be reduced to a series of propositions that have truth value.

Cognitive linguistics has taken the study of metaphor to a yet another level. In the foundational work for cognitive theories of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson persuasively argued that far from being a mere stylistic ornament, or simply part of rhetoric or poetry, metaphor is essential to human cognition. It is through metaphors that we conceptualize complex phenomena or abstract concepts. Moreover, the basis for conceptualizing what is abstract appears to lie in basic perception of space, body and in directly lived experiences. Metaphor, thus, goes beyond not only poetry but also language as such and appears to be central to human thought and action. One simple example that Lakoff and Johnson mention in the beginning of their book is the “argument is war” metaphor. The fact that argument is commonly conceptualized in terms of war is reflected in the following phrases (all taken from Lakoff and Johnson):

Your claims are indefensible.
 He attacked every weak point in my argument.
 His criticisms were right on target.
 I demolished his argument.
 I've never won an argument with him.
 You disagree? Okay, shoot!
 If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.
 He shot down all of my arguments.

(Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 4)

In the above examples, the source domain (war, struggle) can serve its function precisely because it is more tangible, more primary for human experience. Examples of even more fundamental conceptual metaphors are clear when investigating how humans conceptualize categories such as *up* or *down*. Roughly speaking, whatever is conceptualized as a process moving upward, is simultaneously understood as positive. The formula *good is up* is realized in expressions such as “he was over the moon

about it” or “I feel on top of the world.” Conversely, the formula *bad is down* underlies phrases like “I feel so low” or “this is really the pits.”

The idea that what was traditionally considered an ornamental poetic or rhetorical device lies, in fact, at the heart of the human propensity to conceptualize was later developed by Mark Turner in his theory of the *literary mind*. The point that Turner makes is already looming in the work of other cognitive linguists, such as Lakoff, Langacker or Fauconnier, but it is Turner who synthesizes some of their observations into a comprehensive theory of the literary mind. The *literary mind* theory implies that it is not just metaphor and metonymy that underlie human thought processes: they are but one instance of how human propensity to conceptualize is manifested in language. The relationship between literature, language and the mind are much deeper: a vast array of the devices and mechanisms by which literary creations operate are yet again manifestations of human thought processes.

Although Turner’s chief focus is narrative, most of his observations apply equally to other literary forms. By using the example of the classic tales of Scheherazade, Turner claims that storytelling, narrative imagining, is an essential thought instrument on which rational capacities depend, “it is our chief means of looking into future, of predicting, of planning, and of explaining” (Turner 1998, 4–5). The type of narrative which Turner considers especially illuminating about the nature of human thought is parable, which he defines broadly as a projection of story onto another story (Turner 1998, 7); it includes not only the vizier’s tale about the ox and donkey told to Scheherazade in order to give her advice or in, say, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, but also in expressions such as “when the cat’s away, the mice will play” or “a poor workman blames his tools.” Parables, then, as most narratives, tend to employ, as in simulation or imagination, the human capacity to predict, evaluate, plan and explain (Turner 1998, 9). Moreover, comprehension of stories must entail the recognition that they include objects, agents and events, but again, the ability to discern and apply the three categories is by no means limited to literary narratives or to stories in any narrow sense, but is clearly central to human cognitive processes as such.

Other concepts that indicate the close interconnectedness of literary forms and cognitive processes that Turner mentions include emblems, or prototypes (e.g., the vizier and Scheherazade are instances of parent and child prototypes), image schemas, or scripts, the “skeletal patterns that recur in our sensory and motor experience” (Turner 1998, 16), and which serve as a basis, a preliminary system of expectations through which comprehension of narratives is initiated (“motion along a path, bounded interior, balance, symmetry [...], container”) (Turner 1998, 16), actions such as “pushing, pulling, resting, yielding” (Turner 1998, 16). Other processes include constructing and connecting mental spaces (e.g., having a mental model of the present state of affairs, producing

a mental space of a hypothetical future and blending them) or conceptual blending (e.g., blending of talking people with animals common in folk tales). Finally, being entirely in tune with the findings of cognitive science, Turner makes the point that the structure of language as such, or, to be more specific, the structure of grammar and syntax, does not constitute an autonomous, self-contained human faculty, but reflects the more primary human predispositions to establish causality, agency, and to categorize into objects, actors and events. In the end, complex rules of grammar come from parable (Turner 1998, 118) and simple sentences such as “John broke the stick” or “the train left while I was in the shower” can be seen as primitive stories. The latter’s past tense reflects the fact that the point of focus precedes the point of view. Conceptualizing observable phenomena in terms of agency and causality of events (as in constructing narratives) is primary in relation to more complex grammar rules. Both are, however, manifestations of deeper cognitive structures.

In a project called Paleopoetics, which brings together cognitive linguistics, literary studies, archeology, anthropology and neuroscience, Christopher Collins traces the emergence of language, imagination and early literary forms out of cognitive skills that predate both language and writing. Collins begins his argument by reviewing Dual-Process Theory that posits bipartite functioning of the human brain with one cognitive system being intuitive and the other deliberate. Both systems are complementary and are not only central to information processing, where they include parallel and serial processing, but are also modes of perception and action producing figure-ground distinctions and handling multitasking (Collins 2013, 19). The dual pattern they constitute is also manifest in types of broad and narrow attention and in numerous functions “from bimanual coordination to episodic memory [...], gestural communication, protolanguage, full language, and, ultimately, verbal artifacts” (Collins 2013, 20). Later, Collins goes on to elaborate on the development of play, instrumentality and visuality as “presymbolic functions preadaptive to language” (Collins 2013, 20), where the former involves performing actions inside frames with a semiotic shift (actions such as chasing that normally signifies X, now signifies Y) and leads to development of yet another dyadic mental pattern: that of indexical and iconic signs, detaching natural signs from their ordinary semiotic contexts and adding to them intentional dimension. Instrumentality is “the use of an object as a tool to enhance human action” (Collins 2013, 21) which also includes cultural behaviors such as “tool making, tool use, dances and songs” (Collins 2013, 21). Visuality is another domain where serial and parallel processing cooperate, producing integrated visual field and imagination in the sense of simulation of visual perception. This is highly important for creation of and responding to literature as Collins sees verbal artifact as “an instrument

the brain uses to play visual mental images” (Collins 2013, 22). The form of prelinguistic communication and conceptualization that existed before the emergence of language was based on “gesture and noncompositional vocalization” (Collins 2013, 23). After discussing the emergence of language, Collins elaborates on the development of human communicative code based on symbol growing out of index and icon and on a shift from gesture to voice, and traces how prelinguistic functions gained prominence with the development of full language, as with rhetorical and poetical functions of pronouns, metaphor and metonymy being rooted in play behavior and visual roots of syntax. He concludes that language is a medium of visual representation that enables us to simulate “the perception of identifiable objects based on image schemas” (Collins 2013, 168) and the “sense of acting upon those objects based upon motor schemas” (Collins 2013, 168). Moreover, language is bound with the acts of eye-hand coordination and with “step-by-step seriality of tool making and tool use” (Collins 2013, 168). Finally, Collins speculates on the emergence of earliest kinds of poetry out of life event rituals and food production cycles.

Whatever rhetoric features are to be found in language, they move us as they are able to “tap into our brain’s prelinguistic strata” (Collins 2013, 12). Narrative includes anecdotes and exempla utilizes episodic memory which is central to our organization of the autobiographical past. Figurative devices such as metaphor, metonymy, personalization, hyperbole and others “evoke powers of mental imaging and dream” (Collins 2013, 12). Metaphor and metonymy, he argues following Jakobson, are based on two complementary ways of forming thoughts, that of similarity and contiguity, which correspond to “pre-symbolic sign types, icon and index” (Collins 2013, 171) that, in turn, stem from visuomotor systems. Delivery uses gestures and other paralinguistic means to affect us, though written verbal artifacts also contain such stylistic features. Collins’ argument also uses a model of gradual emergence of levels of phenomena along with disciplines that explore them. In his account poetics proves to explore “the next level of language-mediated complexity, that of closed, unitized verbal systems” (Collins 2013, 12).

If the cognitive linguistic account of the literary character of the human mind promoted by Turner, Collins and other cognitive-oriented linguists and literary scholars seems compelling, at least in a very general sense, then it leads us directly to investigate the status of poetics. Cognitive poetics is a field that has greatly flourished in recent decades thanks to the advances in cognitive science. For the purposes of the book, cognitive poetics might be conceived of as enriching traditional poetics in the sense of formalism or New Criticism with both the conceptual apparatus and the methodological orientation of cognitive science. In the following discussion of cognitive poetics I will chiefly refer to Peter Stockwell’s handbook on the topic (Stockwell 2002), as it concisely synthesizes the

relevant research in various areas of cognitive science and provides the reader with literary analyses typical of contemporary poetics.

On the one hand, it might be indicated that the aims and methods of cognitive poetics are quite predictable: analyzing literary texts in terms of their stylistic content and describing how literary creations employ figures, grounds, schemas, scripts, metaphors, deixis, mental spaces, etc. On the other hand, however, Stockwell envisions cognitive poetics to have much more potential. It would be a grave mistake to treat literature in purely linguistic terms as just another set of data (Stockwell 2002, 5). With the help of cognitive linguistics, such a purely linguistic inquiry into literary texts would clearly illuminate the nature of the relation between “literary readings and readings of non-literary encounters” (Stockwell 2002, 5), but on its own, it would tell us nothing about value, status, historical contexts, etc., all of which need to be taken into consideration for carrying out valid research within cognitive poetics. In accord with the basic premises of cognitive science, and quite contrary to his earlier considerations about the role of specific type of knowledge prerequisite for appreciation of literary art, Stockwell maintains that there is nothing inherently different in the form of literary language and any other language use (Stockwell 2002, 1–13), as any given poetic devices and creative uses of language are widespread in everyday discourse, and that this is precisely the reason why “it is reasonable and safe to investigate the language of literature using approaches generated in the language system in general” (Stockwell 2002, 7). Consequently, although Stockwell admits that a proper study of literature requires having a certain idea of literature and knowing relevant contexts, he happily embraces a typically linguistic analysis of literature, as is evident in his literary analyses that will be mentioned further on and in his claims about the need to incorporate cognitive linguistics into stylistics so that the latter can “reassess its exploration of the workings of literary language” (Stockwell 2002, 5).

Regarding the status of research typical of cognitive poetics, Stockwell claims that the discipline operates on a scale whose one end is explanation of how readers arrived at specific readings (in this mode it has no predictive powers and cannot produce its own interpretations), and whose other end is uncovering patterns and processes that might operate subconsciously or remain unnoticed (Stockwell 2002, 7). The latter is especially interesting, as it tends to complicate the status of research in cognitive poetics a little more. Stockwell admits that when he points out the possibility of the latter mode leading to a claim that “some interpretations are only available to analysts who have knowledge of cognitive poetics” (Stockwell 2002, 7). Although he claims the problem might be resolved by distinguishing between *interpretation* (whatever readers happen to do while reading texts) and *reading* (arriving at a final meaning of a text that is considered acceptable), both of which

involve individual and communal effects of “language and experience” (Stockwell 2002, 8) that are covered by cognitive poetics, he does not elaborate on that or demonstrate how such levels of analysis function in his own work. The solution is, thus, unclear and the problem of the status of cognitive poetics remains, to use one of the discipline’s favorite concepts, foregrounded.¹

Stockwell’s analysis of Ted Hughes’ “Hill-stone was content” could serve as a good illustration of the problems of cognitive poetics. Stockwell begins by saying that what grasps readers’ attention is the personification of hill-stone that runs through the title and the first stanzas. Whereas the stone is personified and active, humans are unnamed agents described “in passive grammatical form” (Stockwell 2002, 21) inducing a reversal of expectations. What is even more striking in the poem, according to Stockwell, is the presence of stylistically deviant metaphors such as “guerilla patience.” Next, he jumps into a discussion of syntax and prepositional phrases to explain how the poem relies on reversing the ordinary understandings of what constitutes a ground and a figure.

Stockwell insists that any kind of analysis carried out in cognitive poetics will always be a mixture of extratextual knowledge, purely linguistic analysis and interpretation. In the case of Hughes, Stockwell emphasizes that the interpretation he outlines is purely his own. This is however highly unclear. For instance, if we were to evaluate the adequacy of his interpretation, we would have to acknowledge his familiarity with the art-historical context, his general education and so on. In other words, we would have to acknowledge his competence. Stockwell’s analysis of Hughes clearly demonstrates his familiarity with the necessary background of artistic conventions. His analysis would not be typical of random readers, as it is not clear why we should assume that ordinary readers would really notice the passive voice-reversal and judge it the way Stockwell does. They would need much more than just standard linguistic skills. In other words, when looking at analyses typical of cognitive poetics, it is not immediately clear as to who the reader might be. Stockwell insists that cognitive poetics describes that which often is subconscious or unnoticed. Again, unnoticed by whom? Everybody except the cognitive linguist? We might wonder whether competent literary critics or competent readers who appreciate the poem artistically really take into consideration all the uses of prepositional phrases, deviant metaphors or the complexity of syntax in order to appreciate the work of art. Cognitive poetics is not equivalent to the empirical study of literary response and, thus, it should perhaps be seen as constructing model readings. Stockwell insists that his reading is definitely affected by his background and experience and is only one of the many readings possible within the sphere of cognitive poetics. But if it should be considered as more than just impressionism, than

it means positing model readings. But the question remains: models of what kind of reading? For, if we were to take seriously Stockwell's claim that literary readings require some contextual knowledge, that readers need to have certain idea of what literature is, then we would have to assume that cognitive poetics provides models for aesthetic appreciation.

The above claim does not, unfortunately, resolve the problem of reading status, as Stockwell does in fact fall into the trap of formalist literariness, where what is interesting in a poem is the latter's deviational character: in Hughes' case, the deviation is the reversal of expectations regarding agency. The problem with such a stance is twofold. One, deviation from everyday experience when it comes to artistic form is in no way correlated with the work's artistic value, as I argued in the preceding chapters. Two, it is altogether not clear whose expectations are reversed. An ordinary person with little knowledge of poetry and literature might indeed find it deviational, but would it still be surprising for a competent reader? Clearly not, and, paradoxically, it seems that it is the competent reader, the reader that has a fair amount of contextual knowledge, that is of interest to Stockwell.

If the case is that the identity of the reader who might read in Stockwell's fashion is unclear and we do not know how such an analysis is connected with artistic value and aesthetics, then a conclusion would be that cognitive poetics produces rather artificial constructs in the guise of illuminating the natural mental processes involved in reading. In his short comment about Browning's "The Lost Leader," a poem that refers to William Wordsworth's transformation from a revolutionary to an arch-conservative, Stockwell gives a more promising example of how linguistic analysis and contextual knowledge can produce fruitful results (Stockwell 2002, 3–4). It would clearly be wrong to claim that the decline of a revolutionary is about Tony Blair, as we do need some contextual knowledge to understand part of the poem's meaning. On the other hand, Stockwell claims that even without historical contexts, we can experience some qualities of the poem, such as sound and metrics. He goes on to say that reading it loud makes one feel the metrics of dactylic tetrameter. Further, as he puts it:

the subsequent lines introduce minor irregularities to disrupt the pattern: omitting the last two unaccented syllables at the end of lines two and four in order to place heavy emphasis on "eye" and "die"; or twice omitting one of the unaccented syllables in the third line to create a heavy pause in the middle of the line. The emphases of the word-meaning can be created and confirmed by these metrical patterns, and illustrate the expert craftsmanship in the poem.

(Stockwell 2002, 3)

I could not agree more with Stockwell's brief analysis of the poem. However, I doubt ordinary readers who follow the purely textual/linguistic analysis (which Stockwell sees as radically separate from the art-historical context) would be able to experience, much less to verbalize it.

Following my slight bias toward institutional theories of art, it is not altogether clear why and how ordinary language users would know that there is an additional syllable that disrupts the metrical pattern, or an emphasis in the middle. Perhaps they would not be able to notice any pattern at all. Moreover, it is unlikely that one can have a strict separation of the historical and the textual, or linguistic, where the latter elicits a more or less spontaneous response based on everyday experience of language use. On the contrary, I believe the two remain bound together and it is naïve to claim that one can have an instinctive, spontaneous response to a linguistic passage having no historical knowledge that one applies to it. It is, of course, a matter of degree how relevant or how much knowledge one possesses, but one cannot occupy a space where one responds purely in terms of an ahistorical mental disposition.

Stockwell acknowledges that the historical and textual can work together, but his account of the relation is different than the one I outlined above. He claims that, in the case of Browning's poem, contextual background can shed some light on the poem's change in metrics. If one recalls that traditionally heroic poetry tended to be written in Alexandrine hexameter, then Browning's "disruptions of the dactyl and reduction of the repetitions from six to four in the line" (Stockwell 2002, 3) might be read as in tune with the topic of the demise of the hero, of Wordsworth's fall. But what this shows us is that proper knowledge of art is primary to any effect that deviation of the language use might have on its recipients. After all, the aesthetically relevant observations about the relation of form and content in Browning's poem would be inaccessible to people unfamiliar with art history and artistic conventions, and the poem might have virtually no effect, in a purely naturalistic sense, on random readers. Interestingly enough, Stockwell's short commentary about Browning is more promising than his analysis of Hughes, as in the latter case he seems to be indicating that the value of a poem lies in its deviation of language use and disrupting expectations, whereas his remark about Browning indicates that there is no direct connection between the natural processes of the mind and the appreciation of art, the latter point being in accordance with institutional theories of art as developed in analytic aesthetics.

Stockwell's more recent work is equally oblivious to philosophical literary aesthetics and the ways in which it could potentially inform some questions about research in cognitive poetics. For instance, Stockwell sets out to produce a cognitive framework for discussing ethical positioning of reader regarding a literary text and begins his discussion by laying down a dubious distinction into "natural reading" (Stockwell

2013, 265) and “reflecting analytically on the activity” (Stockwell 2013, 265). The latter, he claims, along with the close reading type of attention to detail is unnatural and typical of the work of literary critics and average readers. Apart from that, Stockwell gives little explanation about the features of both modes. I will return to this point in more detail in the next chapter, but for now it will suffice to say that there cannot be a uniform and useful category of natural reading, but rather a gradation of competence among all readers which is rooted in our natural cognitive-emotive capacities and further reinforced both by training in literary reading and increasing one’s knowledge about literature and by acquaintance with arts and other intentional artifacts. A model, ideal literary critic occupies one end of such a spectrum, but there cannot be a strong distinction into their activities and that of average readers. Institutional Theory of Art appears to be strict in laying down who, and in what conditions, would be able to appreciate artworks but what it does in fact is account for conventional practices that are largely fossilized and perhaps enhanced standard cognitive procedures pertaining to artifact cognition and responding to intentional creations. In tune with the above, one cannot say that there is a natural approach to literature peculiar to the common man and an artificial one promoted by the literary critic. Artworks require knowledge and understanding of their respective categories and nature to be properly interpreted and appreciated. If this is not established, then cognitive poetics has little more to say about literary works than about other linguistic utterances and, consequently, the status and effects of what cognitive poetics studies is unclear. Stockwell also insists that “most literary works have an encoded, text-driven preferred response” (Stockwell 2013, 269), though this boils down to “easy-to-follow plot and easily discernible theme or point” (Stockwell 2013, 269) which help readers position themselves ethically. There are obviously piles of assumptions here that would benefit if consulted with some research carried out by literary theorists or philosophers of art. Stockwell’s sweeping generalizations about literature overlook the fact that preferred responses might fail or diverge dramatically among readers. It will not suffice to just state that even when there are differences in response, readers do not ascribe “polyvalent intention” to authors. It is certainly not something we can take for granted. The question about the source of those preferred responses is not innocent, either. Are they guided by actual authors or they are hypothetical constructs? Perhaps they are effects of an attempt to maximize the value of the work read in the fashion of Stephen Davies’ theory (Davies 2006)? If Stockwell focuses on average readers, how is his idea of positioning affected by highly subjective, personal and idiosyncratic readings? The notion of ambiguity, which for Stockwell is a key indicator of artistic value, for literary critics also requires much more attention than the glossing over he offers. He seems to be suggesting it is something akin to multiplicity

of meaning. Either way, it is clearly not a defining component of artistic value. But the real problem here is that it might be difficult to distinguish between what Stockwell means by ambiguity and rather direct effects of sufficient complexity of a work. Ambiguity need not be a grand term referring to overall assessment of a work, but typically contributes to it, appearing at levels of smaller segments of a work, like evaluating a character or significance of a particular scene. This does not refer to the canon of high art exclusively. Whether one takes the most popular works of young adult fantasy, such as *Harry Potter*, or drama TV shows such as *Breaking Bad* or *The Wire* or classic gangster films, they are full of ambiguous characters whose actions contribute to the overall complexity of a final evaluation of these works and to possible multiplicity of meaning. Stockwell's own example of *Lolita* is a case in point: it will not do to just claim that divergences in responses are never polyvalent in attributing intentions. There are clearly many aspects of Stockwell's argument that would benefit from consulting debates about meaning, value and intentions in literary theory and philosophy of art.

Similar problems pervade other works in cognitive poetics. In the introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (Steen and Gavins 2003), the authors claim that thanks to its being founded on cognitive science, cognitive poetics gives us an insight into universal features of human perception and how they are exploited by literature (Steen and Gavins 2003, 1–13). As a result, they hold, cognitive poetics does not produce elitist readings (as opposed to, say, normative literary theories) but gives the sense of the natural processes of the mind shared by all humans. It can, thus, explain what devices and techniques used in literary works produce certain effects on humans. It would be able, thus, to tell us something about ordinary readers rather than professional, competent ones. The other important feature of cognitive poetics is seen in the authors' claim that the discipline has really been a continuation of the work done by Russian formalists and structuralists. This is not entirely unexpected as the research of literariness and defamiliarization appears to be quite akin to some of the claims of cognitive poetics, and I have tried to show that both concepts were already tacitly looming in Stockwell's work. Essentially, thus, the authors claim that cognitive poetics is an extension of formalist and structuralists poetics updated with contemporary theories of the mind and with contemporary research into language processing and text processing that was lacking in the 1960s and 1970s.

All of the above demonstrates that cognitive poetics is trapped in a paradox. It claims to be able to explore how and why readers are drawn to literary works, but it seems to rely heavily on assumptions similar to those from formalist and structuralists theories and encounters similar problems. Stockwell's discussion of Browning shows that rather than explaining how certain linguistic utterances become an appealing literary

work, one needs to first have a certain degree of relevant knowledge about art. In other words, one needs first to know in advance what is valuable and only then can cognitive poetics begin to explore the reasons why a certain artifact has become valuable. This, however, runs contrary to the original claim about cognitive poetics being anti-elitist and able to place literature within natural processes of the mind.

Even though cognitive science offers quite a promising perspective on merging or bridging mind, language, literature and other arts, cognitive poetics seems to be quite problematic as a result of its reliance on formalist and structuralist ideas. In particular, cognitive poetics is unable to establish the status of its own research: does it produce testable hypotheses about meaning construal? Does it outline possible model readings? In the latter case, to be meaningful, cognitive poetics would have to include rudimentary aesthetic assumptions about the analyzed work in order to account for its artistic value. Unfortunately, the tendency often appears to be to treat literary texts not as works of art but as mere linguistic utterances whose understanding and appreciation depends solely on applying linguistic methods. There are problems with establishing the identity of readers involved in the type of analysis outlined by cognitive poetics. One can assume that what they produce refers to some idealized, abstract model of a mind that responds to the poetic devices, but then again, it is not clear how to apply such a model, if appreciation of art as art requires some degree of literary and cultural competence.

Overall, I see cognitive poetics as offering two ways in which its type of research can illuminate understanding of the relation between literature and mind. First, as stylistics, it can elaborate on the models offered by cognitive linguistics and study the intersection of literature and ordinary language, on the condition that one does not assume that a full understanding of a work can be offered by stylistics. Second, it can be an adjunct discipline that is at the disposal of competent readers and critics, which helps them to verbalize and conceptualize certain types of aesthetic experiences, interpretations and can facilitate one's skills in understanding art. The above means that cognitive poetics can offer some form of connection between the mind, language and aesthetics, but on its own it is unable to account for literary value. Its failure indicates that while belonging to a lower-level discipline connected to the study of the mind, it cannot fully explain the higher-aesthetic level of verbal art, as the latter is governed by its own emergent laws and concepts.

In spite of the criticism voiced above, I regard cognitive poetics (as well as any other applications of cognitive science to literary studies) as highly valuable in two respects. First, by means of cognitive linguistics and psychology it does point to the fact that art, mind and language are interconnected, and that creating and consuming literature is inseparable from the existence of human rationality as such: they both draw heavily from the same resources. In other words, cognitive poetics has

the potential to set the conditions for art creation and reception. The problem is, however, that quite frequently cognitive poetics ignore the need to refer to aesthetic considerations about literature and are, as a result, left with either reducing literary studies to linguistics willy-nilly or implicitly indicating that appreciation of literature is a matter of contextual and conventional knowledge, hence moving further away from grounding art behaviors in natural mental processes. As I argued in the previous chapter, the latter is clearly the same problem that institutional theories face: the inability to account for how art develops from natural human predispositions. In spite of its own problems regarding the emergence and the relation of value in literary texts, cognitive poetics does bring us one step closer to understanding how established and canonical art is related to less developed art behaviors and non-evidently aesthetic processes: it demonstrates that poetic devices are not only widespread in ordinary language use, but also that we use them and understand them without special training even when they are structured in a way that is not different from their use in artworks.

Empathy and Emotions

One of the points of the discussion in the preceding section was to illustrate that cognitive poetics at times displays a tendency toward correlating literary value linguistic properties, which makes the approach vulnerable to the same type of criticism that applied to formalist and structuralist literary theories. It also makes it difficult to place literature in relation to research into other arts. But the principal lesson of cognitive science is that, regardless of its form, art makes use of the same mental processes that are present both in language use and in non-art-related behaviors. One of the most famous cognitive poetics, Reuven Tsur, summarized the point in the following words:

One major assumption of cognitive poetics is that poetry exploits, for aesthetic purposes, cognitive (including linguistic) processes that were initially evolved for non-aesthetic purposes, just as in evolving linguistic ability, old cognitive and physiological mechanisms were turned to new ends. Such an assumption is more parsimonious than postulating independent aesthetic and/or linguistic mechanisms. The reading of poetry involves the modification (or, sometimes, the deformation) of cognitive processes, and their adaptation for purposes for which they were not originally “devised”.

(Tsur 2002a, 281)

There are, I believe, some problems with Tsur’s claims. Even though he ascribes to the cognitive principles of the inseparability of language, mind and art behaviors, he does indicate that the original purpose of certain

mental processes had nothing to do with art (in this case: poetry). Apart from a possibly dubious teleology underlying the claim, Tsur seems to be suggesting that art behaviors are a by-product, a derivative of mental processes. Surprisingly, such a claim would go against cognitive claims regarding the non-autonomous character of language and other human behaviors. In other words, nowhere is it logically implied that art is a by-product. Such a claim is a hypothesis that would require specific evidence. Nobody has been able, however, to convincingly demonstrate that art is a by-product, and to achieve that seems unlikely. What we can safely assume, and what I find much more convincing, is that art behaviors are not separable from human rationality, thought, making sense of the world, understanding other minds and communicating. If such is the case, then the exploration of conditions that underlie the emergence of art must also refer to phenomena other than language.

In the preceding section I discussed Mark Turner and his explorations of how narrative, language and conceptualization are interconnected. But to address art in general, one needs to say something more about human cognition. In their book *Philosophy in the Flesh* (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), Lakoff and Johnson place research into human cognition in the broad context of Western philosophy. They set out to determine how cognitive science can address a wide array of philosophical issues concerning minds, subjectivity, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, etc. They summarize what they consider as the three major findings of cognitive science that can help to answer or revise some central philosophical questions as follows. First, the mind is inherently embodied. Second, thought is mostly unconscious. Third, abstract concepts are largely metaphorical. Since I have already elaborated upon the latter to the extent that it is relevant to my own book, I shall now say a little more about the first two of the findings.

The first claim goes against a highly influential tradition in Western philosophy that sees rationality as something entirely disconnected from human body. In a long tradition ranging from Descartes, Kant, phenomenology and the early Fregean analytic philosophy, it has been assumed that mind is separate and independent from the body; that it is transcendent, self-transparent and radically free. But the findings of cognitive science have plausibly demonstrated that “reason is not disembodied [...] but arises from the nature of our brains, bodies and bodily experience” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 4). The same mechanisms that enable us to perceive and move in space are responsible for the creation of conceptual systems and modes of reason. Its embodiment entails that the mind is to a large extent shaped evolutionarily, and its development followed the biological evolution of organisms. It is not transparent but mostly unconscious, it is not transcendent but is commonly shared by all human beings; it is not literal, but imaginative and metaphorical. Finally, it is not “dispassionate, but emotionally engaged” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 4).

All of the above has significant bearing not only on the human cognition of the world, or language use, but also on the creation and the consumption of art, as all of these forms of human activity remain inseparable. To comment on the second finding of cognitive science mentioned above, consider how the claim that thought is mostly unconscious is reflected in language use and art behaviors. As early as 1923 Bertrand Russell noticed that language is always vague and imprecise, and communication operates with the use of certain background information that are impossible to be contained in the literal meaning of an utterance (Russell 1923, 84–92). Inherent vagueness of meaning in language would clearly be in tune with post-structuralist claims, but Russell and his followers go a step further and, to use an anachronism, rather than insisting on the fact that communication is always already unsuccessful, they maintain that vagueness is, in fact, necessary for humans to engage in communication in the first place. Concepts such as redness or baldness are essentially vague and can be specified in a variety of ways. Utterances such as “it is cold here” can have multiple meanings depending on the context, as several Oxford School philosophers of language (most notable J.L. Austin, 1962) convincingly demonstrated. As John Searle observed:

The utterance of any sentence at all, from the most humble sentences of ordinary life to the most complex sentences of theoretical physics, can only be understood given a set of Background abilities that are not themselves part of the semantic content of the sentence.

(Searle 1994, 640)

Those abilities, in turn, will include attributing mental states to speakers, or agents in general, and assuming a high degree of commonality regarding our own mental processes and those of other minds, an ability which psychologists call theory of mind (Zunshine 2006). Quite predictably, theory of mind is indispensable in establishing causality of events in the surrounding world, but it also constitutes a part of the background necessary for communication, and finally, it is one of the necessary conditions for human understanding and enjoying of art. Empirical research has convincingly demonstrated that people who suffered from brain damage or display symptoms associated with autism spectrum have problems attributing mental states to humans and fictional characters, have problems processing figurative language (cannot understand or use metaphors), and their idea of meta-representation (a concept related to the theory of mind, which, roughly speaking, refers to a skill of tracking the causal chain multilevel mental representations, the layers of information, as well as to being able to distinguish between fiction and reality) is severely impaired (Zunshine 2006, 54–65). As a consequence, they are largely unable to understand, much less to enjoy,

fiction. Recognizing agency behind a given artifact is crucial for both identifying it, locating it chronologically and also acknowledging it as designed in specific ways, all of which are prerequisite of making sense of art. As I argued in the previous chapters, assuming some degree of agency and design behind a candidate for a work of art is essential not only for engaging in aesthetic appreciation of art, but also for carrying out the type of investigation characteristic of contemporary literary theories and cultural studies. Moreover, theory of mind makes it possible to understand the contents of a work of art, at least initially: grasping the motivation and the feelings of a character in a story, evaluating their actions and speculating on their outcomes. Finally, it gives one the ability to relive the experiences of given characters, to identify with them or to condemn them. Theory of mind is, hence, intimately related to empathy and emotions.

The study of emotions in relation to various cognitive approaches, neuroscience and other empirical disciplines is a vast, multi-perspective area that addresses emotions at different levels of explanation. Hence, I will only be able to select a very limited number of scholars and stances applicable to my research.

One popular theory of emotions within cognitive framework is the appraisal theory. It claims that some emotional reactions are triggered as a result of evaluation of the implications of a specific situation for oneself, where one implicitly, that is outside of any focal awareness, weighs its consequence in terms of the likelihood and degree of positive or negative consequence, and by analogy emotional reaction to past events depends “on evaluations of what has happened in relation to the person’s goals and beliefs” (Oatley 1992, 19). Emotions are, then, not the opposite of thought (as we might intuitively suppose), but are “intimately bound up with thought” (Hogan 2003a, 140), as they play an important role in everyday cognition of the world. In Keith Oatley’s words, “emotions are part of a solution to problems of organizing knowledge and action in the world that is imperfectly known, and in which we have limited resources” (Oatley 1992, 3). This form of appraisal theory emphasizes, then, the relevance of human agency, human aims and plans to eliciting emotions. To give a simple example, fear is the emotion evoked “when a particular type of goal, self-preservation goal, is threatened. Sadness occurs with a complete loss of a major goal. Anger results from the frustration of a plan that is currently active” (Hogan 2003a, 145). As Hogan and Oatley noticed, although some of the basic human plans are quite egocentric, that is, concerned mostly with the individuals’ goals of self-preservation, many of them involve more complex social or joint plans shared with other people. As Hogan puts it, “the most intense and consequential instances of most emotions bear not on individual plans, but on joint plans” (Hogan 2003a, 146).

One might say that the above account of emotions is perhaps plausible for explaining real-life situations, but it seems to have little to do with engaging in fiction, where no real plans and no real goals are present. But, obviously, human emotional reactions are not limited to those of personal, or even shared, plans and goals. Emotional triggers might be more direct and immediate, as we all know, since we are all capable of recognizing the feelings of others and responding to or sharing their emotional concerns without being involved in any actual plan. Apart from the aforementioned theory of mind, another source of engaging in fiction is, as Norman Holland recently pointed out, the functioning of mirror neurons which are activated both in the very moment of performing an action, or while observing that action being performed by others (Holland 2009, 94–97). So, in fact, emotional preoccupation with fiction does not seem to be removed from our ability to emotionally respond to the events, plans and feelings of others. The seeming paradox of being engaged and responding to fictional events can be resolved by pointing out that emotional response is prior to any judgments concerning reality or fictionality, which may or may not override the emotional mechanism. Deciding whether the stimulus comes from real or fictional worlds is often secondary to emotional experience. Emotionally loaded stories, thus, engage and manipulate our natural empathic abilities.

In accord with the above considerations, we might say that at least one major reason why stories can become interesting is the development of plans and goals set by the characters, as all humans have a tendency to ascribe intentions and mental states not unlike their own to fictional characters, and to share, or imagine, the fictional emotional response to the course of events. So it follows naturally, as Patrick Hogan and others have noticed, that emotional response often depends on the causal sequence of events; that it is always already embedded in complex narrative structures, rather than being related only to an individual event. On the most fundamental level, stories can be, in fact, conceived of as elaborate developments of goals and plans. It does not mean that the proper way of understanding and appreciating fiction is to see it as if fictional characters were psychologically identical to real people. Yet, it does point to the simple fact that understanding fiction cannot proceed without understanding reality and that exploring the former does rest on assumptions about the latter. This last claim was often voiced by reader-response scholars from Iser to Eco, but thanks to cognitive science it has been placed in a coherent, unifying framework.

Following the famous neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux, Patrick Hogan writes that there are two broad ways in which emotional response can be triggered as a result of arousal of specific areas of the brain (the amygdala in particular), both of which are highly relevant to understanding how art works (Hogan 2003a, 175). “The low road” means direct stimulation by means of single triggers that activate the largely innate,

wired responses. Simple examples of how the “low road” works in real life might include hearing certain sounds (e.g., loud shrieks) that make us feel fearful or images that immediately evoke repulsive feelings, or, conversely, sexual desires. Direct stimulation operates more or less in the same fashion in art. Horror films notoriously make use of sound, lighting or monster creation in a way that immediately activates evolutionarily based emotional responses. Other visual arts obviously rely on similar patterns of the “low road” activation and so is music with its quasi-mimetic associations (sad music is slow, tense music involves “short, repetitive notes” (Hogan 2003a, 178) while comic music “often has with quick tempi” (Hogan 2003a, 178). “High road” activation is more complex as it consists of indirect stimulation through cortex, and, thus, includes appraisal, memory and imagination. In this case, emotional response can be triggered by, for example, being called to a meeting by one’s boss. The response is triggered by the ability to imagine the possible outcomes of such a meeting, which, in turn, depends on the type of memories about similar events stored in one’s mind. These can be both representational (accessible as remembered past events: images or scenes) or implicit. In the latter case, the reason why certain stimuli evoke emotional response might not be self-evident. Of course, emotional response might also be a hypertrophy of an innate disposition (as in certain phobias) or be a mixture of direct and indirect stimulation.

Some scholars also suggested that affect plays a crucial role in the process of comprehending a story. In his project of empirical literary studies, David S. Miall argued that it is affective response that precedes the formation of a broader schemata according to which a story is further comprehended. In the process of reading, it is the affect that guides readers regarding the possible construction of schemata (Miall 1989). If this is the case, then the process of comprehension and appreciation of art must involve some emotion-related components, rather than being a tedious and self-reflective process of matching one’s competent expectations with the tissue of the work, as it was suggested in Olsen’s model which I discussed earlier. Finally, emotions seem to be crucial for the formation of value judgments in aesthetics, a topic to which I will return later.

Apart from the theory of mind, mirror neurons and human empathic abilities, Zunshine and Holland mention several other natural mental processes involved in consuming fiction. One important concept, directly related to theory of mind that Zunshine discusses, is meta-representation: the ability to index the streams of information incoming via theory of mind. This includes the ability to evaluate them in terms of truthfulness and reliability of the fictional characters’ behavior and so to understand and organize the fictional world (Zunshine 2006, 60–61). Norman Holland mentions absorption and transportation, processes that mark being immersed in a fictional world (and which are normally correlated with

its positive evaluation) which stem from standard “task-oriented focusing of attention” (Holland 2009, 58). Holland also quotes Jaak Panksepp’s notion of seeking, which is a basic emotional system which leads humans and animals to constantly seek and be alert for signals in the environment that are important for survival and well-being. In a distant sense, it is responsible for the natural propensity for exploration or curiosity, as well as expecting some form of enjoyment from approaching art or even having expectations as to what we might encounter or what we wish to encounter in a work in general. Holland goes even further, claiming that “it is seeking that drives us to interpret the metaphors and symbols of poetry and to make sense of the plots and characters of dramas and narratives” (Holland 2009, 87).

Jenefer Robinson authored another influential volume on the role of emotions in engaging with art. Like Hogan, Robinson follows a version of appraisal theory of emotions which is indebted to psychological theories of Richard Lazarus and sees what we ordinarily call emotions as divided into two components: some physiological arousal which leads to affective appraisal, a subconscious and quick feeling which, in turn, triggers cognitive evaluation when we consciously assess something as disgusting or scary. Devoting substantial amount of her discussion to literature, she explores how our emotional capacities are prerequisite to understand behavior of fictional characters, and thus, longer narrative structures, how they enable us to fill the phenomenological gaps within a work. Further, she claims, our engagement with literary works resembles psychological coping mechanisms that allow us to work through difficult and complex emotional states and arrive at rewarding feelings even when dealing with painful material.

All the above claims about the importance of emotions in ordinary responses to literature are, I think, uncontentious, as they would be when talking about responses to other forms of art, but also to real-life events, biographical stories told by friends, admiring landscapes, food and so on. In other words, it is obvious that our emotional architecture regulates our enjoyment of art and non-art. The crucial philosophical question is, however, whether actual emotional response is prerequisite for appreciation of (literary) art as art. Robinson seems to be claiming that the answer is positive. Not only does she state that by responding emotionally we are “better able to appreciate” (Robinson 2005, 125) the skillfulness with which authors depict scenes, build suspense or induce and guide reader’s affects and that “emotional involvement is necessary for liking or for appreciating a work” (Robinson 2005, 125) but she also holds that responding emotionally is a form of understanding which informs reflective interpretations of literature, being one of the crucial components of overall understanding of art. This is a contentious issue in philosophy of art and although it is a problem far too complex than to dismiss it with a simple “no,” on the whole I think Robinson is wrong

here and I will return to this matter in Chapter 4 when discussing Susan Feagin's attack on Institutional Theory of Literature.

The above are just examples of the contemporary body of writing regarding the relation of various forms of neuroscience to art, including literature, which has already become quite vast. I could not aim at discussing it all in this book; my modest point was to mention some of the most important concepts that this type of research applies, as relevant to my argument that art, both in terms of artistic forms and in how art is understood and appreciated, has natural underpinnings. There are a variety of issues in aesthetics that could be illuminated or expanded by recourse to work in cognitive science, pertaining to the role of emotions and expressivity both in creation and in responding to art, along with related concerns about intentions and cognition of art or art's beginnings. Likewise, as I hope to show throughout this book, there is a myriad of issues in empirical, cognitive or neuroscientific approaches to literature and arts that would be clarified and rectified by paying more attention to philosophical aesthetics.

Researching Universals

If one accepts the broad premises underlying cognitive science that I outlined in the preceding sections: the embodied character of the human mind, the lack of an autonomous faculty for processing language, the interconnectedness of rationality, emotions and other mental faculties, the "literary" quality of how humans conceptualize and cognize the world, and finally, that the above features are shared by all humans, then one can expect, regarding literature, that some of its features as well as certain aspects of its creation and consumption should be shared by humans cross-culturally. The topic is not uncontroversial and since the rise of post-structuralism, humanities have been reluctant to explore it. On the one hand, as it is often claimed, talking about universals is always at risk of absolutizing local beliefs, phenomena and prejudices, at the same time marginalizing what is seen as not fitting to this local-universalized perspective. This is a legitimate concern that any research program in the humanities must take into consideration. Later in this section I will try to demonstrate how the theory of universals I subscribe to is able to greatly reduce such a risk.

On the other hand, many celebrated scholars in the humanities have tended to reject the possibility of both formulating reliable programs exploring cross-cultural phenomena and even carrying out systematic research as such. In his "From Work to Text," Roland Barthes argued that systematic literary studies (represented by its reliance on the notion of a "work") is an illusion in the same sense in which Newtonian physics has been proved to be an illusion owing to Einstein's relativity (Barthes 1977, 155–156). Not only is Barthes entirely wrong in his claim

about physics, but also it remains a mystery how and why such analogies should be applicable to literature. Even if this is just a metaphor, it is rather unclear² and not much argument follows to support the idea. Barthes is, unfortunately, not alone in questioning the possibility of systematic research in humanities by means of making dubious assertions. At times the two opposing stances run parallel to the analytic-continental divide in philosophy, but the commonsensical suspiciousness regarding the possibility of finding universal patterns in humanities research can sometimes lead to quite preposterous claims as in the case when two renowned continental philosophers, allegedly following Rorty and Badiou (Davis and Zabala 2013), quite openly and seriously claim in a short on-line article that what they see as the tenets of analytic philosophy (apparently: carrying out systematic research using logical argumentation and careful use of language) indicate that the whole tradition is anal-retentive and has a secret death wish.

One of the most famous expositions of such doubts in the progress and the possibilities of science that is often taken up by scholars in the humanities was voiced by Lyotard in his *The Postmodern Condition* (1980). What puts into question science's ambition of producing a coherent and reliable body of universal knowledge (a grand narrative) are the little narratives, scattered findings of science itself: Gödel's incompleteness theorem, quantum physics, fractals and catastrophe theory. The claim was, however, famously rebutted by Alan Sokal (Sokal and Bricmont 1998), and though it is clear that the vision of science promoted by positivists and neopositivists is hopelessly naïve, there is no connection whatsoever between incompleteness theorem and an impossibility of valid, systematic research. There is no reason to suppose that researching local, small-scale or marginal phenomena (which post-structuralist literary theorists happily embrace in their research) is incompatible with larger-scale projects. The two do, in fact, go together as isolating regularities in the studied phenomena is germane to every type of research. I take it that abandoning the latter in favor of the former is to a large extent a matter of fashion.

Before I finally move to discuss literary universals themselves, one more issue needs to be addressed: namely, how the cognitively based program of universals research is related to older attempts at finding cross-cultural patterns in literary studies: archetypal criticism and structuralism. Although in my discussion of literary universals I am chiefly following the work of Patrick C. Hogan, who at one point acknowledges Northrop Frye as his teacher (Hogan 2003b, 13), the work itself contains no references to Frye, Jung or other authors associated with archetypal criticism. Moreover, although the work on literary universals does include the study of myths, it uses various approaches associated with cognitive science as its chief methodology (apart from quantitative studies, of course) and contains little references to Jungian, or any other type

of psychoanalysis. It is true that archetypal criticism, the study of myth and religion, has produced valuable results that can be broadly incorporated into cognitively based research of cross-cultural literary or artistic universals, but the Jungian approach is much more limited in comparison to cognitive approaches, as it focuses on images, character-functions and themes that permeate stories, having little to offer regarding, say, universals related to form or the practice of literary behaviors. If there is a connection, then, it is that of a general spirit of looking for regularities across cultures.

The case is similar when it comes to structuralism. It cannot be said that cognitive approaches to literary studies mark a return or a continuation of structuralism, unless one assumes that looking for patterns and regularities already entails it, a claim that I have argued is entirely wrong, as adhering to structuralism would require following strictly structuralist methodology in the likes of Levi-Strauss or de Saussure. I indicated some problems with structuralist approaches to literary studies in the preceding chapters and my remarks are entirely in tune with cognitively based literary research. Finally, and similarly as with archetypal criticism, structuralism produced a valuable body of writing, particularly in the study of narrative, some of which can be easily incorporated into cognitively based research without necessarily becoming structuralist in nature. As with archetypal criticism, the work to which I refer contains little reference to structuralist theories.

Literary Universals

Hogan defines literary universals as “properties and relations found across a range of literary traditions” (Hogan 2003b, 17). This, of course, requires some further qualifications. First, just like in the study of linguistic universals, to pursue literary universals one must be careful to distinguish those regularities that are traceable to a common ancestor (constitute one literary tradition), and are, thus, not a cross-cultural universal, from those that are “genetically and areally distinct” (Hogan 2003b, 17) and that did not influence each other regarding the studied property. Second, the term “universals” does not entail that the studied property needs to be found in all cultures. Again, just like in the pursuit of linguistic universals it is important that the property or relation occur across unrelated cultures “with greater frequency than would be predicted by chance alone” (Hogan 2003b, 19). An absolute universal, that is, when a property or relation is found across all traditions, is a special case of the statistical universal. An example of an absolute universal in linguistics can be the fact that all languages contain vowels. A very general literary universal is that all cultures appear to produce and consume literary forms. The standard Western typology of the three basic literary forms: prose, poetry and drama, is just a particular manifestation of the

universal feature that all, or almost all, cultures tend to produce verse, “a verbal art involving formalized cyclical organization of speech based on fixed, recurring patterns of acoustic properties” (Hogan 2003b, 23). Similarly, storytelling in terms of “sequences of non-banal events involving human agency” (Hogan 2003b, 23) including “patterned variation of emotional intensity” (Hogan 2003b, 23) produced partly for enjoyment, partly for other reasons (religious, cognitive, etc.), along with some form of its enactment, though sometimes in a rather limited fashion, as with “brief episodes on festival occasions or in rituals” (Hogan 2003b, 23) appear to be absolute, or near absolute universals.

According to Hogan, literary universals include two broad categories: a repertoire of techniques and a range of non-technical correlations “derived from broad statistical patterns” (Hogan 2003b, 20). One example of the latter might be the fact that cross-culturally the “standard line lengths appear to fall regularly between five and nine words” (Hogan 2003b, 20), a fact that Hogan explains as being either a cognitive constraint or a natural tendency that stems from the mechanisms governing working memory and attentional focus (Hogan 2003b, 20). Examples of universal techniques encompass the use of symbolism and imagery, assonance, rhyme, alliteration, verbal parallelism, foreshadowing, plot circularity, structural assimilation etc. (Hogan 2003b, 23). Further, techniques are organized into schemas that define literary types and subtypes within which a technique may be defined as obligatory or optional. For example, for a work to be classified as a traditional sonnet, it is obligatory (apart from a certain rhyming scheme) that it has fourteen lines, whereas it is not obligatory that it contain alliterations. Within schemas, one can isolate more specific patterns concerning, for example, narrative structure. As Hogan claims, it appears that every tradition does tell stories of conflict in two areas, “love and political power” (Hogan 2003b, 23) that contain common motifs, character types and plot developments.

The fact that certain basic narrative structures tend to recur across cultures leads Hogan to formulate a cognitively based theory where the romantic and the heroic tragi-comedies figure as cross-cultural narrative prototypes. This might seem like a nod to Northrop Frye’s theory, but Hogan adds that this is merely due to the fact that both his and Frye’s theories make use of well-established facts and in this particular respect are not really original.³ The fact that similar stories regarding romantic union and political power recur leads to him to claim that they are connected with eliciting basic conditions of happiness. This seems quite predictable taking into consideration the narrative embeddedness of emotions that I outlined earlier. Hogan adds the following:

romantic union and social or political power are the goals sought by protagonists in prototypical narratives. The corresponding

prototypes for sorrow are the death of the beloved and the complete loss of social and political power, typically through social and political exclusion, either within society (through imprisonment) or outside society (through exile).

(Hogan 2003b, 94)

The cross-cultural structure of the romantic tragi-comedy is easily recognizable and roughly follows the pattern where two lovers cannot be united because of some constraint of social structure; the story often includes a rival “preferred by the interfering parents” (Hogan 2003b, 101). Next comes the separation of lovers associated with death or images of death, followed by a reunion preceded by a struggle and defeat of the rival (even if this entails union in afterlife). The middle-part, the development of the story, is normally associated with feelings of sorrow, something that is accountable by contemporary research into emotions: due to habituation, the feeling of joy is intensified to some degree by preceding sorrow (Hogan 2003b, 103). This leads Hogan to another interesting observation, namely, that romantic tragedies are “truncated tragi-comedies” (Hogan 2003b, 103) as their plots stop precisely at the moment associated with feelings of sorrow. What further supports the claim that tragedies have, in fact, evolved from tragi-comedies is the fact that they are less common cross-culturally than comedies. Moreover, as Hogan points out, it is very often the case that early instances of tragedy are “integrated into larger cycles that are ultimately comic,” (Hogan 2003b, 104) as in *Oresteia*, *Oedipus* plays and in traditional Japanese drama (Hogan 2003b, 104).

The plot of the prototypical heroic tragi-comedy is, similarly, easily recognizable. Its beginning marks a social conflict between the hero and the ruler/usurper, following a usurpation or deprivation of the kingdom or any other rightful position. What follows is imprisonment or exile of the hero associated with death-like imagery. Next, a threat haunts society, often in the form of invasion, which is alleviated through some struggle and thanks to the returning hero. The final prototype narrative, according to Hogan, is the sacrificial tragi-comedy associated with a violation of a divine rule that leads to the whole community being punished either by means of food deprivation or an exile from land of plenty.

Apart from the three basic prototypes, Hogan mentions also some “minor genres,” (Hogan 2013, 29) which he considers less prominent across literary tradition but still quite widespread. In fact, their existence seems to be predicted by the theory of prototypes, if we acknowledge that cross-cultural emergence of such stories is directly connected with fundamental human needs and emotions with which these needs are bound. So, the romantic tragi-comedy prototype is rooted in the “combination of sexual desire and attachment” (Hogan 2013, 31) associated with romantic love. The heroic prototype bears on the feelings of both

group and individual pride and the related concerns over the stability and security of the society, emphasizing loyalty, violence and defense. Sacrificial tragi-comedy concerns perhaps the most basic needs – access to food and water related with general physical health and well-being. In accord with the above, minor types tend to develop when some of the combined emotions are addressed separately. Thus, the minor familiar separation prototype is related to the romantic one (Hogan 2013, 32) with only attachment being involved and the sexual component omitted. Conversely, the seduction prototype takes up only sexual desire leaving out attachment. The personal revenge prototype is driven by anger and disgust, both of which are taken directly from heroic narratives (Hogan 2013, 32). The fourth recurring narrative involves identification and punishment of criminal activity.

In addition to the widespread occurrence of whole genres, Hogan claims that it is possible to isolate recurring sequences of events, scenes and character types (Hogan 2013, 32). Characters such as tempters, heroes, villains and sacrificial victims are clearly identifiable cross-culturally. Some event sequences, such as exile, seem to be present across genres. Recurring places include, predictably, home society and an alien place.

Taking into consideration the broad cognitive framework involving both Lakoff's notion of embodied cognition, Johnson's theory of the literary mind and Oatley's theory of emotions, Hogan's theory of the prototypes should make yet another prediction: that the prototype theory itself be extendable to encompass other literary and non-literary creations of the human mind. This is precisely what the theory claims to achieve, as Hogan suggests that his emotional/narrative prototypes can explain some aspects of lyric poetry and religious belief.

Although perhaps intuitively, we tend to think that narrative and non-narrative verbal art are entirely separate, Hogan claims this is not the case. Instead, lyric poems appear to be, traditionally, "elaborations of junctural moments in narratives" (Hogan 2013, 153) that focus on specific emotions elicited by particular events or sequences of events. Old Testament psalms are a good example both regarding their meaning and the roots of their affective force, as is the case with the famous lines from psalm 137 "Beside the streams of Babylon/we sat and wept" (Hogan 2013, 155). Thus, its affective force and its meaning is not disconnected from its place within the longer narrative. Other examples of Western literary tradition that involve lyric poems as part of narratives include the development of the sonnet where poems are structured into "loosely plotted series of events" or in medieval prose narratives (Hogan 2013, 155). Similarly, poetry marks and elaborates on the junctural moments in narratives in traditional dramatic works cross-culturally, as well as in popular Hollywood, Bollywood or Broadway musicals (Hogan 2013, 157).

Apart from explicitly junctural functions of lyric poetry, some of its genres seem to be directly related to heroic or romantic narrative prototypes in a non-junctural way. Thus, the praise and blame poetry of eulogy and satire focus on the physical properties or personality traits germane to heroic plots. Natural imagery, on the other hand, is often an essential part of romantic plots. Accordingly, devotional poetry tends to fall into two categories of relation to God: that of awe, and that of longing, which appear to have some connection with praise associated with the heroic prototype, and attachment typical of romantic plots (Hogan 2013, 169–171).

On a side note, a related discussion of poetic conventions can be found in the work of Reuven Tsur (2009). In short, Tsur argues that some forms of traditional poetry, by which he means mostly medieval and renaissance works, across cultures are in fact “cognitive fossils,” that is, “cognitive solutions to adaptation problems that have acquired the status of established practice” (Tsur 2009). This means that certain themes and forms often found in poetry are conventionalized psychological processes commonly occurring in human minds. An example that Tsur gives is the Freudian ambivalence toward the beloved, which indicates that his interdisciplinary perspective bridges psychoanalysis, evolutionary psychology and cognitive anthropology. Though surely it is not the case that all love is ambivalent, it is not unusual to happen. One fairly natural process of dealing with the displeasure of ambivalent love is splitting the ambivalent image into polar opposites of good and bad. This is, in turn, fossilized into a convention commonly used in folktales as in the case of splitting the ambivalent feelings toward the mother into that of an evil witch and that of a good mother. In traditional poetry (exemplified in Tsur’s discussion by Catullus, Petrarch and many of their imitations), ambivalent feelings toward the beloved one are dealt with using conventions that are different fossilized mechanisms of resolving ambivalence-related tension: leveling and sharpening, that is, either minimizing or maximizing the “unfitting detail” (Tsur 2009). Tsur indicates, however, that fossilization of cognitive devices does not refer only to the thematic aspect of art. Just like Hogan, he readily admits that certain cross-cultural patterns of versification and prosody are not just arbitrary conventions that have been then culturally transmitted with no connection to the propensities of the human mind, but do, in fact, reflect some natural tendencies of the mind regarding working memory (as with the natural, time-related limitations on the capacity of the mental phonological loop which serves as a short-term storage of incoming verbal data) and attention span (Tsur 2002b).

I take the basic claims put forward by Hogan and Tsur to be uncontroversial. Partly because, as Hogan admitted, the theory is not greatly original in some respects: that certain thematic and formal properties of literary works appear cross-culturally without the possibility of them

being merely transferred from one culture to another is a well-known fact. But the value of both theories lies elsewhere: in their ability to explain the data in a unified interdisciplinary theory that bridges the literary with what we know about the human mind, being both up to date with recent research in other disciplines and offering a fertile ground for future research. The perspective offered is that of combining the cognitive with the cultural. It is clear that those stories or poems served a different cultural function than they do nowadays. They were not simply candidates for appreciation to be judged by a competent literary critic. Rather than that, they served religious, ritual, social, cognitive and political functions. But apart from that, their design indicates that they comply with the basic propensities of the human mind regarding emotions (and their embeddedness in stories) and pleasure so as to satisfy natural human expectations. It may be concluded, then, that the organization of the human mind sets the broad framework and broad constraints on the production of these prototypical stories.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that the three narrative prototypes posited by Hogan, or the cognitive fossils hypothesis put forward by Tsur, cannot be said to encompass all stories. One can tell an ordinary story about how they spent several hours in a terrible traffic jam or how they repeatedly have problems with postal services and the story will be neither romantic, heroic nor sacrificial. Similarly, many celebrated contemporary stories fail to submit to the pattern. Hogan's own example of a canonical work that does not fit to the pattern is *Waiting for Godot*, but it is also true that the story is far from being usual or prototypical in any sense. I doubt if the universals theory can even have such grand ambitions as to claim that stories circulate in culture in a given form because the form itself must always be perfectly fit for the natural tendencies of the mind. Such arguments are often put forward by the literary Darwinists, but I suppose that pursuing putative evolutionary advantage in reading Kafka or Beckett is an intellectual dead end that entirely eliminates cultural input and the importance of cultural transmission in favor of crude reductionism. What a cognitive cultural theory can offer instead is to explain why certain basic stories were most probable to originate as prototypical forms and, perhaps, why many popular stories nowadays might also follow similar patterns. What it cannot offer is another monomyth theory, a one-size-fits-all key to all narratives.

Although the prototype theory cannot be decisive regarding artistic value of stories, its relation to value theories is, nevertheless, quite interesting. For one thing, many prototypical stories are among the canonical and most celebrated ones. On the other hand, many canonical and valuable works are far from being prototypical, and similarly, myriads of pop-cultural reproductions of prototypical stories are not artistically valuable. Still, informed value judgments in art must include references to art history, that is, we always evaluate partly comparing a candidate

for appreciation to classical works. Classical works are, in turn, most often prototypical and what we value in later works that constitute literary tradition is, among other things, their ability to challenge, change or enter in a dialogue with the prototypical forms. The fact that heroic or romantic tragi-comedy appear to be universal prototypes tells us little about its intrinsic artistic value per se, but they touch upon artistic value on at least two levels: indirectly, by being originators of the canon of verbal art to which other works relate, but also on the level of what I should call ordinary reader experience. I doubt that the fact that prototypical stories permeate popular culture narratives is exclusively due to their embeddedness in narrative tradition or due to exposure effects on mass audience.⁴ If the cognitive cultural theory is correct, exposure can reinforce certain expectations but, more importantly, the themes and structure of prototypical stories resonates well with the natural tendencies of the mind. This also entails that if these stories are valued by everyday readers/audience, there might be some connection between basic human emotional reactions and evaluation. After all, prototypical stories are widely enjoyed because they touch upon most universal, most common human desires and are, thus, constructed in a way that maximizes the chances of empathy and identification, which, in turn, facilitates the enjoyment of stories. I feel that the above makes both strong cultural constructionism on the one hand, and naturalistic reductionism a la Literary Darwinists, on the other hand, seem implausible in comparison to cognitive cultural (historical) theories.

Information Processing

So far throughout this chapter I have been trying to demonstrate how literary texts rely on and exploit natural cognitive processes and tendencies in terms of both the form and the content of verbal art. My aim was to argue that the proviso introduced by institutional theories of art that literary works should touch upon topics of human interest has deeper implications than perhaps suggested by the theory. For if the constitution of both form and content of artworks depends greatly on the natural propensities of the human mind, then the claim that informed consumption of art is a convention not unlike engaging in a game of chess should be revised. As the case may be, calling the vaguely conceived rules and procedures involved in appreciation of literary works conventions is useful on a certain level of description. But, as I already suggested in Chapter 2, the claim becomes problematic when compared to how the notion of “convention” is understood. A fair amount of both themes and forms that verbal art uses is not merely conventional and, thus, the notion of “institution” must in fact be a partly naturalizable phenomenon as it depends on natural facts about humans and human minds in a non-trivial way.

Although I touched upon certain general issues regarding language, mind, emotions and cognition, I have not yet adequately discussed that aspect of cognitive science that is, in fact, central to its interests: how the mind processes incoming inputs. Just as a previous consideration in this chapter outlined what underlies some formal and thematic “conventions” of verbal art, discussion of information processing sheds some light on how humans come to understand and appreciate literature. This is, after all, another essential component of the literary institution.

It is common knowledge that cognitive science is a vast, heterogeneous field where scholars often share very little when it comes to research interest and methods. After all, investigating the workings of the mind can fall anywhere between hard, physicalist neurobiology and neuroscience to quasi-phenomenologist accounts of subjective experience and folk psychology. My discussion will follow Patrick Hogan’s (Hogan 2003a, 29–59) and, thus, I will assume that the space between the physicalist and folk psychology consists of various, complementary levels of description and not necessarily of competing, mutually exclusive paradigms, all of which are, in the end, explained on the meta-level of human evolution. What all the levels of description share is the conviction that human cognition needs to be studied by introducing information processing models consisting of interplay between perception and memory. Consequently, they include references to structures, contents and processes. The first are equivalent to “organizational principles of the mind” (Hogan 2003a, 30) and might comprise: working and long-term memory, sensory processors and buffers, specialized modules, such as loops and sketchpads, as well as a general workspace and central executive, or, a segment of working memory we normally call “consciousness.” Contents are understood as representations, or symbols occupying space within structures, as in one’s lexical entry for “cat.” Processes are “operations that run on contents” (Hogan 2003a, 30) in or across structures. The processes will roughly include selection, segmentation and structuration. When it comes to the levels of description, two accounts most relevant for understanding experience of art would be representationalism and connectionism.

In the neurobiology-phenomenology spectrum, representationalism is closer to the latter. In fact, it might be seen as systematizing and objectifying the language of folk psychology, as well as subjecting it to experimental method. Following Johnson-Laird, LeDoux and Hogan (2003a, 34–42), I will assume that, in representationalist accounts, each sensory processor (responsible for processing inputs from each respective sense), along with its buffers and specialized modules operate in a parallel and independent way. For instance, an auditory processor selects data from the incoming stream of sounds. Next, the signal enters temporary buffers whose role is to match the selected material with information stored in long-term memory. If recognized as speech, the partly encoded input

enters specialized processors. Finally, the encoded data enters workspace and is used by the central executive, where it can be synthesized with other inputs or long-term memory data.

When it comes to the processes involved in encoding information, selection is perhaps the most obvious one. It is almost a platitude to say that we cannot register all the incoming signals of the outside world in a naïve realist fashion. There is a lot of information that we are not able to register, and this refers to each of the senses. Selection, however, is not only a matter of the perception-level processes. Specialized processors, buffers and memory make sure that only some, relevant information enters further stages of encoding, whereas some inputs are filtered out as irrelevant for currently running goals. Predictably, segmentation involves dividing the incoming stream of information into discernible units. Again, if the incoming sound is identified as speech, the input will be segmented into speech sounds, words, etc. Other examples include isolation of notes and phrases in music or recognition of rhythm in poetry. Structuration includes matching the selected segmented inputs with some system-stored in long-term memory. In language processing, the identified small-scale segments are put together by morphology and syntax owing to structuration. At this level, the segmented units have some interrelations assigned and a complex, hierarchically structured model is produced.

Although the outline is, necessarily, very rough, I am convinced that the above processes and structures have an important bearing on how art is produced, understood and appreciated. First, Olsen's institutional account of literature, which I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, uses seemingly analogous steps in the discussion of competent reader's (or, a literary critic's) actions. One can clearly distinguish there the stages of selection, segmentation and structuration as parts of a goal-oriented process of literary appreciation, which mirror almost exactly the cognitive processes outlined above following Hogan and others. I take it that it is not a mere terminological coincidence and, consequently, how we cognize and appreciate something as art is not an entirely arbitrary procedure, but it bears significant affinity with how we cognize in general. I will have more to say about this in the last chapter.

Second, the model produced owing to structuration serves as a kind of compass for orienting ourselves in a given situation. Specifically, situation models, that is, the ones that refer to the environment in which we are acting, guide our responses and actions in the world (Hogan 2003a, 40–42). Entering a room is equal to opening a general category in the workspace, such as “a room.” This already shapes a broad array of expectations that are in tune with ongoing goals. It guides our attention and “provides structure for incoming information” (Hogan 2003a, 41). Obviously, a couple of decades before the explosion of cognitive science, reader-response theorists, phenomenologists and some semioticians, as

Umberto Eco, noticed that the way in which we come to understand the world applies to literary experience. How we accumulate information about the world and what we store in our memory bears directly on how we experience fiction. Hogan's simple example of this application is the processing of a line from Coetzee's *Waiting for Barbarians*, "We sit in the best room of the inn with a flask between us and a bowl of nuts" (Hogan 2003a, 41). Reading it already opens relevant categories (e.g., novel, characters and pub) that shape some expectations, and activates specific modules (e.g., visuo-spatial sketchpad for outlining the room). Selection of inputs on the basis of the saliency is also crucial. Probably, the nuts and flask would be ignored and quickly forgotten on first reading. Alternatively, they might be ascribed some significance in the context of the whole work, perhaps on another reading or when one specifically reads with food-related themes in mind. Some inputs are just not processable all at once.

As with the relation to institutional accounts of literature, I will have more to say about this in the final chapter. But the general point is, as Hogan noticed, the same complex processes of encoding taking part in the same cognitive architecture generate identical situational models and inferences both in understanding fiction and in the cognition of the real world.

There remains at least one important feature of memory in representationalist account of the mind that illuminates how we come to understand and appreciate art in general, and verbal art in particular, and that is the relation between *long-term memory* and *mental lexicon*. Long-term memory should not be understood as a uniform module, but rather as a set of separate systems and subsystems that include modules for skills (*procedural*, or *skills memory*), knowledge and experience, and *episodic memory*. Of course, this does not mean that these systems are not interrelated or that they do not offer easy access from one to another. The part of long-term memory germane to verbal art experience is *semantic memory*, or the *mental lexicon*. Despite the term *lexicon*, it is not organized as typical dictionaries are. It is not a list of definitions consisting of necessary and sufficient conditions of word use. Instead, as Hogan puts it "it is a system of circuits that spread throughout long-term memory, encompassing a wide range of information" (Hogan 2003a, 42) that includes, apart from definitions, beliefs, attitudes, visual images, memories, ideals, norms, common beliefs, etc. Moreover, just like all other items stored in long-term memory, lexical entries are content-addressable, which means that in order to arrive at them, it is not prerequisite to begin with the initial sound of the linguistic representation of an entry. One can access an item through part of the meaning or a referent. Apart from that, access is possible thanks to the linking of entries. *Cat* and *pet* can lead to *dog* or the other way round. Some entries might be linked due to complementarity, as *male* and *female*. Others may be

linked in a scalar way (as with descriptions of temperature), may share a superordinate category: *dog* and *animal*, or can be subsumed under one domain (when entries are linked in the same way), as with days of the week (linked in a serial way), or with temperature (linked in a scalar way). Domains are particularly important for the conceptual metaphor theory I outlined earlier, where one, a more tangible domain, is used to conceptualize a more abstract one. Entries in the mental lexicon have not only external relations but also internal structures, where contents of an entry are ascribed degrees of importance and form a hierarchy.

Finally, features of lexical entries are more important in the complexes of features that they make up, rather than on their own. Thus, organization of knowledge in long-term memory could be further divided into complexes of features such as *schemas*, *prototypes* and *exempla*. Feature lists, or definitions, considered on their own might be called representational schemas; skills are procedural schemas, whereas a script is a schema involving a situation rather than an object, or a concept. Scripts are also internally organized into hierarchies that include defaults and alternatives, but the contents are usually organized spatio-temporally rather than in a manner of naming properties and relations. Thus, we have a script for visiting a restaurant that includes subscripts such as talking to a hostess or ordering an item from the menu with the help of a waiter. Clearly, scripts are essential to understanding fiction. A passage such as “would she be at home? It was a chance. I found a booth. Fumbled for a quarter. 444–3993. Was that it? I waited for the ring” (Hogan 2003a, 45) would be impossible to understand without the reader having a script for a phone call. *Prototypes*, on the other hand, might be called standard cases where the default features are what we consider average. This, however, frequently has nothing to do with actual average: the prototype for man or a woman might be very far from statistically average men and women. Finally, *exempla* are particular instances within a category.

The above categories clearly apply to experiencing literature. Organizing literary works in terms of genres involves schemas. Particular genres involve prototypical works, plots and characters. Originality in literature and other arts often depends on rearranging and introducing new elements in familiar scripts and schemas or altering the features commonly associated with a prototype or an exemplum. The schemas and prototypes could obviously be innovations based on real-life expectations and particular aesthetic expectations that we have as a result of accumulated knowledge about art. Predictably, creation of art also depends on using and manipulating hierarchies of features, drawing on scripts, contrastive prototypes and salient exempla.

What leads us from representationalism to another level of description of cognitive processes is the account of lexical processes, or how lexical entries and complexes are operated upon. One standard process is *full*

activation, where items stored in long-term memory are fully accessible in working memory. Another process is *priming* which entails partial activation of entries, which are not placed in workspace and are operated upon in working memory. They are, however, more immediately accessible than entries that are latent in long-term memory. For example, activating an entry such as *river* makes related entries partly activated: *bank* or *boat* will be accessed by the working memory easier than *dog*. I suppose that both types of activation have significant bearing on the experience of literature, specifically poetry and what we tend to call poetic language. To illustrate this, another level of description in cognitive science needs to be outlined.

If the language of representationalism is closer to folk psychology and accounts for cognitive processes in a serial manner, connectionism is its opposite, being closer to neurobiological accounts. Connectionist accounts are typically networks that are supposed to represent neuronal activation in simplified terms. Thus, the electric activation is presented in terms of a model that contains a structure of units (nodes), connections between which vary in strength, and processes of inhibition and transferring of activation. The major advantage of the neural network is that it is able to account for the cognitive processes in a parallel, rather than serial, fashion by tracing how activation of neurons spreads throughout a circuit. In other words, connectionism models simultaneous, multiple processes, which are not necessarily localized in a particular area of the brain, in what is often called “parallel distributed processing” (Hogan 2003a, 48–58). One simple illustration of how a connectionist network might work that Hogan uses is answering a question such as “name the first US vice-president that comes to your mind.” As a result of specific series of activations and inhibitions one might say “Joe Biden” or “Dick Cheney” or something altogether different. Yet, what makes it distinct from representationalist processing is the emphasis on degrees of activation, rather than on one final result. Suppose one person says “Joe Biden,” and the next one says “Dick Cheney,” but upon hearing the other name, they admit that they thought about it, too. This does not necessarily mean that the person consciously chose one answer instead of the other, but rather that only one answer got the strongest level of activation and entered working memory. The other answer was partly activated, below the activation threshold, as in priming. Other answers could have been entirely inhibited and kept latent in long-term memory. This could be further explained in terms of background activation. Some answers will access working memory easily because they are frequently activated: for instance, the current vice-president could be mentioned regularly in the media, and thus his name “comes first to one’s mind,” because he has the strongest background activation. This leads to acknowledging the fact that activation is also dependent on the strength of connections, that is, how strong an impulse can be transmitted from one node to

another. Each time Dick Cheney is introduced as “vice-president” the bond between the two nodes is strengthened. On the other hand, George H. Bush has probably never been introduced as “vice-president” since he became a president. Hence, every time he is introduced, the strength of connection between his name and “vice-president” is weakened, leading to his name not being activated.

The above seems quite elementary and, moreover, what bearing could it have on experiencing literature? Hogan claims that understanding complex metaphors and other aspects of what we tend to call poetic, or literary, language can be modeled using connectionist networks, and I entirely agree with him. His own example is the passage from *King Lear*, “You do me wrong to take me out o’ the grave./Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound/Upon a wheel of fire” (Hogan 2003a, 58). Here, “grave” and “soul” can lead to activations of “death” and “Hell” with “bound” and “fire” perhaps reinforcing the strength of “Hell” activation. Moreover, “bound” can activate notions of “prison,” “crime” and “torture,” just like “wheel” and “fire.” “Crime” and “betrayal,” along with “Hell” and “death” lead in the context of the passage into “sin,” finally into “remorse,” which seems to be the chief meaning behind the metaphorical passage uttered by Lear.

Although I find the very broad possible applications of representational and connectionist models of cognitive processes to understanding production and consumption of verbal art quite compelling, Hogan’s accounts of the phenomena discussed above rest on several more or less implicit assumptions that should be made explicit here so as to show their potential, as well as their shortcomings in literary applications.

First, and this is again symptomatic of cognitive literary studies as such, the identity of the reader interpreting Lear’s metaphor in this way is not altogether clear, and Hogan says nothing about the status of such reading. On the one hand, it is clear that the use of metaphors is essential to everyday language use and to rational thought. On the other hand, in non-literary contexts, metaphors are easy to recognize as they usually acquire a rather formalized status. In other words, everyday language is probably not as creative as imaginative writing when it comes to the formulation and use of metaphors. This indicates that literary figurative language might not be immediately recognizable for naïve readers. In the previous chapters, I mentioned Olsen’s attack on structuralism based on the premise that when beginning to read a literary work, one does not have specific expectations as to its structural organization in the sense that one can have them when expecting to hear a linguistic utterance. The structure of a work does not necessarily follow easily recognizable patterns in the fashion of everyday language use, and, consequently, competent readers do not have strictly formulated expectations about it. I suppose that the same holds for the meaning of metaphors used in a work. Thus, we recognize and widely use metaphors in ordinary

language, but this need not be sufficient to universally recognize the meaning of fresh metaphors, as well as their structural role within a work.

The above remarks could suggest the superiority of the view that informed literary response is a convention, but, as I argued throughout the book, I consider it to be too radical. For one thing, it is far from clear as to when one becomes competent in understanding and appreciating art, as the latter skill seems to be inseparable from having basic linguistic and cultural competence. In the case of Lear's metaphor, we already assume that any reader will have some language skills and some knowledge of cultural background within which English is used. It is pointless to argue that a metaphor will have a fixed meaning independent of a particular context of use: Lear's metaphor of remorse makes sense only when one understands the earlier events in the story and the motivation of characters. In other words, a cognitive analysis of literary works presupposes that their readers already belong to a certain culture and have some degree of cultural competence. It does not describe purely naturalistic or mechanical processes. Consider the notion of "sin" or "Hell." The above model of activation would be inadequate for people who have no idea what "sin" or "Hell" is: the passage might then activate completely different patterns of associations or be incomprehensible and without any aesthetic or artistic quality to it. The tacit assumption here is that the above pattern of activation works for readers with some degree of literary and cultural competence: it is perhaps not a definite model, but it is one of the acceptable responses to the passage, that is, based on a recognition of *King Lear* as a literary work produced by a given author operating within a culture in a particular art-historical context.

If my above claim is correct, one can envisage cognitive literary studies as serving two functions, or rather, exploring two separate areas of investigation related to literature. First, it can illuminate how figurative language, memory, perception, theory of mind and various natural mental processes inform our experience of literature, demonstrating how verbal art dwells on natural predispositions of the human mind. Second, and this concerns more Hogan's connectionism, as well as cognitive poetics, it can serve a subsidiary function to aesthetic and, in the long run, theoretical approaches to literature, since the type of analysis espoused by cognitive poetics or representationalist/connectionist models as outlined by Hogan presupposes that the experience/reception/interpretation⁵ is actually based on a recognition of a particular text as a literary work. It relies on the concept of literature. This does not mean, however, that connectionist models have no other application beyond modeling competent responses: obviously, one can empirically study responses of various types of readers (including naïve ones), and then

produce a different connectionist model that could predict yet another type of response.

What the above suggests is that it is impossible to account for literature as literature in some purely naturalistic language of cognitive science. We can either point out to natural mental processes that underlie literary appreciation, or we can produce models of informed responses as a subsidiary tool to produce interpretations and evaluations of literary works, as in the language of literary criticism. It would be simply impossible to account for artistic value in the naturalistic language of bio-psychology where we have an ahistorical encounter of some idealized model of mind's natural inclinations with an abstract text, unmediated by culture and history. Moreover, in cognitive terms, there is no qualitative difference between ordinary and literary language, which can lead to cognitive literary studies being prone to making quasi-formalist errors of correlating artistic value with quantitative difference and deviation of language use. If we cannot account for artistic value in purely naturalistic terms of, say, neuroscience, then I believe that we cannot dispose of the aesthetic dimension of artistic appreciation discussed by philosophical aesthetics. We can point to continuities, but we cannot altogether reduce one to the other.

So far, I have mostly discussed the underlying cognitive-emotive conditions for the emergence, and also for the understanding and appreciation of art (as well as some cognitive constraints on the form and content of art). In the following chapter, I will elaborate on the continuities and transitions from the level of cognitive science to the level of informed aesthetic appreciation.

Notes

- 1 I am of course alluding to Jan Mukařovský's use of the term, as the formalist-structuralist spirit of his works holds sway over many cognitive poetics.
- 2 A detailed discussion presenting several variants of understanding Barthes' essay was included in Chapter 2 of this book.
- 3 On page 13 Hogan states that

Specifically, some readers may be inclined to see my account of romantic tragi-comedy as Fryean. However, at the level where they overlap, neither account is greatly original. To a considerable extent, Frye took well-known facts about New Comedy and its progeny and integrated these into a larger, typological framework. I have drawn on the same well-known facts – along with less widely known, but no less well-established facts about literary works in other traditions – to make claims about literary universals and to integrate these into a quite different, explanatory framework.

- 4 The empirical research about exposure effects is problematic due to the very nature of the problem. The few studies that have been carried out are mutually exclusive, and thus, inconclusive. I mention them in Chapter 4.
- 5 I am inclined to use the concepts interchangeably in this particular context.

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4 Values and Competence

In the preceding chapters, my main focus was to explore the aims, methods and concepts used in three seemingly disparate areas of research in literary studies: literary theory, analytic aesthetics and cognitive literary studies. Apart from that, I attempted to demonstrate how each of the disciplines sees its place in literary studies and how it relates (implicitly and explicitly) to the others. My contention was that the three need not be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, a critical review of some of each discipline's assumptions reveals a possibility of a more nuanced approach, where the three disciplines appear to be bound in a hierarchy of dependence, with a higher order discipline relying on the lower-order discipline's research. In the final chapter of my book, I will elucidate the nature of this hierarchy. First, however, I should like to expand my discussion of the continuity between cognitive science and aesthetics.

The Sublime, The Beautiful and the Everyday

If the model of disciplinary hierarchy that I am outlining here is supposed to give at least a rough account of key levels of investigation of art, one of the crucial questions it should account for is the continuity between art behaviors, emergence of art in the institutional sense and the study of art through the notion of "cultural text." In other words, my focus here will be to illustrate how out of the material that originally serves non-artistic purposes (including thought processes, activities, but also artifacts) we can expect the contemporary concept of art to emerge, and later, how the emergent aesthetic structure informs the textualist research.

To begin with, one has to reconsider some seminal concepts, such as "art," "aesthetics" and "aesthetic experience." So far, I have been mostly preoccupied with a rather narrow and local understanding of aesthetics and art. It is narrow, because it covers only institutionally and historically established definition of art and art's appreciation. It is local, because such a concept of art has developed in the Western world in the last couple of centuries, and it is relevant almost exclusively to the phenomena observed there. In other words, it is disputable (Currie 2009, 1–10) if the

discourse of contemporary Western aesthetics, and the Western, narrow, definition of art are applicable to non-Western phenomena. Though it is indisputable that the discourse is largely local, I will argue, in tune with the rest of my argument, that it is emergent in relation to some universal tendencies of the human mind. As Gregory Currie has put it, “whatever humans do, they must have a biological make-up that allows them to do it” (Currie 2009, 2).

The use of concepts related to art is, however, far from uniform and often applies to phenomena that we do not typically consider art in the contemporary, institutional or historical sense. As I earlier indicated, the advent of conceptual art has had a significant bearing on how we understand art today. One of the points of the artistic revolutions of the early twentieth century was to challenge the traditional ideas about the quality of art. Traditional philosophical aesthetics held that an artwork was supposed to be admired for its beauty, but perhaps starting with Duchamp’s provocations, this was no longer the case. It is a brute fact that Western art has since largely abandoned “the idea that art involves the production of beautiful or aesthetically pleasing objects” (Currie 2009, 2). Accordingly, contemporary philosophical aesthetics has emphasized the need to include the notion of an institution, of the artworld, in any overarching definitions of art. We might thus say, that this led to a separation of aesthetic value (and, accordingly, aesthetic qualities or experience) and artistic value. The former would be, predictably, associated with a sense of beauty or pleasure, whereas the latter with an informed appreciation of an artifact as a work of art. Although nowadays the two need not be correlated (a highly valuable artistically work can have little aesthetic value and the other way around), it would be rather hasty to abandon any sense of connection between the two. After all, for philosophical aesthetics, the two have been separated for no more than five decades, and probably only a little longer for the artists themselves. It is just another brute fact that the human species has always spontaneously been involved in art-related behaviors, and what I wish to claim is that, corresponding with the previous paragraph, artistic value is emergent in relation to aesthetic value.

The question regarding the beginning of art is clearly a perennial one in the philosophy of art. Ever since archeologists started to discover artifacts produced by prehistoric cultures that either did not appear to be simple tools with exclusively practical value, or being tools, were at the same time highly decorated, questions began to arise concerning their role, and consequently, their possible status as art. The lack of any information about their status apart from the sheer fact of their existence makes it a puzzle that probably shall never be convincingly resolved. Some things, though, can be definitely established. We know that humanoids used tools resembling axes made with exceptional and apparently unnecessary care regarding their visual qualities (colors, shape,

symmetry) as early as 400,000 years ago (Currie 2009, 1). Ochre, believed to be used for personal decoration (though this was most probably not its only use), began to be collected around 100,000 years later (Davies 2012, 4). More obvious personal decorations, such as those crafted from shells, bones, stones, amber, etc. date back to at least 40,000 years. Perhaps counting the decorative as art might sound controversial, but even though I wholeheartedly agree that it is pointless to discuss art nowadays without the notion of the artworld, I find the question whether prehistoric beads are *really* art quite uninteresting. Art is clearly an extremely fluid concept and I see it as uncontroversial to use both the narrow, artworld understanding of art, and the broader one associated simply with beauty or sensual pleasure. Apart from the decorative, other important artifacts related to art behaviors would typically belong to visual arts: painting and sculpture. Although some of the cave paintings admittedly contain “doodles and erotic graffiti” (Davies 2012, 3), others “display breathtaking artistic skill, power, grandeur, and eloquence in abundance” (Davies 2012, 3). The puzzle of the cave paintings’ function and value was adequately summarized by Lamarque:

On the one hand, the surface perceptual qualities of the paintings naturally invite description in aesthetic or art historical terms. The techniques, pigments and materials have been studied and there is extensive commentary on the form and texture of the paintings, the ways that natural features of the cave walls are exploited, the recurring motifs, the fidelity of naturalistic representation (allowing for the ease with which the subjects can be identified), and the sheer power, economy of means, and vitality of the depictions. On the other hand, the paintings remain a complete mystery; they are uninterpretable, and the role they played in the cultural or social life of the peoples who made them is unknown, as are the attitudes, aspirations, values, and beliefs of those who viewed them.

(Lamarque 2005, 22)

To this, Davies adds that even if the function of the cave paintings remains unclear, we can definitely assume that they were very important due to the difficulties that must have arisen during their creation:

their painters climbed beneath the surface of the earth with only candles or lamps for light. They erected scaffolds to paint high up on walls and ceilings. Some of the pigments they used had to be prepared by being heated to a very high temperature.

(Davies 2012, 4)

The same meticulousness holds for multiple examples of early sculpture and carvings, as well as early musical instruments (Davies 2012, 4).

Two important hypotheses have been proposed regarding the use of visual representations in the Paleolithic. One longstanding hypothesis put forward by anthropologists points to the connection between cave art and some cultural developments, such as magical and religious practices (Currie 2009, 7–9). According to this theory, caves were considered boundaries between the supernatural and the natural worlds. The presence of cave paintings could allegedly contribute to the experiences of magical connection with the other world. As Currie notes, this theory “associates the development of pictorial art with the growth of relatively sophisticated cultural practices such as storytelling and religion” (Currie 2009, 8) to which it can be added that it places the symbolic as preceding the aesthetic: the capacity to symbolize is prior (and necessary) to the development of art and aesthetic sensibility. Another important hypothesis makes an opposite claim regarding the symbolic/aesthetic. In a celebrated paper, Nicholas Humphrey argues that there are striking similarities between cave paintings and drawings made by autistic children with severely impaired language skills (Humphrey 1998, 165–191). This, along with the fact that when autistic children do acquire language, the “Paleolithic” quality of their drawings declines, leads him to speculate that the style of cave paintings might be due to some form of linguistic impediment of the Stone Age humans. Although it is established that some form of linguistic communication must have existed “at least a million years ago” (Humphrey 1998, 173), Humphrey argues that there are good reasons to suppose that Upper Paleolithic language use was still limited to mostly interpersonal use: naming and talking about other humans. Special modules such as “technical intelligence” or “natural history intelligence” were not in use, and a general language-based schema of knowledge was not necessarily present. Cave artists might have had little interest and skill regarding conceptualizing or classifying non-human phenomena, and thus, their works present a curious type of naturalism of representation: uncontaminated by language, painting without having to recourse to a concept that needs to be depicted. In the end, perhaps both hypotheses need not be mutually exclusive, as the painting could have had some form of magical or ritual use while being produced by humans of limited language skills.

Even if nothing conclusive can be said about the function or the source of the paintings, Humphrey’s hypothesis cannot be immediately rejected. Moreover, one interesting implication of his claim is that the symbolic need not be prior to the aesthetic. If Paleolithic humans found something appealing in animal paintings, at the same time having limited conceptualizing skills, then perhaps some aesthetic sensibility precedes symbolic content. If true, this might lead to revising some established beliefs about the relation between the two. One might specifically think of some development of Saussurean linguistics where the sign is given primacy over other cultural products, or where aesthetic value is associated with

a deviation of code. Currie speculates that with such a reversal of the order of priority, it may be the case that aesthetic sensibility plays “its part in explaining the development of symbolic culture” (Currie 2009, 9), and consequently “the design-features of the natural world can be expected to trigger aesthetic responses and to create illusions of purpose, leading to ideas of magic and religion” (Currie 2009, 9) In the end, the claim that the symbolic emerges out of the aesthetic could be as valid as the one that the aesthetic emerges out of the symbolic.

Another important point is that even if the aesthetic could be in some sense prior to the symbolic, or to culture in general, it goes without saying that historically artworks have usually served other functions than just the aesthetic one. The insistence on the importance of art’s intrinsic value, on its the purely aesthetic or artistic qualities is quite a recent phenomenon. Before that art always played a non-aesthetic role, too (e.g., religious, political, ethical, ritual, cognitive, decorative). The point is, however, that beauty and the appeal to some aesthetic sensibility of those participating in a culture was an essential adjunct to the proliferation and successful circulation of the cultural products, along with whatever instrumental value was conferred on them, and institutions involved.

The fact that art has been used to facilitate the non-artistic areas of human culture leads to a question about the source of this need and its universal success. It is perhaps easy to point out the reasons for instrumental and utilitarian uses of art in more advanced cultures (transmission of ideologies, religious beliefs, advertising, propaganda, etc.), but what about prehistoric and possibly pre-symbolic times? In the language of evolutionary psychology, one could ask why would a species invest so many resources for a costly appeal to aesthetic sensibilities? One hypothesis is that this has something to do with sexual selection: being able to produce a decorated axe requires some skills useful for survival, such as manual and spatial skills, finding resources, general efficiency, etc. Some evolutionary psychologists would argue that decorated axes were, in fact, means of advertising one’s adaptive advantage (Currie 2009, 6–7). Alternatively, it can be said that the objects themselves were appealing to the senses, which made their creators more likeable and having more prospects for reproduction. I will explore the relation of evolutionary psychology to aesthetics and, particularly, to literary aesthetics later throughout this chapter, but what needs to be addressed first is the biological foundation of the aesthetic sensibility, as this is impossible to ignore when considering prehistoric, humanoid art-related behaviors.

In the language of evolutionary psychology, the sense of pleasure that members of a species feel cannot be disconnected from considerations regarding its adaptive value: enhancing or decreasing the chances of successful reproduction. The evolutionarily shaped mechanisms regulating reward and punishment made humans wired in to respond positively to

these stimuli in the environment that increase the chances of survival and reproduction, and negatively to those that decrease the chances. This is the source of the pleasurable feelings that humans experience while engaging in sexual acts, eating foods rich in fats and carbohydrates, seeing landscapes that abound in features indicative of good conditions for life sustainment, or the pleasurable response to some physical features of fellow humans that indicate good genetic material, etc. The innate reactions of disgust and displeasure operate accordingly in reaction to the stimuli that are evidently harmful for the well-being of the organism. It should not be assumed, however, that feelings of pleasure will always involve aesthetic pleasure. Stephen Davies pointed this out, arguing against the claim that perceptual pleasure is equivalent to aesthetic pleasure and, thus, we should not assume that most rewarding experiences that animals have are aesthetic in nature (Davies 2012, 13–14). The former need not entail the latter: if a hen responds positively to a male, her pleasure may be that of “lustful anticipation” (Davies 2012, 14), or a sense of looking right, rather than acknowledging the mate as beautiful. It is not clear whether the pleasure that animals feel takes on an aesthetic hue, “do they find what they see beautiful as well as pleasurable to look at?” (Davies 2012, 14).

As I pointed out earlier, before the emergence of modern art, aesthetics saw the value of art in its being able to evoke the experience of beauty, sublimity, or, conversely, ugliness, dreariness, etc. Though, the sensual appears to be central to aesthetic pleasure, a theory that holds that every pleasure is aesthetic in the above sense seems too liberal. In fact, it is a relatively new approach, whose naturalizing tendency is boosted by evolutionary psychology and biology. Modern aesthetics, at its inception in the eighteenth century, actually put forward a more balanced understanding of the relation between the aesthetic, artistic and the sensory experience, though I believe, following Davies’s discussion, that it should be rejected too, as it offers an excessively limited perspective on what counts as aesthetic.

The theory I am alluding to is of course the one attributed to Kant. Immanuel Kant opposed the idea that every kind of pleasure might be called aesthetic, even though he acknowledged that the subjective sense of pleasure is the basis of aesthetic judgments. The latter are, however, concerned with the experience of what he called “free beauty,” delight taken while apprehending the perceptual form of an object. This, in turn, requires an interaction between imagination and understanding. “Free beauty” means that it does not require extended conceptual apparatus, or a governing schema. This is why, as Davies claims, the delights of, say, a football connoisseur would not count as aesthetic in Kant’s sense: they require too much conceptual input to fall under “free beauty” (Davies 2012, 17). Likewise, the type of analysis characteristic of cognitive poetics would not fall under “free beauty” as its meticulous dissection of a

work using sophisticated technical jargon has little to do with the play between imagination and understanding. Rather than that, Kant's idea of aesthetic pleasure entails a form of contemplation where imagination helps us to reflect on the object and conceive of it in terms of a unity and coherence which the human need for understanding demands, without any particular conceptual content. Moreover, Kant's aesthetic experience is supposed to be disinterested, disconnected from our personal goals, beliefs or practical interests.

Davies makes a point that perhaps Kantian aesthetics could work as a model for fine art appreciation, but it is too exclusive to account for a broader sense of aesthetic experience. I believe that the model is inadequate for high-brow art appreciation, either, as I repeatedly demonstrated throughout this book that appreciating modern fine art requires specific knowledge about art-historical contexts, conventions, etc., but these are precisely the things whose relevance Kant rejects. Moreover, it has been argued that Kant's model is too much concerned with natural beauty (Davies 2012, 17), mere contemplation of form (Davies 2012, 17), and that it unjustifiably privileges some sensory experiences over others (Davies 2012, 17). For instance, touch, taste and smell could not really lead to aesthetic experience on his account, as they are only "agreeable," rather than beautiful. The pleasures they afford, he claimed, are too simple, unstructured, overly reliant on mechanical, sentimental reactions, and leave no space for the imaginative contemplation of "free beauty." I suppose there is no reason to believe that the more proximal senses cannot afford aesthetic experience in Kant's sense: one can easily imagine certain qualities of food consumption (preparation, serving, setting) that will more or less fall under Kant's sense of beauty or sublime. John Dewey's inclusion of the everyday experience as the source of aesthetic pleasure (Dewey 1980) or Richard Shusterman's development of Dewey's theory that encompasses all sensory and bodily experiences (Shusterman 2008) are good examples of aesthetic theories that compellingly argue against privileging some senses over the others.

Finally, as I argued in Chapter 2, it is questionable whether the notion of disinterestedness is really helpful in explaining anything regarding the experience of art. Out of the many attacks on the notion, Georgie Dickie's remains probably the most famous one (Dickie 1964, 56–65). Dickie enumerates a range of philosophers who seem to be claiming, similarly to Kant, that experiencing art in the proper sense necessitates an "aesthetic attitude," a special mode of distanced attention that enables the art's audience to respond to it in a disinterested way without practical concerns. To counter it, Dickie proposes to ponder upon possible ways of attending to an artwork in an interested way. The examples include a spectator who watches a staging of *Othello*, thinking obsessively about his wife's infidelity, or an art collector financially satisfied with a work being a good investment. These, Dickie persuasively argues, are in fact

examples of inattention, not attending to the work at all. So, it cannot be maintained that there is a special aesthetic mode of attending to a work of art. We can attend to it, or not, but disinterestedness does not seem to be a helpful concept here. On the other hand, Patrick Hogan argues that Dickie himself admits that one can read a poem aesthetically or for other reasons, such as concentrating on its informational value, etc. (Hogan 1996, 161–169). This, Hogan claims, is indicative of the fact that we sometimes open ourselves to an aesthetic experience and sometimes we do not. Consequently, some form of aesthetic attitude theory should be kept. But here I would argue against Hogan: it is true that we can attend to a work with a different purpose in mind rather than just experiencing the aesthetic, but the point is that if such an endeavor is to be productive and informative in any sense, it must be underlain by an understanding of the work as an artwork. We simply have to identify and understand it correctly in order to pursue our specific goals regarding attending to it. This is merely a variation of my argument from Chapter 2 concerning literary theory: any investigation into the contents of a work that goes beyond appreciation must be carried out after properly identifying the object as aesthetic.

Earlier I mentioned John Dewey's aesthetics in opposition to Kant, and I believe his theory is a more promising link between those areas of cognitive science relevant to my discussion and philosophical aesthetics as carried out in the manner of analytic philosophy, if the concept of the aesthetic is to be kept at all and proved to have some links with both the human biological organism and discussions of art. Dewey was probably one of the earliest to include everyday experience into the aesthetic, emphasizing the continuity "between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience" (Dewey 1980, 3) and arguing against excessive spiritualization of the experience of art where it becomes disconnected from the everyday experience. Dewey goes on to argue that every unified, complete and intense experience should be called aesthetic and the roots of aesthetic experience stem from the constant interaction of the organism with its environment. According to Dewey, we get an aesthetic experience whenever we feel "an adjustment of our whole being to the conditions of existence, we experience a fulfillment that reaches to the depths of our being" (Dewey 1980, 17), which indicates that in our daily falling in and out of sync with our environments, aesthetic experience marks the moment of restoring the balance and harmony. Not any experience, however, can be counted as aesthetic, and Dewey makes a proviso that aesthetic experience is characterized by unity, fulfillment and a certain complexity where its internal elements can be conceived of as interrelated. Against Kant, Dewey stresses that all the senses and bodily functions can be sources of this feeling, a point that is very much in tune with

the concepts of embodied cognition as well as being rather up to date with the overarching metatheory of cognitive science, that is, evolutionary psychology with its stress on the organism-environment relationship basis of human experiences, values, culture, etc. Art is, then, perhaps a particularly refined, elaborate or structured form of the aesthetic, but the experience it affords lies beyond art itself and in the everyday experience of the environment by the organism.

In the preceding chapter, I mentioned some literary universals that point to a continuity between literary forms and contents, and mental processes. By now, it should be clear that in spite of the problems with formulating a universal definition of art, the existence of art itself, or rather art behaviors, is a cross-cultural universal. In fact, the elusiveness of the concept does not prevent people of different cultures from easily recognizing certain cultural artifacts as belonging to the fuzzy concept of art. As Noël Carroll puts it, this is not to say that people of different cultural backgrounds will immediately recognize the cultural, historical and contextual complexity of a given artifact, but, that certain traditional forms of art will be immediately recognized as such (Carroll 2004, 95). Europeans can easily identify Ganesha's statue as art without having any knowledge of its meaning or status in India. Similarly, large portions of European art are accessible and enjoyed outside Europe, just as Westerners can easily appreciate "sub-Saharan music, Chinese painting, and woven carpets from the Middle East" (Carroll 2004, 95).

To summarize this section, I tried to demonstrate how some powerful theories of aesthetic experience that came to prominence in the Western world have created an illusion that the experience that art affords is disconnected from the natural world and from the reactions of the human organism to its environment. This can be held against both contemporary institutional theories of art (including the institutional theories of literature that I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2) and against a long tradition embracing a myriad of scholars that goes back to Kant's aesthetics. What I find more compelling in the light of the growing body of research on the relation between the human biological organism, human cognitive capacities and culture is that such dualistic concepts marked by strong conceptual distinctions must crumble. Instead, I propose to embrace theories that point out to continuities between the sensual, everyday experience, and the structured artworks that stem from these experiences. The next section will continue these considerations, moving from the notion of aesthetic experience to that of aesthetic and artistic value.

Artistic and Aesthetic Values

The notion of artistic and aesthetic value is inseparable from my previous discussion of aesthetic experience and will continue and refer to a

large portion of the points I made in the preceding section. One important difference is perhaps that even if the notion of aesthetic experience can be to a large extent accounted for in a naturalistic language of cognitive science, emotions, sensual impressions, etc., I suppose that artistic value cannot. In other words, it is impossible to explain the value of the works listed in artistic traditions or canons purely in terms of how they may interact with some idealized model of human cognitive capacities. A substantial amount of artistic value stems from a work's relation to other works, its historical significance, its drawing on the works of the past and its influencing future works. These are central to appreciation of art, though they require to move beyond the idiom of natural sciences. Yet overall, artistic value seems to have partial naturalistic underpinnings while retaining its autonomous, local and historical character. If the above is what might be called intrinsic value of art, there are multiple instrumental values that are associated with the experience of art: moral, cognitive, political, sentimental, etc. In what follows, I will look at some major tendencies regarding artistic value in analytic philosophical aesthetics, then I will overview some neurobiological theories of human values in general. I will begin my speculations on how the two could be merged together and applied to understand artistic and specifically literary value, and then move on to elaborate on it, as well as to integrate it with my earlier discussions in the next section of this chapter.

One of the most celebrated accounts of the value of art in the analytic tradition, and the one which I find compelling and relevant to my discussion, was proposed by Malcolm Budd (Budd 1995). Budd begins his discussion by noting that there are clearly numerous types of value that we can ascribe to art. There can be "a cognitive value, a social value, an educational value, a historical value, a sentimental value, a religious value, an economic value, a therapeutic value" (Budd 1995, 1–2) and so on. But the central and logically prior type of value must be the artistic one. It must be a distinctive type of value owing to which we can say that we value something as art, or as a specific type of art. Budd goes on to say that the value of art lies "in the experience a work of art offers" (Budd 1995, 4). This, however, requires a constraint that the work is properly identified and understood as a work of art, thus the experience implies the one in which it is properly understood. The experience Budd mentions is an experience of the work itself and should be construed in terms of a type of experience that can be instantiated multiple times rather than some actual experience of a person. It should be noted that even though the value of a work is accessible through experience, it is the experience of the work, and the qualities ascribed to it are qualities of the work, and not of the experience. This means that artistic value is intrinsic in the sense of being experienced with full understanding, thus, including the aesthetically valuable properties, and in the end, the experience of the work is intrinsically valuable. It is important to note that

Budd does not contrast intrinsic value with extrinsic value, but rather with instrumental value, that is, one that looks for further effects and benefits of the experience, attaining further goals or fulfilling desires, rather than it being worthy for its own sake. We could, then, say that Budd's theory of value is able to link both the intersubjective qualities of a work (its "surface" qualities such as a general understanding of the form and content), and the rewarding experience they afford, against either formalism (which sees value of purely in terms of its formal qualities) or reader-response theories (which concentrate on the effects of art).

Apart from being intrinsic, Budd adds that artistic value is sentiment-dependent, intersubjective, anthropocentric and incommensurable. The first of the essential qualities Budd enumerates can be most probably linked to Hume's famous discussion in "Of the Standard of Taste," where it is roughly equivalent to general human emotionality. Though Hume also claimed, in congruence with his broad sentimentalist outlook on ethics, that judgments concerning art are sentiment-dependent or rooted in one's natural features of character, subjective taste, etc., he focused, *contra* Budd, almost exclusively on the actual reactions of art's audience, marginalizing the actual qualities of a work. What Hume and Budd do share is the insistence that what we hold valuable in art must have an emotional underpinning. The judgments about art's value that we pronounce are not, however, entirely sentiment-dependent in a subjective sense. Budd explains they are intersubjective, as it is evident that one's assessment of a work can be approved or criticized in a well-founded way. They are argued in a rational way: drawing informed inferences, using evidence, and some basic ideas of rational discourse and communication. Artistic value is also anthropocentric, as it is valid only for those who possess distinctly human sensibility, perception, comprehension and emotional response (Budd 1995, 38–40). Finally, it is incommensurable, as even though value judgments are a matter of degree (we confer some degree of value on one work and a different degree on another one), it is impossible to specify the degree to which a given work can possess artistic value; it is not measurable. Moreover, incommensurability of value refers both to works across different arts, as well as within a single art. The point is that there are different types of qualities that can shape a work being valuable or not, and these qualities might not be commensurate. Budd concludes that incommensurability or indeterminacy of value rankings need not imply incomparability; it merely implies vagueness of comparative judgments.

Just as with any other philosopher I mentioned, Budd's position can in no way be considered representative for analytic aesthetics. In fact, there are many celebrated scholars who argue that the value of art is largely instrumental in Budd's sense. For example, Kendall Walton has argued that most reasons why we value art have something to do with its cognitive, moral, religious or other practical concerns (Walton 1993, 499–510). It seems hard to believe that what we judge

so wonderful aesthetically about much great poetry, for instance, has nothing at all to do with the insight we receive from it, or that the feelings one has in appreciating music aesthetically are entirely unlike and irrelevant to everyday emotions.

(Walton 1993, 500)

I do not deny that these are important, but I doubt all artistic value can be reduced to what we consider instrumentally valuable. Moreover, Walton seems to be either blurring the line between appreciating something as art and just enjoying something without necessarily having it properly identified, or his remarks against intrinsic value are misguided, as his points seem to be included in Budd's claims about the sentiment-dependent and anthropocentric nature of art.

Needless to say, Budd's theory of value is applicable to contemporary narrow definition of art and we should not assume that it holds for whatever artifacts from different cultures and times we tend to call art. It is clear that in pre-Kantian times, what we now call "art" served multiple purposes, displaying significant instrumental value and afforded aesthetic experience (in the broad sensual sense) at the same time, but Budd's elucidation of artistic value need not apply there. Moreover, artworks can nowadays be both instrumentally and intrinsically valuable. A good example is the emergence of the so-called "no-brow" or middle-brow art which undermines the traditional distinction into high-brow elite art and low-brow mass art. Instead, it aims at offering something valuable to both palates: some form of aesthetic or other instrumental enjoyment for a low-brow audience, and the pleasure of a perceptive, informed judgment of artistic value conferred by competent audience. The issue is far from settled in analytic philosophy of art. Jerrold Levinson, although sympathetic toward Budd's theory, maintains that, in the end, we value art for instrumental reasons (Levinson 2004, 319–329). I will set the debate aside for the sake of brevity, but take up the issue again after introducing some neuroscientific accounts of value. Before that, however, there is a need to elaborate on another understanding of how the value of art might be called intrinsic.

Assuming that Budd's theory is essentially correct when it comes to explaining how we come to value art nowadays, in the narrow sense, not everything is clear regarding the experiential value of art. There are some facts that contribute to a work's artistic value which seem to be difficult to grasp experientially. To illustrate this, I will tentatively assume that the intrinsic value Budd discusses (as opposed to instrumental value) can be further divided along the axis of interiority and exteriority. Thus, Budd's value would be constituted by internal and external facts about the work. In this sense, its intrinsic value would be roughly equivalent to its aesthetic value, the accessible, experiential pleasure that it affords and that we describe using typical aesthetic vocabulary: harmonizing, balanced, moving, etc. I suppose we might assume that intrinsic

value in this sense can hardly be subject to radical changes in status over time. For instance, I find it doubtful that *Taming of the Shrew* could at some point cease to be considered comical and become tragic, that *Macbeth* could cease to be grim, that certain works of poetry would lose their euphonic qualities, or that Henry James' novels would no longer be considered realistic psychologically. Now, a value-relativist could even at this point object that readers might not, and they do not, necessarily judge the works by ascribing them the qualities I mentioned. It is true that works can be, and are, consistently misread and read entirely according to one's prejudices, in the manner Stanley Fish envisaged, but I do not see it as a broad philosophical principle (as I would have to be committed to a dubious type of framework relativism and Cartesianism), but simply as an action that stems from insufficient understanding of the object in question. Budd's proviso is that a work is considered valuable only when one grasps it with full understanding, including its art-historical context and having some interpreting skills. But to read *Macbeth* as a comedy is just a mild case of, say, reading *King Lear* as a story about football Champion's League, or reading the Chinese alphabet as random pictures: it results from ignoring substantial portions of the text and misidentifying the object of attention, not to mention that reading-in entirely personal, idiosyncratic meanings to a text has nothing to do with the concept of interpretation and appreciation.

Apart from the intrinsic value I have outlined above, the status of a work of art would be influenced by its extrinsic value, by which I understand its relation to other works of art, artistic tradition, canon, etc. This aspect of value might be a challenge for Budd's theory, as the work's position and reputation in relation to other works is subject to considerable change and is not easily grasped experientially. Levinson correctly observes that this type of value might be experiential in Budd's sense, but only in relation to past works: appreciation of an artwork presupposes knowledge of its relation to other works, or in other words, in most cases how the work relates to a given artistic tradition (of the past) can be accurately determined in the moment of its publication/display/performance, etc. (Levinson 1996, 667–682). But it is impossible to assess the potential that a work has regarding its influence on future works, and it is precisely this component of artistic value that can change substantially. On the other hand, I am well aware that the idea of extrinsic value that I outlined is only useful as a future potential, as in any given moment in time when an artwork is properly evaluated, determining its relation to other works will fall under Budd's notion of intrinsic value. Peter Lamarque argued quite rightly, on the example of indiscernibles, that the experience and evaluation of a work depend on its proper identification (Lamarque 1998, 60–78). Assuming we perceive certain aesthetic qualities in Larkin's *High Windows*, upon a hypothetical discovery that Larkin's work is plagiarized, we would no longer ascribe these qualities

to Larkin, but to the original work. This reflects Lamarque's distinction into works and texts (which, as I argued in Chapter 2, does not necessarily reflect the distinction as used in literary theory): aesthetic qualities are ascribed to a work and not to its textual tissue. To put it crudely, if I published Shakespeare's sonnets under my own name, my own "creation" would not have the same aesthetic qualities the originals have, since whether we see an artifact as possessing certain aesthetic qualities depends on its prior and proper identification.

Finally, artworks are continuously ascribed multiple instrumental values, be they moral, political, personal, etc. One's involvement with art might be a matter of looking for simple sexual gratifications, therapy, financial investment, cheap laughs, didacticism, showing off, etc. Instrumental values are crucial both on a personal level and on the level of the whole community: canon, curricula and reading lists are always created with at least some instrumental values in mind. Needless to say, these values are almost infinitely malleable. A good example of how artworks with little, or disputable aesthetic value, can become canonical owing its status almost exclusively to malleable instrumental values is the case of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.¹ Upon its publication, the novella drew little attention and received negative reviews. It went out of print for several decades and was largely ignored throughout nineteenth century. Interestingly, it appears that its commercial success and later recognition is largely due to its various popular culture adaptations produced throughout the previous century. In an almost Bakhtinian, dialogic fashion, the book received wider critical attention in the second half of the twentieth century after being thoroughly digested by popular culture and repeatedly reworked, staged and adapted to films. It was not until the early twenty-first century that the novel became common on the curricula of American English departments. It is perhaps arguable whether the novella is good in a strictly artistic sense, but it became increasingly valuable as a result of its relation to other works, and perhaps, among other things, due to the themes of the story becoming more relevant nowadays.

The above is, of course, an idealized model, as in reality the value of an artwork could change dramatically upon discovering other, forgotten or unnoticed works. The other thing is that a given work tends to have its value established over time rather than immediately after its release, which is perhaps a question of developing its relation to other works or a matter of arriving at certain degrees of consensus among the informed audience, which is necessarily extended in time.

The account of value I subscribe to goes entirely against the purported view of post-structuralist critics about the need to dispose of the notion of value altogether, and against the stance of authors such as Barbara Herrnstein Smith, who argued for an entirely contingent, local and power-infused vision of artistic value (Herrnstein Smith 1988). In

her view, literary value is socially constituted, and thus, contingent and constantly variable. The establishment of a text as valuable is a matter of agreement of certain social groups relative to their own agendas. It merely serves their ideological purposes. Eventually, a given standard of literary value is a matter of reinforcing cultural power of the privileged and perpetuating the dominant social order. Although it is certainly true that artworks have always been used for political ends and for other instrumental purposes, to argue that all there is is a contingent, ideologically-motivated value is a different thing altogether. Stein H. Olsen challenged this view quite convincingly by pointing out the fact that debates questioning the canon in Herrnstein Smith's way tend to focus on the classics, ignoring the question of artistic failure regarding the canon (Olsen 2001, 261–278). Olsen gives numerous examples of authors who, in spite of being very much in tune with the dominant ideologies of their times, and in spite of initial popularity, did not make it to the canon, because, as he demonstrates, they failed artistically. This indicates that apart from merely instrumental values, a candidate's work must still have other, artistic qualities to become canonical.

Furthermore, Olsen points out a serious flaw in Herrnstein Smith's reasoning. Her notion of value is ill conceived as it refers to social identity, such as race, class or gender, and fails to provide a conceptual framework that would elucidate the standards according to which the practice of evaluation is organized within the community. Herrnstein Smith simply fails to account for how meaning and value are established, identifying it as some form of consensus of practical interests, a balance of power within a group. This is crucial as the literary institution is not defined by some identity-based membership (as being male, or being white) but is a matter of applying concepts and conventions used when appreciating a literary text, whose nature and structure is generally accessible to everyone and transparent, rather than some impenetrable, non-arguable power struggle; they depend on the internalization of the practice itself. Another implication of the view that value assessment depends on applying specific concepts, conventions and is a rule-governed procedure is that value judgments are not merely a question of apparent communal consensus but are results of reasoned arguments (Olsen 2001, 261–278). Again, value judgments are not a matter of somebody literally enforcing one's opinion in a power struggle, but are subject to evaluation in terms of evidence, reasoning, etc.

Values and Emotions

The aspect of Budd's theory of artistic value that might be related to some natural human dispositions in the most evident way is its insistence on sentiment-dependence and anthropocentricity. As I said, Budd's use of the term "sentiment" should be understood in the sense of general

emotionality, thus entailing that emotional reaction to the work is a component of its overall evaluation. Again, this should not be confused with random reader-response or affective fallacy, since Budd's focus is the experience of a work with its proper understanding. The study of emotion or affect has long been neglected in literary studies, partly due to concerns about emotional response being too idiosyncratic and subjective, or being a distant effect of the work, rather than about the work itself. In the previous chapter, however, I tried to demonstrate that contemporary knowledge of emotions points to their inseparability from reasoning and general human cognition. This indicates that we cannot entirely exclude emotional component from our interpretations of artworks and from our reasoning regarding why certain works are more valuable than others. Some scholars noted that even the seemingly neutral commentaries on the formal aspects of a work contain emotion-laden value judgments (Norwood 2013, 135–152). Consider stating that a plot of a story is balanced or unbalanced, that characters are flat, or that a passage is surprising. Emotion-laden value judgments are also crucial for the process of interpretation itself: while reading, we constantly make value judgments concerning the meaning and the status of a passage, we try to relate it to other passages in the work so as to make a coherent interpretation which we further evaluate and compare with rival hypotheses about meaning, etc. Moreover, without our emotional system, the ability to empathize and to attribute mental states, we would not be able to understand art, fictional words and characters at all.

The link between what we call “human values” (ethical and aesthetic) and emotions is a standard one in neurobiology. In a representative account of the relation, Antonio Damasio points out that the roots of what humans tend to hold valuable ethically and aesthetically are in certain biological mechanisms that predate human species (including emotions) (Damasio 2005, 47–57). The mechanism that Damasio discusses is the homeostatic life regulation or the drive toward preservation of life and striving for its well-being. In the course of evolution, this system has managed to develop mechanisms that promote emotional reactions associated with “the maintenance of health, prevent circumstances leading to death and procurement of states of life tending toward optimal function” (Damasio 2005, 48). In other words, the system of homeostasis elicits feelings on the spectrum from pleasure to pain and punishment in response to the stimuli the organism is experiencing. The smell of rotten meat or faeces triggers the feeling of revulsion and disgust and a negative evaluation. The smell of food, the sight of a life-supporting landscape or features of a fellow human that indicate health and fertility elicit feelings of pleasure and a positive evaluation. The two are the basis of ethical and aesthetic evaluations.

This is not to say that emotional reactions to life-threatening and life-promoting stimuli are all there is in artistic appreciation. On the

contrary, not only can the responses be contained, changed or acquire a highly personal degree through specific experiences in life, but there is more to evaluation of art than the pleasure or displeasure of the senses. Consider again the case of ready-mades. An aesthetic experience of a urinal in a gallery and a urinal in a lavatory would be the same, unless one attributes a proper art-historical context to the former. The evaluation that follows comes from recognizing the work's relation to traditional works and the pastiche-like qualities its title and placement affords. Thus, if one attributes to it originality, freshness, wit, humor, etc. then the indirect, simulation² emotional evaluation is there, but it is not directly accessible. To say that we appreciate Greek statues merely because they represent healthy, attractive bodies is flawed as it fails to explain why we appreciate the type of art that rejects the imitation of natural beauty. Still, if we accept that a work becomes valuable through the experience of its qualities, then the aesthetic component must entail a degree of affective attraction and evaluation.

The claim that to be successful in terms of its effects an audience, established status or popularity, an artwork must have some underlying affective component leads to some important implications regarding the circulation of the work in a culture. It implies that a success or a failure of given art forms or individual works must be also partly due to its ability to tap into some natural propensities of the human mind. The fact that a given work is successful cannot be, to repeat the argument against Herrnstein Smith and others, entirely owing to cultural-specific factors or ideological manipulation. A variant of this theory is to claim that works become seen as valuable because of exposure effects: the fact that our culture sees Shakespeare as more valuable than Chandler is simply due to Shakespeare being reproduced, referred to and discussed more than the latter. The thesis about exposure effects has some potential of being empirically testable and that is why I will restrain from making definite claims about it (though I suspect it to be false much in the same sense as Herrnstein Smith's thesis is). Although it has not been sufficiently investigated so far, some recent research indicates that mere exposure does not necessarily increase one's liking of a work (in the case of the studies mentioned: works that would fall into a category of bad art) (Meskin, Phelan, Moore and Kieran 2013, 139–164).

Noël Carroll made the claim about the need to revise and re-include the notion of “human nature” into broader considerations in philosophy of art. Carroll maintains, and I can only concur in tune with my argument so far, that art is not “culture all the way down” (Carroll 2004, 96), for art, as part of culture, is partly woven from evolutionarily shaped “cognitive, perceptual, and emotive architecture” (Carroll 2004, 96). As a consequence, much traditional, transcultural art “addresses our evolved sensibilities, feelings, emotions, and perceptual faculties in a fairly direct manner” (Carroll 2004, 99). Certain historically specific

forms of mass art, such as film and TV, have become increasingly popular largely due to “ways in which they engage our evolved cognitive, perceptual, and emotive architecture” (Carroll 2004, 99). In TV’s case, it is specifically the ease with which humans cross-culturally process visual representations of natural objects and fellow humans (especially faces and emotion types associated with them, an issue I mentioned in Chapter 3 with regards to empathy and theory of mind). Had films and TV shown just words instead of visual representations, they would clearly be much less successful commercially. One can mention other features, much in tune with the notion of artistic universals listed in the previous chapter, which will have higher ratio of accessibility for humans due to their evolved cognitive architecture. Thematically, they would of course include romance, reproduction, social status and political power, horror, fear of death, survival, etc. Formally, to expand Carroll’s examples, one could think of sound qualities, rhythm, memory and phonetic loop, or the sense of “now” that puts cognitive constraints on poetic forms (as I argued in Chapter 3, traditional poetic forms tend to have limits on the line length), visual images, as well as figurative language that is immediately appealing, as well as a sense of harmony and symmetry. Stephen Davies cites numerous researches into how certain innate preferences predate human species: e.g., birds and monkeys also display a preference for symmetry, order, etc. (Davies 2012, 192). Furthermore, we can speculate, and rightly so, that the above explains why traditional art is more about direct sensual experience, bodily sensations, as well as imitation of the natural world. It would be highly improbable, if not impossible, that conceptual art developed historically before art developing as imitation of nature/life.

The list can go on and on, but I suppose the point is clear: artworks do consist of some “primal” stimuli, that is, devices that stem from and engage ordinary perception and emotive, as well as cognitive processes. It makes use of things people are normally drawn to. They are obviously more than that. Apart from mimetic art, they are structured in a way which does not normally occur in nature, and they do have a set of volatile external relations to other works which are crucial for how we understand and value them. All this leads to restate the claims I have been making throughout the book, namely, that even though artworks must have affective and anthropocentric qualities, what they mean and how they become valuable is not reducible to the language of biology or psychology, and thus, we cannot dispose of the autonomous aesthetic level of reception of art. It is, as Peter Lamarque stresses, that aesthetic qualities are based in non-aesthetic properties but the former are not reducible to the latter (Lamarque 1998, 60–78). I would add that they form a continuity with aesthetic qualities emerging out of the non-aesthetic. I should also say that, potentially, one may ask where aesthetic experience proper (supposing it makes sense to use the term “proper” here) starts in

relation to the merely sensual, an issue I discussed in the preceding section. I do not think we can convincingly set such a borderline. Moreover, I do not consider it a problem or even an important issue. Some philosophers of art argue that the proviso that for an experience to be aesthetic, it should be unified and structured is only valid when talking about the intersubjective, communicative aspect of the experience. In other words, only when we intend to embed our experiences in a network of communication with others, do we need to talk about it in terms of coherence and unity. On a personal level, unstructured experiences such as itching could be called aesthetic (Irvin 2008, 25–35). I do not intend to settle the matter here, but I suppose one cannot reject the argument all too hastily. What it does show conclusively, though, is the necessity of tracing a non-trivial continuity between the sensual, the emotional, the aesthetic, and the artistic.

Natural and Competent Responses

This section of the chapter will attempt at summarizing and integrating some elements of my argument so as to give a coherent account of the continuity between cognitive and aesthetic research into art and literature. The two preceding sections gave a rather general account of the relation, or of the roots of the relation, without particular attention to the verbal art, or perhaps even privileging the more perceptual, sensual arts. It is precisely to the verbal that I now turn.

First, I want to clarify the nature of the relation between the more sensual and the verbal art. For one thing, literature does not give us immediate sensual experience in the sense painting or music do, even though the roots of verbal art surely lie in the sensual, as with the effects of the early spoken poetry. But it is clear that with the development of writing and printing that altered the habits of verbal art consumption promoting quiet reading, the experience of the verbal became less sensual. This does not mean, however, that the relation of literature to other arts became severed or that some of the points I made in the preceding section lose their validity regarding literature. In fact, some key developments in visual arts in the twentieth century seem to reinforce the link between the sensual and the verbal.

Grounded Cognition and Simulation

As I insisted throughout this chapter, an indispensable component of the value of art is its informed experience that is understood in emotional and sensual terms. This however seems problematic when applied to evaluation of those works of art whose value seems to be removed from direct sensory experience, e.g., literature and conceptual art. To clarify the issue, I will draw on and expand the account of the mechanisms

I discussed in Chapter 3 that account for human interest in fiction and other arts using the notion of “grounded cognition.” The issue is, roughly, that conceptual art and literature appear to pose a problem to the theories of art that stress its sensory element. How can we say that Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* are valuable due to their sensory experience if they look no different than regular bars of soap? Accordingly, there appears no sensory, or stimulus-like basis for an aesthetic experience of literature. Institutional theorists, such as Olsen or Lamarque, would perhaps claim that this illustrates how art appreciation is a matter of knowing proper art-historical context of a work and actively following conventions and rules that govern the practice as in a game of chess. To counter the claim that appreciation of literature is a matter of convention, I surveyed a number of concepts developed in cognitive science that undermine any strong distinctions between literary appreciation and other forms of cognition. I reckon that the notion of “grounded cognition” gives further ammunition against the institutional claim as I conceive of it.

Grounded cognition is closely related to, but significantly broader, the concept of embodied cognition I discussed earlier. In the words of one of its most famous exponents, grounded cognition opposes the view that “knowledge resides in a semantic memory system separate from the brain’s modal systems for perception [...], action [...], and introspection” (Barsalou 2008, 618). In other words, typical accounts of cognition assume that humans store knowledge via semantic, amodal symbols. Grounded cognition points out that it is either unlikely that knowledge resides in amodal symbols, or such representations “work together with modal representations” (Barsalou 2008, 618) in order to create cognition. Thus, we do not store knowledge in terms of abstract, symbolic items, but we store multimodal representations that keep sensory impressions, as well as actions and mental states. This also entails that a crucial aspect of human cognition comes from “simulation,” or, the “re-enactment of perceptual, motor, and introspective states acquired during experience with the world, body, and mind” (Barsalou 2008, 618). Every experience that occurs or every action that is taken uses simulation extensively. Suppose one sits on a couch and turns on the TV. The brain then integrates “states across modalities” (Barsalou 2008, 618) with multimodal representations stored in memory. Every time some portion of knowledge is needed to represent a category, such as “couch,” the multimodal representations that are kept in memory “are reactivated to simulate how the brain represented perception, action, and introspection associated with it” (Barsalou 2008, 618–619). One might say that the claim about the multimodal nature of knowledge goes hand in hand with the particular outline of semantic memory I discussed, following Hogan, in Chapter 3. The difference is perhaps about the emphasis on the role of simulation in cognition.

At least one thing that has a significant bearing on understanding human interaction with art follows from the above. Namely, any strong distinction into perceptual and non-perceptual (conceptual) art seems suspect in the light of how concepts and perception function and are stored in memory. It seems inadequate to claim, as some proponents of the Institutional Theory appear to be doing, that with the advent of modern art it has become clear that appreciation is a matter of following rule-governed conventions, as conceptual art affords no directly accessible pleasure. On the contrary, it is clear that memory is largely representational, and thus the appreciation of both perceptual and the seemingly non-perceptual art requires reactivation of the multimodal representations stored in memory, “unless the properties in question evoke instinctive responses from mere exposure” (Norwood 2013, 143). Needless to say, appreciation of most art requires some degree of reliance on multimodal representations, and this is most evident in conceptual art, as well as in poetry and prose. Venus of Milo might elicit some natural, instinctive aesthetic response cross-culturally, but surely Duchamp’s “The Fountain” cannot elicit such responses unless the audience is familiar with the concept of a “urinal,” of a “fountain” and of a “gallery,” that is, unless the person in question has some degree of acculturation and cultural competence. The ability to employ one’s cultural competence in comprehending works of art is thus translatable into the language of cognitive science in terms of simulation, mental lexicon, priming, schemas, scripts, prototypes, etc. Since, as I stressed in Chapter 2, there is no special social institution that regulates the activities of literary critics and of proficient readers and that grants certificates of literary competence, or that publishes a rule book according to which humans interact with arts, there cannot be any difference in essence when it comes to the workings of untutored and competent readers. Both readers employ the same cognitive processes in understanding and evaluating art. The difference lies largely in the contents that these processes utilize.

Simulation and Appreciation

In accord with my discussion of simulation and, earlier, types of activation in the mental lexicon, I wish to have a look at their application to the aesthetic response to literary works. Perhaps the clearest exposition of how simulation-related processes operate with regard to literary works was offered by Patrick C. Hogan. Hogan noticed that there are striking similarities between much of contemporary work in cognitive science regarding levels of activation in the mental lexicon and some Sanskrit works on literary aesthetics from as early as tenth century AD (Hogan 1996, 163–194). Though he offers an interesting discussion regarding the commensurability of the concepts applied in both fields, I will leave this issue aside and try to summarize the views he presents

without either the technicalities of cognitive science, or the specificity of the Sanskrit conceptual apparatus.

Hogan begins by addressing one of the perennial questions of philosophy of literature. There are clearly multiple ways we can read, or read into, a literary text: we can look for specific information, we can study it linguistically, etc., In other words, whenever we attempt to construe some meaning of the text, we must first stipulate what meaning we are interested in. There is, however, a type of meaning that we take as somehow logically prior, or defining, when it comes to artworks, and thus, literary works. The meaning we stipulate while approaching an artwork comes from the assumption that the work in question was designed with some aesthetic intent: so as to elicit an aesthetic experience in its audience/readers. So far, so good, but interestingly enough, Hogan attempts to explain the nature of this experience in terms of an aesthetic attitude, a notion that I found problematic earlier in this book. Although Hogan rejects the idea that an aesthetic attitude is a matter of special, disinterested attention on the same grounds I did, following George Dickie, he assumes that we should think of aesthetic attitude in terms of expectations regarding the form and content of the work and the effects it can elicit in audience. Specifically, by adopting the aesthetic mode we expect that a literary work will afford us specific type of pleasure by activating networks of emotion-laden associations stored in our minds.

Despite the fact that I see Hogan's understanding of aesthetic attitude as more promising than the traditional one, I still consider it problematic, and perhaps even redundant. The problem with defining literary response purely in terms of an attitude is prone to marginalizing the concept of art and literature entirely. If I can experience something aesthetically or not by merely switching my aesthetic and non-aesthetic mental modes on and off, the ontological consequences are dire, for an external object of attention which initially drew my interest by virtue of the possibility of experiencing its formal and thematic qualities ceases to exist (I believe this is roughly the view of Stanley Fish and Norman Holland). Consequently, if the experience is entirely a matter of the creative propensities of my mental aesthetic mode, I should be able to have exactly the same aesthetic experience reading David Lodge and mowing the lawn, which is surely not the case. On the other hand, it is true that I can attempt to read a non-literary text with a set of expectations normally reserved for artworks and do have similar experiences occasionally, but it is doubtful that they will turn out to be structured in the same way and, eventually, be as rewarding as an experience of an artwork. Clearly, the quality of a literary experience cannot be merely a matter of an attitude. I will return to these considerations after discussing Hogan's literary aesthetics in more detail.

Hogan proceeds to observe, quite correctly, that the specifically literary experience cannot be unstructured and it must be unified. This unity

cannot be, however, reduced to simple causal or logical unity, as it is clear that celebrated works of, say, postmodern fiction may lack internal causal and logical unity, but we are able to experience them as unified in the way in which they were designed. Thus, just as in my discussion of Olsen in Chapters 1 and 2, Hogan assumes that the unity, or integrity, of an artwork is the “mutual relevance between parts, or elements of a work” (Hogan 1996, 174). Yet, this still seems too broad and insufficient to define the experience of artworks. It is precisely to clarify the issue that Hogan brings together Indian aesthetics and cognitive science.

To specify the nature of the literary experience proper (though as I said, I believe his account is generally applicable to understanding other arts), Hogan quotes an analogy drawn by one of the Indian authors between “aesthetic experience and savoring the taste of food” (Hogan 1996, 169). To experience the aesthetic value of art is to squeeze out “the poetical word” (Hogan 1996, 169), and to “read and taste many times over the same poem” (Hogan 1996, 174), “dallying with the meanings, contexts, associations of the words and phrases” (Hogan 1996, 174). This, in turn, implies delectation of suggestions or evocation that are linked to a particular sentiment or emotion. Aesthetic suggestiveness is not equivalent to mere implication. A phrase such as “a hamlet on the Ganga” implies that the hamlet is on the bank of the river, rather than on the river itself, but it suggests “sanctity, [...] as well as peace, purity, and so forth” (Hogan 1996, 169). This means that the type of activation in semantic memory that is crucial for literary aesthetic experience is not entirely paraphraseable, as it includes both the emotive and the cognitive. It is an activation of the conceptual and the associations, images, feelings and beliefs along the lines of a unifying sentiment or feeling (Hogan 1996, 174). In the end, the type of unity that is relevant for literary works is the “unity of emotionally evocative association” (Hogan 1996, 174). To link this claim with Hogan’s earlier point about artistic unity, as well as with Budd’s discussion of value, and with Olsen’s notion of expectations of competent readers, I suppose the above outline is perfectly congruent with Budd’s insistence on merging the formal and the experiential while ascribing some value to art. We approach a work of art with expectations regarding the experience it may afford; we assume it to be unified in the sense of being composed of interrelated elements, but we also expect that if the work proves to be structured in such a way, this would produce in us a set of semantic and emotional associations structured around a posited unifying theme of the work linked to a given sentiment/emotion. I find such a vision to be perfectly congruent with Olsen’s idea of aesthetic experience, though he is unwilling to admit the precise nature of aesthetically relevant expectations.

Further, and in tune with the notion of simulation I outlined earlier, the chain of associations is able to evoke emotions because of latent traces of previous, related experiences stored in memory, either experienced

sensually or simulated. However, we must be careful to emphasize that the experience is still an experience of the work, rather than dwelling on our own deeply personal, contextualized memories, so as not to fall into the pit of affective fallacy or Dickie's inattention to the work. Thus, a proper aesthetic appreciation requires a degree of generalization of one's emotional response. If personal sorrow is supposed to elicit aesthetic experience

it must be in some way generalized from specific memories of personal loss, which is to say that it must be in some way removed from those specific memories, while at the same time remaining in some way connected with them (as the continuing source of feeling).

(Hogan 1996, 170)

This can be explained through reference to the notion of priming or partial activation. Why we respond emotionally to a literary text can be a question of not only full activation where we are aware of particular personal experiences, but, more importantly, that of partial activation, where certain feelings, beliefs, etc., are primed; that is, we somehow feel their "traces," but they do not cross the threshold of full activation and, consequently, do not enter our consciousness. But this does not yet explain whether the type of priming we can possibly experience from literary or other artworks is in any sense unique. It seems that the type of activation can be elicited by entirely non-artistic events, but I would add again that highly esteemed literary works aim at a specific structuration of the response: one that we do not expect to see while chatting with friends in a pub, shopping or watching news on TV.

Additionally, Hogan suggests that while reading in the aesthetic mode (that is, having relevant expectations about the work), we tend to suppress the overly personal dimension of the experience and stay focused on the work itself: that is why in proper aesthetic response, the activation of memories is closer to priming, rather than to full activation. Again, this remains puzzling as it leads us back to the question of the nature of relevant expectations. According to Hogan, it appears that this suppression is not something that happens spontaneously or naturally, but it is a conscious decision based on informed expectations, that is, occurring when one had already internalized a proper concept of an artwork/literary work. This seems to push us back to square one as the overall conclusion is that, just like in the Institutional Theories, a proper response to an artwork is only possible when one internalizes a body of conventional knowledge about its nature and about its appreciation. Sadly, Hogan does not elaborate on the matter, but I am convinced the anti-conventionalist cause is not lost, however it requires some clarification.

First of all, for a number of reasons I already listed, it is unlikely that there can be any strong distinction into the conventional and non-conventional (natural, spontaneous) regarding responses to art. At the same time, it would be absurd to claim that there can exist strictly spontaneous, untutored responses to the type of art that does not directly address the senses and instinctive human reactions. Showing a novel (a book) to a person who has no concept of the novel in any sense (say, belongs to a culture that has not developed writing, or was brought up outside human culture and does not know any language; in milder cases: is illiterate, does not know the particular language of the work, etc.) will not lead us anywhere, and we cannot expect any form of appreciation and understanding to emerge there. That is, when talking about reading a novel, or contemplating “Brillo Boxes,” we tacitly assume that a person engaged in such an activity already has some degree of acculturation. Note that Hogan’s example of “a hamlet on the Ganga” requires both some linguistic knowledge and cultural background so that the reader can experience the possible suggestion of sancticity. One has to know the meaning of “hamlet” and “Ganga,” along with their cultural connotations. The point is not trivial, as it demonstrates that merely by being brought up in a given culture and having some language skills we already begin to internalize a degree of the conceptual apparatus or cultural competence used in this culture; thus, the question of being a competent or incompetent reader must be, in reality, a matter of degree. Now, the relevant aspects of the acculturation in question include here: linguistic competence, knowledge of art-historical contexts and the ability to read a literary work having relevant expectations about its structure and content, or in other words, knowing the strategies involved in literary interpretation (the aesthetic mode, in Hogan’s sense). This also means that how we come to grasp something as a literary work is gradable, rather than a matter of becoming acquainted with an entirely arbitrary concept which is defined in a rule book of aesthetic appreciation. In other words, the concept of a “king” in chess, an “offside” in football or “full house” in poker are entirely arbitrary and require becoming introduced to the specific set of rules of applying the concept in their respective activities. Literary works do not exist in the same arbitrary manner; there is an overwhelming evidence of the concept of the literary work (in terms of its ontology, form and contents) and literary appreciation (as in literary/artistic universals, or Sanskrit and Chinese aesthetics that Hogan discusses) developing independently across cultures.

The concept of a literary work itself and how we come to cognize it are, likewise, not arbitrary constructs in any meaningful sense of the concept of “arbitrariness.” In Chapter 3 I discussed how factors such as empathy, theory of mind and emotionality provide the broad framework in which humans come to understand a literary work, and these are quite instinctive and spontaneous. They provide a substantial portion

of our natural response to art. Furthermore, the argument that the only reason we attempt to understand a literary work as a coherent, unified structure (though, as I pointed out, this does not entail standard causal/logical internal coherence), and ascribe it some agency and space-time indexicality is because we are slaves to bourgeois ideology which necessitates such a perception of art (since it reinforces and perpetuates the dominant power structures in an overarching network of ideological practices) is a little far-fetched. The basic features of an artwork listed above are just standard features humans are initially interested in, as their determination is prerequisite to humans being able to orient themselves in the surrounding world. The above is how we come to cognize, identify and categorize the elements of the world around us in general, and man-made artifacts (from bread to space rockets) in particular.

Similarly, the formal and the thematic aspects of literary works are not made of entirely arbitrary substance, in the sense in which the conventional rules of card games shape the progress of the game. We can program a computer how to simulate a gameplay of cards, but it is impossible to program it so as to understand and appreciate art, for art is anthropocentric and requires specific type of emotional-cognitive architecture as well as specific types of human experience and memories in order to be enjoyed. I indicated in Chapter 3 how the formal aspects of literary works ranging from the length of lines and phonetics in poetry, through the use of figurative language, storytelling and the structure of prototypical stories are necessarily intertwined with the dispositions of human cognitive architecture. The fact that we see, or see-in, metaphorical meanings in a work is bound with our natural way of conceptualizing, or seeing-in connections between various elements of our ordinary experience. How we are skilled in identifying and relating the internal elements of a work or to see its figurative meaning is related to our individual capacities to conceptualize and understand the world around us.³ Figurative language and stylistic ornaments are used widely in ordinary language and it is an exaggeration to claim that we need a special conventional knowledge to hypothesize a metaphorical level to a literary text. It is not that we cannot experience anaphoras (though, we, of course, might not know the term), alliterations or various forms of foregrounding (Hogan 1996, 177) unless we are acquainted with a special rule book.

Hogan mentions Aristotle's idea of "epitetic unity" (Hogan 1996, 173), that is, a certain unity of design of an artwork that is not equivalent to standard causal-logical unity. Rather than that, he sees it as related, and apparently rightly so, to his idea of literary experience as elicited by a chain of associations structured around a unifying theme linked to a certain sentiment. He mentions an example of this type of associative unity used by Aristotle, "the statue of Mity's at Argos killed the man who caused Mity's death by falling on him at a festival" (Hogan 1996, 173).

We link the two events as forming a coherent narrative, though no causal relations define them. Despite its brevity and simplicity, I regard this example to be symptomatic of one of the most central aspects of the practice of literary understanding/interpretation and appreciation, as it illustrates the necessity to recognize the figurative as well as the interconnectedness of the internal parts of the work (in this case, the elements of the plot, but this also refers to the relatedness of form and content, including the specific layers of both aspects of a literary work). According to Institutional Theories of art, in order to recognize this passage as figurative and in order to be aware of its symbolic significance in relation to other elements of the work, one has to be acquainted with the conventions that govern the appreciation of literature. This, however, seems implausible, as the ability to connect associatively, rather than causally, certain events, elements, images and quite distinct forms, is not something specific to art appreciation. Our ability to link various levels and various elements of a work is broadly used even in such simplistic forms as jokes or proverbs. Take the famous proverb derived from the Gospel of Matthew, “for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword,” or “those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it” taken from the book of Job. There is no logical connection between the events the proverbs discuss. But we are able to link the two by means of emotional associations, by conceptualizing some degree of analogy between them. They can both refer to Aristotle’s example and I believe there is no reason to suppose we need a special rule book to see (or see-in) this type of relation, as this kind of figurative language is widespread in everyday communication, as well as in multiple cultural texts that we would not normally consider artworks.⁴ It is just another case of humans looking for patterns and connections in how they make sense of the surrounding world.

On the other hand, I am far from claiming that competent appreciation, in the sense of literary critics and models outlined by Olsen et al., happens spontaneously. Certainly, though, some responses to literary works that eventually lead to full-blown appreciation do happen spontaneously among all members of a literate culture. Everybody is capable of reading-in some degree of figurative dimension, allusion, metaphor and symbol into a literary work. Further, we quite instinctively ascribe some agency to a linguistic artifact, so as to frame it in at least some minimal limits of possible meaning. We all have rather spontaneous evaluative responses to literary works which can be broadly conceived of in terms of emotionality, but which are, in fact, always a contingent mixture of the capacities of our cognitive-emotive architecture, personal memories and experiences, and our current state of knowledge about the art-historical context of the work in question (including the knowledge about literary traditions and conventions). This leads me to claim that literary interpretation cannot be entirely removed and disconnected from other forms of human inquiry, even though it does have its own peculiarities. Following

Patrick C. Hogan, I believe that literary interpretation is a variant of rational inquiry (Hogan 1996, 1–94), where readers continually test and evaluate their hypotheses about the probable meaning of subsequent fragments of a work using their personal experiences, cultural competence and the knowledge of art-historical contexts of a work to produce its probable meanings.

In one of his recent books, all of which actually mark his reinvigorated interest in the actual practices of appreciation of literature not dissimilar from the one displayed by analytic aestheticians, Terry Eagleton gives an example of what inferences we might draw from short passage of a literary work. I dare say that his approach is not neglectful of the aesthetic dimension of literature and is typical of at least some early stage of textualist analysis (Eagleton 2013, 40). Consider the opening sentence of Anthony Burgess's *Earthly Powers*, "It was the afternoon of my eighty-first birthday, and I was in bed with my catamite when Ali announced that the archbishop had come to see me" (Burgess 1980, 7). Some minimal background knowledge about the language in which the novel was written, as well as its year of publication, along with some basic facts about the author (e.g., that he was British) suffice to form initial hypotheses about the meaning of the passage. For instance, the use of the word "catamite" makes a strong case for assuming that the speaker is male (though, of course, it could turn out in the course of reading that this is not the case). Moreover, his sleeping habits indicate that he might have a lot of leisure time at his disposal. The visit of an archbishop probably entails his high social position (at this point, one can also assume that the speaker holds a very high position in the clergy, e.g., he is a cardinal). The character of "Ali" could probably lead the reader to think about colonial setting and a servant-like occupation, and so on. These are very simple inferences that moderately competent readers could make, but I suppose they illustrate the idea of probable/rational inquiry into a literary text. All of the above are, of course, subject to change and revision in the course of reading, but the procedure itself should operate as in my example. Furthermore, I do not believe that the inferences I mentioned are verbalized or necessarily conscious. In tune with my discussion of types of activation, I believe it makes more sense to think about sets of possible hypotheses that we have at hand while reading: some of them are perhaps fully activated, whereas others remain primed so that we can easily follow along few possible lines of interpretation of a passage.

Suppose, for example, that one reader who happens to be fond of boxing or has just heard some facts regarding the history of the discipline reads the name "Ali" in the above example and experiences an activation of "Mohammed Ali," leading him to see the famous boxer in the scene depicted. It is of course possible to start out with such an initial hypothesis about the meaning of the passage, but it will be increasingly difficult to read the servant-like character as a boxer, as there will be less and less evidence to support this hypothesis, as well as less and less

putative functionality of such an inference in the sense of its relation to some general themes of the work.⁵ I believe, thus, that interpretation is a matter of making ongoing, always revisable rational inferences considered most likely in relation to current knowledge. It is, then, a type of abductive reasoning.⁶

Of course, the above Ali example is again just one case of responding to art in an entirely personal, idiosyncratic way. As I indicated earlier, it is not much different than persistently reading *Coriolanus* specifically as a story about Stalin, or reading *King Lear* as a story about one's family. Related cases of personal readings happen every day and they are entirely explainable in terms of memory activation I discussed. Why should we even expect, then, that readers might follow the general rules of rational inference? I believe the answer lies in Budd's condition that proper value judgments about art are intersubjective, and I should add that, in reality, readers with various levels of competence will display corresponding levels of movement toward intersubjectivity in their interpretations, rather than toward idiosyncrasy of interpretations. There are several reasons for that. First, intersubjectivity presupposes communication and a certain level of common ground between participants. It is most unlikely that a community of competent critics will form where all members share highly idiosyncratic interpretations of a number of artworks. Rather than that, interpretations will move toward the shared, that is, toward seeing the work as touching upon matters of general human interest and not the particular. Second, and more importantly, I do not believe we can have a literally personal understanding of an artwork for the simple reason that it is impossible that we participate in experiencing artworks in an entirely individual manner: we are introduced to art by others, we enjoy it with others, we talk about it with others, just as we are introduced to any other aspects of human culture. My point is derived from the anti-Cartesian sentiments of both cognitive science and Donald Davidson's philosophy. Human rationality is not a preoccupation of individual minds but requires knowledge of other minds to be actually formed: our understanding of the self is intertwined with our understanding of other minds and with our understanding of the world. It presupposes communication with other minds. Understanding and enjoying art, thus, requires the peculiar type of human rationality, rather than any idea of abstract rationality. All in all, where we are located on the scale between idiosyncratic readings and ideal intersubjective readings of literary critics is a reflection of our general sense of relation to other minds and our ability to communicate with them, as well as it is an indication of our cultural competence.

A similar point against the austerity of Institutional Theories of art was made by Susan Feagin, a scholar famous for her explorations of the emotional underpinnings of aesthetic appreciation (Feagin 2010, 89–92). Feagin noticed that the claim made by Peter Lamarque about

the relation between a literary critic and a competent reader has more far-reaching implications than Lamarque admitted. In short, Lamarque sees literary critics as model readers, fully capable of informed, intersubjective value judgments in Budd's sense. They are well acquainted with the rules and conventions governing literary appreciation. In fact, Lamarque holds there should be no significant difference between "the practice of criticism [...] and the responses of an educated reading public" (Lamarque 2009, 135) and that "a literary critic is simply a reader who has more experience and heightened perceptiveness than the 'common reader'" (Lamarque 2009, 135). Although I entirely agree with Lamarque's claims, I see merit in Feagin's remark that he marginalizes one important aspect of literary criticism that is not necessarily present in the appreciation experienced by competent readers. This aspect is the critics' duty to communicate about the work to others (Feagin 2010, 92). To place it within the framework of my previous discussion, communication presupposes stronger emphasis on intersubjectivity, that is to say, the language of criticism tends to be more impersonal with the critics' initial emotion-laden appreciation swept under the carpet. Thus, even though the responses of critics and competent readers should be comparable, the latter's professional position requires them to marginalize their emotional appreciation and to focus on intersubjective communication about art whereas competent readers can appreciate art "enriched by emotions and other affective responses without fear that they might interfere with one's professional responsibilities" (Feagin 2010, 92).

My outline of the interpretive decisions placed on the spectrum of intersubjectivity/idiosyncrasy might give the impression that the only mechanism that regulates the limits of interpretation is the presupposition of its communicative nature. This is not the case. Despite the fact that it is precisely intersubjectivity that entails the movement toward commonality or universality, it does not imply that interpretations are just arbitrary constructs. They are not produced out of thin air by audience as, for an interpretation (or a value judgment, for that matter) to be accepted, it has to be argued using evidence from the work – from the material accessible to other members of the culture. In other words, relevant aesthetic expectations, as in Hogan's understanding of aesthetic mode, are not enough for appreciation to be experienced, for there has to be something in the work itself that fulfills the expectations and rewards the reader. I am thus, *contra* Fish, of the view that aesthetic expectations may or may not be met while attending to a work of art or to any other cultural text for that matter. In the end, what I am suggesting does have a remotely Humean flavor, owing to the fact that Hume stressed both the sentiment-dependence and the argued intersubjectivity of value judgments, but I believe my adherence to Budd's theory of artistic value, neurobiology, and to Hogan's cognitive literary studies makes it significantly different.

I should add here that Susan Feagin made a significant contribution to the philosophical debate on the role of emotions in appreciation of literary works, offering the first book-length treatment of both the nature of affective response to literature and of how these responses shape literary value. With a slightly different outlook than the later work of Jenefer Robinson, Feagin insists on interpretation and appreciation being different pursuits and though the former underpins the latter, it is appreciation that is the pivot of her discussion. Appreciation for Feagin is largely a rather complex emotional response where, in an early stage of reading, small sections of a work trigger affective reactions and later shape further reactions causing “mental shifts” and “slides” (Feagin 1996, 59–83) manipulating our perspective, sensitivity and overall emotional state. Empathy is particularly important in her theory and she maintains it operates on the basis of simulation of the mental states of others and, thus, one of the values of reading literature is the ability to understand and improve the skills of understanding other minds. Much like Jenefer Robinson, whom I mentioned in the previous chapter, Feagin seems to be claiming that appreciation of literature is largely an emotionally-based activity and that it requires actually experiencing emotional states while attending to a work. I suppose that Peter Lamarque rightly holds, against Feagin and Robinson, that appreciation of literature involves what Noël Carroll recently called “appreciation as sizing-up” (Carroll 2016, 1–14) evaluation without the necessarily affective component. Instead, appreciation of a literary work involves “seeing how it works, what it attempts to do, how the elements hang together, admiring the intricacies of plot, the delineation of character, the aptness of dialogue, the subtleties of thematic vision” (Lamarque 2000, 147). I think it is clear that a large portion of appreciation is not really emotional at all. On the other hand, it does seem to have the affective underpinnings, sentiments and anthropocentric qualities Budd discussed. Robinson is entirely correct in maintaining that without particular emotional memories, experiences and certain, say, maturity of the mind, we would not be able to appreciate art. As she puts it,

a precocious little girl reading ‘The Ambassadors’ might understand what she reads in a sense if she understands the literal might understand what she reads in a sense if she understands the literal meaning of the words, but in another, deeper sense she won’t understand because she won’t understand the characters or their motivation. The book is ‘too old’ for her in that it describes experiences outside her emotional range. She understands the words ‘I come from Woollett, Massachusetts,’ but the emotional implications are most probably beyond her reach. Here cognition is clearly not enough. The little girl needs emotional sophistication as well.

(Robinson 2005, 129)

The problem with Robinson and Feagin is that they claim proper appreciation of artworks involves full emotional response. But with the notion of priming and simulation that I outlined earlier it is clear that affective component need not be full-blown. I suspect that understanding and appreciating literature in the sense suggested in the quotation above involves priming or partial activation, which touches deep memory content without necessarily crossing the threshold of full awareness. A competent reader would, thus, be able to understand *The Ambassadors* thanks to some affective component stored in his memory, but I guess it is not typically fully activated. In this sense, I am on Lamarque's and Carroll's side in the sense that Robinson's argument about the necessity of *full* emotional response is false. But by revising and updating it to include priming and partial activation of affect (which is then not the locus of literary critic's actions, nor necessarily a major part of conscious reflection or debate on art), not only can it be saved, but it remains congruent with the opposing anti-emotional view. I believe the above is a brief example how bridging cognitive psychology and analytic aesthetics can clarify some issues in both disciplines.

Not much has been written so far on the continuity between naïve and expert type of response to literature, though this is an area that lies precisely on the border of cognitive and philosophical aesthetics. There has been, however, some debate and research on visual perception and response to arts, results of whose may prove to be applicable to tackle similar problems regarding literature. Mark Rollins argues for a naturalistic approach to interpretation of pictorial art along the lines of hypothetical intentionalism, claiming contra Levinson that both categorial intentions, those pertaining to locating a given work within a broader art category, and the semantic intentions, which we typically call meaning of an artwork, are work-internal and extractable by responders. The latter are formed on the basis of microintentions, "small-scale internal representational events" (Rollins 2004, 185) which tend to guide and manipulate perception by, say, certain treatment of colors or contours, revealing "minimal communicative intent" (Rollins 2004, 185). There is no direct way in which this can be applied to literature, but I suspect the theory with which Rollins bears most affinity is a variant of defamiliarization thesis put forward by many neuroaestheticians, cognitive scientists and proponents of empirical studies of literature (see next chapter), which I see as seriously flawed and what I think is particularly evident in the context of literature, as demonstrated in previous chapters. On the other hand, I take it that it is undeniable that we are guided by actual or posited intentions which are largely extractable from a literary work and I agree entirely with Rollins and Danto that "sociohistorical practices supervene on psychological states" (Rollins 2004, 177) but it will not suffice to say that we hypothesize about the semantic content of what is *actually* there in the text. Recognizing and appreciating nuances of linguistic style, narrative and psychological representation or complexity of metaphors in a

given literary work is not a matter of mere perception or easily extractable microintentions but a blend of natural skills which are further fossilized in conventionalized interpretive procedures and art-historical knowledge. For more on the need to expand and connect research goals in aesthetics and cognitive science in relation to pictorial arts, and on cognitive penetration of perception and its effects on expert and untutored responses see Stokes (2009, 2014), Bergeron and Lopes (2012) and Dilworth (2005).

In most of Chapters 3 and 4 I tried to demonstrate the inadequacy of the claim that literary appreciation is solely a matter of convention, a rule-governed procedure not unlike playing chess. I believe there is overwhelming evidence against the claim. Institutional Theorists themselves do not appear to be entirely clear on that matter. On the one hand, their central claim is the institutional-conventional nature of art and of artistic appreciation. On the other hand, Olsen maintains that literary works have to be of human interest, but if so, this interest is not reducible to a convention or to a cultural locality. Similarly, Lamarque holds that there is no major difference between the responses of the critics and competent readers, and the latter are different from “common readers” merely owing to art-historical knowledge and heightened perceptiveness. All of the above indicates some degree of confusion over the status of the literary institution. Whereas I am of the opinion that literary appreciation does not happen spontaneously and becoming a competent reader does require time (as in accumulating memories of some experiences), practice and art-historical knowledge, just as being introduced to the general rules that govern appreciation can facilitate the process and improve one’s interpretive skills, it is not equivalent to saying that both appreciation, as well as the form and content of art, are conventional. The concept of literature as we have it now is not fully natural; obviously, it developed along the lines of development of human culture, society, economy, etc. It would be impossible to appreciate it if we were entirely outside of culture (within it, our skill at appreciation is a matter of degree), but it also engages our evolved cognitive-emotive architecture. It is not fully explicable in naturalistic terms, but our contemporary, institutional concept of art only utilizes and clarifies what humans are naturally interested in or driven to, and its foundations (both in terms of content, form, as well as its appreciation) existed long before the emergence of our narrow sense of literature. My belief in the continuity-like relation between spontaneous responses to art and non-art, responses of ordinary readers of fiction, and those of competent audience, might suggest that perhaps the notion of the institution is redundant and should be disposed of. On the contrary, there are sound reasons to believe that in spite of its problems and unclear status, we are not able to fully understand art without it. I will try to demonstrate this in the final section of the chapter.

One final comment before proceeding to the next chapter concerns my use of certain key terminology. Throughout this section, I have been using the terms “convention,” “competence” and “acculturation”

interchangeably to denote some degree of acquired or learned proficiency in appreciation of art. At the same time, I have argued for a partly naturalistic explanation of what art is made of, to put it crudely, and how humans come to understand and appreciate it. This requires some clarification. In the hierarchy proposed here, all the above mentioned concepts belong to the aesthetic level of explanation. It is the terminology that usually describes the workings of literary critics and proficient consumers of art. As such, it suggests being acquainted with a fair amount of culturally produced knowledge that seems to belong squarely to an entirely autonomous domain of culture. This view, however, would be too simplistic. Referring back to my earlier discussions of Baxter and Tsur, not everything produced by a culture is an arbitrary construct. The existence of art itself in the broad sense is definitely not arbitrary. Likewise is human interest and delight taken in it. As Tsur pointed out, some cultural products or institutions are fossilized cognitive devices. Some cultural phenomena are more likely to occur or to become popular because of how they engage human cognitive-emotive architecture. Literary appreciation stems directly from certain cognitive-emotive processes and it is not fundamentally different from our ways of cognizing the world in general. It is true that model appreciation (in the sense of literary critics' actions) requires some degree of knowledge about, say, history of art. But this is only part of the story. It provides some contents to the cognitive-emotive human architecture, but the processes operating remain the same. The procedures involved in appreciation of art are not arbitrary in the sense that traffic organization or housing policy are. One's skills can be clearly facilitated by practice and formal training, but they are not equivalent to being introduced to the rules of chess. I see being formally trained in literary appreciation as being introduced to certain fossilized natural processes. The exposition obviously accelerates the development of the skill. Overall, if the "conventions" applied to appreciation of art are not entirely arbitrary does it not mean that the term should not be used? Not at all. One has to keep in mind that "convention" and "competence" are fairly established and, to a large degree, helpful terms used in accounting for art appreciation. They belong to the aesthetic domain and make sense within the conceptual framework used there. If one looks closer, they cease to be conventions in the purely arbitrary sense, but this is equivalent to saying that if one looks closer at a human being it ceases to be one and becomes a cluster of various cells. It all depends on one's current level of explanation and therefore, there are pragmatic reasons to use the term.

Notes

- 1 My brief summary of Frankenstein's case is based on an unpublished paper by Professor David Fishelov "Frankenstein is Alive and Kicking: A Multi-dimensional Model for the Literary Work in Culture," which he delivered at *International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (IGEL) Congress in Turin, Italy, July 21–25, 2014.*

- 2 In the sense developed in cognitive science by L. Barsalou, "Simulation is the reenactment of perceptual, motor, and introspective states acquired during experience with the world, body, and mind." Quote taken from Lawrence Barsalou "Grounded Cognition," *Annual Review of Psychology* 59 (2008): 617–645.
- 3 In this sense, I am inclined to believe that literary works can be instrumental in developing human cognitive and emotional skills.
- 4 There are, of course, innumerable examples of how we use, or are expected to recognize this type of interrelatedness either in artworks, in other cultural texts and even in real life events. I wish to illustrate the latter using a specific personal anecdote. Some time ago, a horrible gas explosion destroyed a tenement in the city where I live, killing several tenants including a local journalist. Upon discussing the event my friend remarked that there is a tragic, grim irony to this event since the journalist's career had boosted as a result of his covering a similar building collapse a few years back. This case resonates again with Aristotle's example. Surely, there is no logical or causal connection between the events. Nor is there anything particularly literary about them. Still this is yet another case of the human propensity to look for patterns and similarities structured around a unified emotional-associative response in order to produce and to experience stories aesthetically. We see them in particular literary works just as we see them in real life.
- 5 I am well aware that literary theorists such as Stanley Fish or Norman Holland would argue that readers are only able to affirm their own presuppositions in the course of reading (and thus a boxing aficionado will read Burgess' entire novel with Mohammed Ali as one of the characters) but I reject their view for the reasons outlined earlier.
- 6 I am referring to "abduction" in Charles S. Peirce's sense, as a probabilistic method of reasoning from observation to forming a hypothesis using the simplest explanations.

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5 Levels of Explanation

In this chapter I will summarize and combine my earlier discussions about the relation between cognitive science, aesthetics and textualist literary theory as relevant to literary studies. My general thesis is that rather than being three disparate and unrelated research approaches, they remain intimately related and represent three levels of explanation when it comes to the inquiry into literature. Before going on to explain details of this relation, it is prerequisite that I explore related general issues regarding explanation in philosophy of science. First, however, I would like to address one objection about the purpose or the need to bring the three approaches together, as the rationale behind my project might not be obvious.

The fundamental objection to my analysis, as I see it, would be, roughly, as follows. What is the point of looking for links between the three research approaches if we know that they have fundamentally different methods and purposes? For instance, cognitive literary studies investigate how literary works engage human mental processes, the point of aesthetics is to read literary works so as to elicit aesthetic experience, whereas textualist literary theory analyzes texts in order to elicit social change. What can we achieve by conducting such an analysis?

To begin with, one should be careful about making generalizations regarding each of the aforementioned areas. It is a mistake to see them as highly unified fields. Consider textualist literary theory: it is true that a substantial portion of the scholars associated with it pursue literary analysis with the aim of bringing about social change. But what are their means and what exactly is the social change they pursue? It is hard to find a homogenous research method among scholars as diverse as Derrida, Eagleton, Gubar and Gilbert, and Hoggart, all being luminaries of textualist literary theory. Similarly, the type of putative liberation that literary studies should lead to is in no sense unified. For some, it would be a liberation from colonialist hegemonic discourses, for others a liberation from the ideology that justifies economic oppression, or liberation from male dominance, liberation from logocentrism, transcending one's fundamental phantasm, etc. Moreover, it is far from clear whether we can authoritatively claim that all literary theorists really envisage any kind of tangible

liberation that their analyses lead to. It is hard to imagine any revolutionary potential behind Goldmann's analysis of Jansenism in Racine. It does illustrate the well-known cliché about the economic basis of cultural phenomena, but there is nothing that necessitates revolutionary social change upon reading it. After all, why not read it and acknowledge it with an altogether conservative political agenda in mind?¹ Specific instrumental uses of literary analyses can vary and they are of little importance to my thesis; what I am interested in are the very procedures involved in the analyses themselves, the procedures that make up the textual analyses.

The point holds similarly for analytic aesthetics and cognitive science. Throughout the book, I maintained that they are far from unified and there is a very limited set of principles that make it valid to put all the scholars into one of the categories, e.g., in Chapter 1, I mentioned the claim that it makes no sense to define analytic aesthetics in terms other than just specific writing style. In Chapter 3, I mentioned some seemingly opposing tendencies within cognitive science along with some suggestions on how to see them as complementary rather than opposite. In other words, I would partly agree with the claim that the three disciplines have disparate means and methods, but the very claim rests on a tacit and wrong assumption that each of the fields has quite a homogeneous set of means and methods. It is not just that they are disparate on the outside, they are internally heterogeneous. But with this observation, we are back at the beginning of the discussion. We should not assume that the relation between the three areas is already established as that of an opposition, just as it is not objectively given what the internal relations between specific movements within each of the orientations are. Literary theory is perhaps the most radical of the three when it comes to internal heterogeneity, as there is hardly any agreement about the most fundamental concepts used in the field. But it is precisely the point of my book: to make preliminary definitions and claims, and to argue, to clarify some concepts, to see how this state of internal confusion can be alleviated by cross-disciplinary cooperation. In a field as heterogeneous and interdisciplinary as literary studies, nothing can be taken for granted, especially with the new, related research areas emerging in recent years.

Emergent Structures and Special Sciences

One of the topics typically explored in the philosophy of science, and correspondingly, in ontology, is the relation between different types of scientific investigations along with the relation between the different types of entities or substances that each respective area of investigation describes. The topic has been of major concern for the philosophy of mind, specifically regarding the mind-brain dilemma, and it has direct bearing on the formulation of method of research for psychology, and hence, for the status of the whole discipline.

Needless to say, with the rise of empiricism and positivism in the nineteenth century, English-speaking philosophy has experienced a shift of discourse toward physicalist monism. Some important positivist beliefs regarding the philosophy of science included the need to imitate the research method of natural sciences in all other disciplines and the conviction that science is unified: that all specialized disciplines are explainable and thus reducible to the foundational science of physics, and that we should follow the principle of ontological minimalism. Perhaps the most radical forms of positivism were typical of the Vienna Circle philosophers who held that all assertions are either tautological, subject to direct empirical verification or meaningless. This of course leads to a predictable conclusion that history, social science and all sorts of considerations about art, ethics, religion, etc. are devoid of meaning. Equally puzzling on this account is the status of philosophy itself. The idea of verification as a scientific method was harshly criticized by Popper and Quine among others and has since been largely rejected by philosophers of science.

In the philosophy of mind, a radical opposition to Cartesian dualism appeared in the form of behaviorism, a tendency inspired by the works of Wittgenstein and Ryle. Behaviorists maintained that psychology should talk about mental states in terms of observable behavior. More recently, a different strain of positivist scientism developed, called eliminative materialism. Its proponents claim that it is a matter of time when the mental will be entirely reducible to and explainable by neurophysiology and that the language of psychology will become obsolete. It is important to emphasize that, just as with the neopositivist Vienna Circle's claims, neither behaviorism nor eliminative materialism is widely accepted nowadays. In fact, most scholars working in the area accept some form of physicalism, that is, the monistic thesis that everything either is or somehow supervenes on the physical, without necessarily supporting the idea of reductionism and the positivist unity of science. I will not venture into exploring or deciding between the particular flavors of physicalism, as this has little bearing on my thesis. What I want to stress is that by referring to anti-positivist physicalist philosophers, I refer to the work of mainstream scholars in the areas, even if only to the extent that is relevant to my own project.

One very famous attack on the positivist idea of the unity of science was launched by Jerry Fodor, a notable physicalist himself. It is impossible, Fodor claims, to say that the phenomena described and the laws posited within one discipline are entirely explainable by some corresponding laws of physics (Fodor 1974, 97–115). Consequently, special sciences, that is, those that are not physics on positivist view, do retain rather strong autonomy in relation to the hard sciences. This is clearly visible in social sciences and psychology. Take, Fodor suggests, Gresham's law in economics. Its actual formulation is irrelevant, but it suffices to say

that it “says something about what will happen in monetary exchanges under certain conditions” (Fodor 1974, 103). Further, for reductionists, “any event which consists of a monetary exchange (hence any event which falls under Gresham’s law) has a true description in the vocabulary of physics and in virtue of which it falls under the laws of physics” (Fodor 1974, 103). This, however, seems obviously false. Some forms of monetary exchange involve strings of beads, signing checks or transfers of virtual currency. They encompass various physical and non-physical events. There seem to be no chances that all these events express a physical natural kind or that they are a consequent of a law of physics. Even if the events had some commonality in physical description it would tell us nothing about the substance of the specific law in economics. The fact that two biological organisms exchange strings of beads is a physical event, but physics alone tells us nothing about the laws of currency exchange. The above also applies to psychology: it is highly unlikely that thinking about the weather is coextensive with any single neurological, and consequently, physical property. Fodor is not alone in his attack on positivist formulation of the unity of science, but his discussion has been quite influential and I use it to illustrate my indebtedness to his general outlook. The concept of “emergence” with particular focus on irreducibility that I use is roughly equivalent to stating that:

properties and laws are systemic features of complex systems governed by true, lawlike generalizations within a special science that is irreducible to fundamental physical theory for conceptual reasons. The macroscopic patterns in question cannot be captured in terms of the concepts and dynamics of physics.

(O’Connor and Wong 2015)

Despite the fact that Fodor does not use the term “emergence” in his paper, his views seem to match the above definition.

A related discussion about various levels of explanation with special attention to arts was brought up by Patrick Hogan. Following some rather basic and uncontroversial facts about the relation between specific disciplines, Hogan mentions several rules about the order of explanation in science. First, lower-level elements “provide necessary conditions for elements higher in the hierarchy” (Hogan 2003, 202), that is to say, laws of physics/chemistry that apply to inorganic matter provide necessary conditions for the existence of higher elements, e.g., organic matter studied by biology. Second, “laws are conserved in the conceptual or explanatory movement from lower or more basic levels to higher levels” (Hogan 2003, 202), which means that they continue to operate in all the levels higher than the one in which they were originally formulated. “The laws of biology do not cease to operate with respect to mind. The laws of psychology do not cease to operate in society” (Hogan 2003,

202). Third, “each level is defined by the emergence of some structure that is not accounted for by laws at the lower level” (Hogan 2003, 203). The emergence of mind is not accounted for by the laws of biology, just as the patterns that result from the emergence of organic matter are not captured by the laws of physics and chemistry. The higher level incorporates the lower level and derives from it. Moreover, the lower level provides a general framework and constrains the patterns that can emerge at the higher level. There is, of course, a principle, or a set of principles, that regulate the transition (e.g., mutation in biology) and allow that some possibilities provided by the conjunction of lower-level laws are actually “realized and stabilized in continuing patterns” (Hogan 2003, 203).

Hogan is quite correct in stressing that laws operating on a higher level are not fully reducible to a lower level, that is, apart from a realized possibility resulting from a conjunction of lower levels, new laws appear, and the fully emergent structure is a combination of the possibilities realized owing to the transition principle, as well as new relations and patterns that emerge. The point is particularly valid when discussing the mind and evolution, as evolutionary psychologists are prone to ignoring the importance of a newly emerged, partially autonomous structures with its own body of contingent laws, and thus of reducing some local cultural and historical phenomena to evolutionarily shaped mechanisms, sometimes reinforcing possible cultural stereotypes and prejudices. As Hogan rightly concludes, it is disputable, to say the least, that evolutionary psychology can successfully prove that the act of rape has had an evolutionary advantage, or that men are naturally promiscuous, both of the claims being a cliché in evolutionary psychology (Hogan 2003, 200–201). What the claims do indicate is a negligent attitude toward the emergent structures of society and culture and a belief that a higher-level discipline has already been entirely explained in terms of the lower level. To put it differently, it implies redundancy of the higher disciplinary levels.

Earlier, I indicated that lower-level laws remain valid upward in the disciplinary hierarchy. It remains to be added that the overall structure of the disciplinary hierarchy is not entirely a matter of bottom-up formation, but it might be said that the higher levels make their own use of the structures formed on lower levels. This does not imply literal interrelation, as the higher levels do not alter the lower-level structures, but it does mean that, overall, structures tend to be projected downwards, that is, a higher-level structure organizes elements on lower levels on its own terms. For instance, psychological laws operate on the social level and put broad constraints on its organization. On the other hand, patterns that emerge on the social level “themselves place minds in certain social relations” (Hogan 2003, 203). The same goes for other levels: anatomy of the neural system does not fix psychological structure, but neuroanatomical laws do put limits on it. Also, patterns that appear on the psychological level “define certain structural relations in neuroanatomy” (Hogan 2003, 203).

It is also important to stress that the above does not apply only to strictly scientific disciplines, nor does it apply to contiguous structures. Hogan illustrates this using two examples: music and transportation. We hear certain sequences of sounds as having certain relations to each other (as with quantized pitch intervals), tonal centers, we cluster sounds together into sequences, themes, variations, etc., owing to certain psychological processes which project the structure downward through neurobiology to physics of sound. Similarly, transportation systems are integrated at the social level and, regardless of the fact that “they are physically diverse and spatially dispersed” (Hogan 2003, 202), they project down to the physical level “taking diverse bits of matter spread discontinuously across different regions and making them into a single structure” (Hogan 2003, 203). Michael Gazzaniga, a prolific neuroscientist, made a similar point about the relative unpredictability of emergent complex systems:

A complex system is composed of many different systems that interact and produce emergent properties that are greater than the sum of their parts and cannot be reduced to the properties of the constituent parts. The classic example that is easily understandable is traffic. If you look at car parts, you won't be able to predict a traffic pattern. You cannot predict it by looking at the next higher state of organization, the car, either. It is from the interaction of all the cars, their drivers, society and its laws, weather, roads, random animals, time, space, and who knows what else that traffic emerges.

(Gazzaniga 2011, 71)

Recently, Reuven Tsur, a leading cognitive poetician, vehemently opposed the tendency which he sees as reductionist in literary studies, that is, ignoring the emergent higher levels and seeking answers to questions about art directly in neuroscience (Tsur 2012, 429–446). Tsur's points are compatible with Hogan's discussion, as he also invokes the bottom-up unpredictability and refers to Michael Polányi's idea of tacit knowledge (Polányi 1967), which implies that there is always a tacit, un verbalized dimension to any knowledge, partly corresponding with the idea that a given claim or law is always already underpinned by some tacit assumptions taken from a lower-level discipline, as well as to “the principle of marginal control” which, roughly, states that lower-level laws always leave a substantial portion of upper-level indeterminate and it is precisely where new, emergent laws apply. In his words:

You can see, for example, how, in the hierarchy constituting speech making, successive working principles control the boundary left indeterminate on the next lower level. Voice production, which is the lowest level of speech, leaves largely open the combination of sounds

into words, which is controlled by a vocabulary. Next, a vocabulary leaves largely open the combination of words into sentences, which is controlled by grammar. And so it goes. Moreover, each lower level imposes restrictions on the one above it, even as the laws of inanimate nature restrict the practicability of conceivable machines; and again, we may observe that a higher operation may fail when the next lower operation escapes from its control.

(Polányi 1967, 40–41)

The last point is particularly important as it indicates the risk of failure of an explanation that ignores the hierarchical dependence of disciplines. The question of what constitutes such a failure is not trivial, and should be clarified as criteria for such a failure might be slightly different for natural sciences and for the humanities.

For one thing, the overall natural-scientific criterion is pragmatic: excessively reductionist accounts will yield certain propositions, solutions to problems and theories increasingly unable to meet expectations; observed phenomena will become more and more unpredictable, etc. Things surely get trickier starting with psychology, social sciences and the humanities, as it is evidently less clear-cut what constitutes the pragmatic test there, though I believe similar general rules apply for psychology and social sciences. Moreover, we do not really test individual hypotheses but larger chunks, or the whole of our knowledge which we expect to be coherent and consistent with other, related types of knowledge.

There are at least three broad reasons why the positivist thesis in the humanities should not be accepted and that the model of emergence should be used instead, all of which are related to some form of pragmatic success. First, one might refer to varieties of scientific realism which state that entities that science posits really exist, and that science's chief role is explanation rather than mere prediction, as in standard positivist claims. Needless to say, the predictive power of a theory that ignores these entities and marginalizes explanation in favor of positivist reductionism could be weaker. Second, objects might be explained on various levels of description depending on current goals. There is no need for me to think about a chair always in terms of energy and force. I might describe it in terms of the history of art, anthropology, cultural studies, etc., where simple physical properties are not all there is. In other words, a given object can be said to exist on multiple levels simultaneously, but there is no reason to believe that its stipulated "nature" is entirely covered by physics. Third, the objects and the laws that we posit should be somehow consistent with our experience. Therefore, there is no reason to eliminate mental states in favor of neuronal activity, or replace an object such as a chair in favor of a swarm of atoms, for it would be grossly impractical with regard to our everyday experience and the

constitution of our minds and organisms. I will leave the notion of pragmatism and humanities aside and return to it after outlining my vision of the application of the hierarchy to literary studies.

Special Sciences and Literary Studies

My argument throughout the whole book has been to demonstrate how the three broad approaches to literary studies (cognitive literary studies, analytic philosophy of literature and textualist literary theory) constitute the type of disciplinary hierarchy, forming partially autonomous structures with emergent sets of properties. Specifically, to prove my point, I focused on two issues located, as I see it, around both ends of the spectrum of problems covered by philosophical reflection on literature. The first of the issues, or focal points, was the possible contiguity of the analytic notion of “work” and some construals of the notion of the “text,” as used in literary and cultural studies. The other issue was the status of the procedures and concepts involved in understanding and appreciation of literature, including the notion of literature itself. In both cases, I am convinced that there exists a continuity of the type discussed above. However, several further issues need to be clarified.

First, the three disciplines that I discuss do not form a simple relation such as that between physics, chemistry and biology. The type of relation for which I argue here is but a tiny fraction in the complexity of external relations that the three research areas display. For instance, literary studies are linked to many other disciplines, such as history and sociology. Patrick Hogan suggested that literary studies can also, reciprocally, influence some areas of cognitive and affective research, pointing to a possibility of a top-down reflexive causality, perhaps (Hogan 2011). In other words, there can be many other configurations of the disciplines I discuss, but the other models that could be proposed would touch upon different problems, and would not have any significant bearing on my thesis.

Second, one should always keep in mind the internal subdivisions, or layers, of each respective discipline, as some of their components are obviously more relevant than others. Neurobiology has little direct connection to literary studies, clearly less than, say, cognitive linguistics. The sensuality of the aesthetic experience has little to do with “cultural texts,” clearly less than, say, definitions of artworks. Each discipline consists of a spectrum of issues, or layers, which tend to have varied “connection strength” to other, external disciplines. A discipline as vast and heterogeneous as cognitive science can inform literary research on many levels. As I argued, neurobiology can illuminate some aspects of value. Representationalism can show how various sensory experiences intertwine with memory and cognition. Connectionist accounts, cognitive linguistics, along with Turner’s idea of the “literary mind,” demonstrate

how figurative and emotionally saturated language produces literary experience and engages our cognitive-emotive architecture. Apart from that, cognitive science can tell us something about instinctive responses (it is, thus, a useful tool in empirical studies of literary response) and tendencies of the human mind, as well as intersection of the literary and the ordinary, bridging humanities with other disciplines. Correspondingly, every level (in cognitive approaches, that would only be some layers) also necessarily uses some philosophical assumptions about art/literature.

Another important point about the structure of the levels discussed regards the observers and the materials studied. In cognitive science, the object is, roughly, the mind and cognitive processes with the scientist as the observer. In aesthetics, the object stretches from common aesthetic experiences and responses to art to the actions of art critics, and it partly covers the experiential as well as the formal and historical aspect of art. The observer is the philosopher of art, and the discipline's focus is producing an account of certain types of human activity. It is again different with literary theory, for here there is only an observer (the scholar, the "theoretician") and the cultural text that they study. There is little or no focus on particular human actions, as the discipline is strictly academic and tends to study large-scale cultural processes.

I have already mentioned multiple links between cognitive science and aesthetics, including how the former informs and constrains the latter. To add to or to clarify my claims, I should like to say that, in accord with my account of emergence and the principle of minimal control, cognitive science links with art through the experiential rather than through the study of some hypothetical pure artistic form. In fact, following Budd, Damasio and others, I suppose that discussions of art that ignore the experiential and art's anthropocentric quality are misleading. The constraints that cognitive science places on aesthetics are not about the possibilities of some form being considered art (we know at least since the advent of conceptual art that this is impossible), but rather on the natural tendencies of the mind that shape our responses to art. How we come to value and understand art is constrained by our cognitive-emotive architecture. This also illuminates some aspects of the beginnings of art, for example, the fact that early art has a tendency toward the sensual, toward imitation, rather than toward, say, the conceptual, as well as shedding light on the popularity of certain forms and themes in mass art. Accordingly, there is little chance that arbitrarily set, normative reading strategies, interpretations or value criteria (including highly local and idiosyncratic ones), as envisaged in the analogy of literature as chess, could ever achieve widespread acclaim.²

The transition from the everyday, sensual, symbolic and figurative to full-blown contemporary aesthetics marks also an emergence of a new structure. As I argued, what counts as valuable, or canonical, is not fully explicable in naturalistic or psychological language. Structured artworks

are not natural objects. Similarly, psychological language cannot explain why *Campbell's Soup Can* is seen as more valuable than realist landscape paintings sold in the streets. Predictably, cognitive science leaves large portions of aesthetics unexplained and indeterminate, and these places are, in turn, covered by new patterns that emerge at the new level.

Similarly, the level of aesthetics provides the necessary foundations for the type of research carried out by literary theories. As I argued in Chapter 2, if textualist research is to produce reliable results, it must rely on proper identification of the artifacts studied. This implies, in terms of literary theory, that the object is recognized as a literary work, which already entails several assumptions about its aesthetic nature. One mistaken assumption of textualist literary theorists is that meaning is arbitrary and entirely autonomous from any anthropocentric qualities, as well as from evaluative practice. On my account, research in aesthetics and cognitive science shows this is not true, since it seems that artistic meaning is tightly interrelated with value and biological human nature. This does not mean that the patterns that emerge at the level of cultural text are fully accountable by the lower level. Our knowledge of an artwork, or of an oeuvre, cannot predict the overarching cultural phenomena that a textualist scholar explores. Aesthetics, along with its adjunct disciplines such as history of art, is not enough to understand the complexity of Jansenism and how it shaped Racine. Similarly, aesthetics cannot explain why nineteenth-century female writers struggled with the images of an angel and a monster. Value is perhaps not central to the literary theorist, but understanding and appreciation must be part of some lower layer of textualist research as, just as in aesthetics, philosophers of art do not strive for appreciation (as critics do), but they do acknowledge its importance for understanding art.

Finally, it is doubtful whether in the actual practice of reading/analysis, the three levels are consciously distinguished or temporally separated. Peter Lamarque's remarks about Marxist and feminist criticism, which I quoted in Chapter 2, indicate that no strict boundary between the aesthetic and the textualist level can be delimited. In other words, the model that I outline is chiefly about logical dependence and I do openly acknowledge that the levels I posit are internally heterogeneous and fuzzy at the edges.

So, to sum up, what is the point of following the model I propose? After all, people systematically depart from the model I embrace and apply all sorts of reading strategies toward literary works. What I am interested in, however, is laying down some conditions for producing reliable knowledge in literary, and narrowly, textualist studies, and my argument has been to demonstrate how such a production is possible. It is an entirely different matter how we instrumentally approach artworks. But there is another thing: I believe knowledge is holistic and coherent. How we understand and appreciate literary works is, on some

basic level, not much different from how we understand other artifacts. Departing from such a practice in favor of normative and highly arbitrary reading strategies seems unnecessary.

Psycho-Historical Framework for Art Appreciation

My vision of levels of explanation in literary studies and of literary ontology is obviously not without any precedents and is indebted to the work of numerous scholars that inspired it in various respects. In what follows, I would like to review and compare most important related ideas of orders of explanation and ontologies that arose in literary studies, aesthetics or cognitive science.

Starting with perhaps the most general scope of inspiration, the notion of a multilayered literary ontology where all the strata exist simultaneously with lower-level layers providing a delimiting framework for the emergence of partly unpredictable higher-order ontological level can clearly be seen as an idea of Ingardenian flavor. However, apart from the structural similarity between both models, they largely differ in scope and in terms of philosophical commitments, an issue which I discussed in Chapter 2.

Clearly, a much more direct methodological inspiration comes from the work of Patrick C. Hogan, to whose explorations in philosophy of science covering orders of explanation, emergence and disciplinary hierarchy I am entirely committed. Hogan is particularly wary of evolutionary reductionism in explaining literature and attacked hasty jumping to general conclusions about the nature of literature on the side of evolutionary psychologists who debate putative adaptive and non-adaptive functions of literature in general or see it as a space of simulation where we can test strategies for survival and reproduction. Instead, Hogan claims cognitive and evolutionary explorations should focus on very specific components of aesthetic experience that underlies the working of literature and strive toward more meticulous definitions of art and literature, as opposed to intuitive notions about them that evolutionary psychologists often hold (Hogan 2003, 192–217). Even though Hogan's investigation of arts is sensitive to cognitive-emotional, art-historical and cultural-ideological factors, I found his work lacking in specific account of the relation between those components. My tracing of interdisciplinary breaks and continuities between those areas might thus be seen as clarification and exposition of the spirit of his oeuvre.

Similar proviso was voiced by Reuven Tsur who condemned the reductive tendencies in brain science, calling them *neurological fallacy*. Tsur acknowledges that just like mind is an emergent process and cannot be predicted by brain structures, human experience of literature cannot be comprehensively accounted for by purely neurological research such as brain scans. Perhaps we can learn which regions of the brain

are activated when reading *Crime and Punishment* or sensually stimulating vocabulary in Baudelaire's poetry but it will never give us a better understanding of the relation between our empathy and Dostoyevsky's novels or why we should even bother to read Baudelaire instead of lists of words that activate brain areas associated with sensations (Tsur 2012, 429–446). Just like Hogan, Tsur claims there are particular areas of research where neuroscience could be beneficial, but it is counterproductive to explain a complex conventionalized and art-historical artifact such as a literary work entirely in language of neuroscience.

When it comes to outlining a model of the aesthetic that includes both the art-historical and cognitive-emotive components, the above examples only point toward the necessity of formulating it and warn against ignoring the levels of explanation in science, but do not offer any conclusive outline of both components. Perhaps the most comprehensive account of this relation, and the closest to the one proposed here, was recently proposed by Bulloet and Reber, who dubbed their model a “psycho-historical framework for the science of art appreciation” (Bulloet and Reber 2013, 123–137). The authors aim precisely at filling the blank that stretches between the psychological and the historical inquiries into art appreciation, stressing that both are “equally relevant” (Bulloet and Reber 2013, 124). They developed separately and lack “a common core of theoretical principles” (Bulloet and Reber 2013, 124). Both authors acknowledge some flaws in a purely psychological approach to art appreciation and attempt at integrating it with the historical (by which they mean appealing to appreciators' sensitivity to historical contexts and their evolution as used to explain art appreciation) in their framework. Their stance, which I applaud, is that art-historical contexts of artworks' creation leave traces of crucial causal information, such as “historical events, artists' actions and mental processes” (Bulloet and Reber 2013, 123) within each artwork and whose extraction, and thus proper appreciation, requires a more competent level of appreciation than the type of mere exposure that psychological approaches sometimes tend to espouse. The psychological approach investigates the mental and neural processes that take part both in production and appreciation of artworks, though as they stress, it often falls victim to a reductive approach where art simply obeys the laws of the brain and that appreciation and aesthetic preferences are directly caused by deep neurobiological laws. In contrast, the contextualist-historical approach acknowledges that certain historical and social contingencies play a crucial role in the circulation of art. In other words, and again in tune with my discussion throughout this book, a work of art comes into being as a result of actions of certain human agents, including, artists, critics, readers, audience, curators embedded in certain historical contexts and institutions rendering certain events unrepeatable and objects irreplaceable. Moreover, as Bulloet and Reber correctly observe, work of art is an artifact, meaning an object

or a performance brought to life through human action and intentions and its cognition is not significantly different from other artifacts where intended, historical functions are taken into consideration along with a distinction into proper and accidental functions. It seems only natural that people try to understand man-made objects partly by recourse to their contexts of creation and putative intended functions and it is also a premise that underlies appreciation of artworks. This, in turn, implies that proper appreciation of art requires contextual knowledge pertaining to these historical and institutional contexts and is not measurable purely in terms of instinctive, hard-wired responses.

The first, elementary level of art appreciation outlined by Bulot and Reber is basic exposure which refers to sets of mental processes involved in the experience of artwork without art-historical knowledge. This stage involves perceptual representation and attentional tracking of observable features, syntactic and semantic processing of symbols and narrative structures, implicit learning of regularities and probabilistic anticipation, as well as automatic elicitation of emotions, pretense and mindreading (Bulot and Reber 2013, 128). The second stage of appreciation is the design stance, where appreciators begin to look at an artwork as an artifact, reasoning about its causal history, functions and agents that brought it into existence and processing abductive inferences concerning art-historical and causal information carried by artworks. Mindreading activities are further constrained by historical contexts and may involve apprehending the artist's perspective on the artwork, its intended effects on the audience or particular problems the creator wished to solve (Bulot and Reber 2013, 130). Finally, knowledge gained during the design stance may lead appreciators to the level of artistic understanding where they are able to competently identify and evaluate an artwork, much like in Malcolm Budd's earlier discussed vision of experientially accessed intrinsic value of art. At this stage, appreciators are able to classify works, identify styles or apply art theory-based reasoning to produce cognitively rich interpretations equivalent to abductive inferences to the best explanation

Both my model and their psycho-historical framework states that it is necessary to bring together the psychological and the historical. First, my discussion was perhaps more focused on the institutional rather than purely art-historical context of appreciation, but this is partly a terminological decision, though on the other hand, I believe the institution is a broader concept that includes references to art-historical contexts. Second, I take it that their first stage of appreciation, the basic exposure and the psychological frameworks used to study it, is largely equivalent to my first disciplinary level concerned with the workings of human cognitive-affective architecture discussed in Chapter 3. Bulot and Reber, however, think primarily of responses to visual arts, whereas my discussion was limited to verbal art where some of their observations

need to be altered. For instance, if a literary work is read quietly, tracking observable features would probably blend in with semantic-syntactic processing, though it should involve various degrees of primed affective responses to sound qualities and devices. This might be reinforced when a work is recited, depending on the quality of the performance. Simulation of verbal representations included in a work is obviously both central to the experience of literature and very limited in the experience of other arts, but it clearly must appear at the stage of basic exposure. Moreover, Bullot and Reber stress the utility of various strains of psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience and empirical studies to the investigation of this level of appreciation, which is entirely in tune with my discussion, though I emphasize that these disciplines underpin further, more specialized approaches which are particularly valuable for literary studies, such as cognitive poetics and narratology. Third, my competent level of art experience is something that stretches over both Bullot's and Reber's artistic understanding and design stance. Though we appear to be in concord regarding the nature of informed appreciation, the differences here lie chiefly in decisions of taste that concern the necessity of conflating or separating the actions that trigger artistic understanding as a distinct stage. I guess that one can further subdivide the stages of appreciation *ad infinitum*, depending on one's particular purposes. and it suffices to say that for the purposes of my discussion there was no need to distinguish "design stance" as a significantly distinct transitory stage. Even though it clearly leads to artistic understanding in the long run, it seems to be a fuzzy link between exposure and understanding underpinned by our natural processing involved in artifact cognition, but refined and enriched by institutionally determined knowledge and the proper ways of acquiring it.

There are, however, more substantial differences. Bullot and Reber tend to see the stages of appreciation as largely temporal and I see them as abstract models of causal-logical dependencies since, in reality, natural exposure will be temporally indistinguishable from artistic understanding and the natural responses will be always already infused with various degrees of cultural and art-historical competence. In practice, causality might be more complex with various types of loops and feedback operating simultaneously: substantial competence in responding to art might shape basic exposure immediately drawing readers' attention to things they would perhaps not notice before. Moreover, throughout my book, I have tended to use the term "appreciation" in reference only to those informed responses to art, and indeed, basic exposure responses are a premise of competent appreciation. However, contrary to Bullot and Reber, I would not call a responder to an artwork who is not involved in design stance and artistic understanding an appreciator. This is not mere word choice difference, but important conceptual distinction which, in my case, emphasizes that not any response to art might

be reasonably called appreciation. Finally, and most importantly, Bullot and Reber stop their discussion at the level of artistic understanding, or in terms of my model, on the artistic level of experience, and are not interested in exploring another level of understanding and explanation of art, the one that is underlain by artistic understanding but which goes beyond it to the dimension of cultural texts that make up the highest stage in the model outlined here.

Surface and Deep Interpretation

The relationship between the type of interpretation involved in competent appreciation of art, as studied by analytic philosophy and art, and the one more associated with continental philosophy involving psychoanalysis, Marxism, Feminism, semiotics, etc. widely pursued in humanities departments outside of analytic aesthetics was famously explored by Arthur Danto, one of the key figures of twentieth-century American aesthetics. Danto made a number of claims with which I agree and which are in accord with my model, but remained ultimately hostile toward the latter type of interpretation. In what follows, I wish to revisit his argument.

Central to Danto's discussion of the matter is the belief that interpretation is constitutive of artworks' ontology. It is by means of informed response to art, the one that acknowledges art-historical context of its creation and is bound by artist's intentions, that a work of art is actually brought to life as art. This historical and intentional identification is what Danto calls "surface interpretation." But there is another type of interpretation, which plunges below the level of the first one and attempts to disclose a type of meaning that is not possible to realize at the surface level, that is, it is not easily confirmable by the artist or even attributable to them. Danto calls this "deep interpretation" and equates it with the types of readings that emerge from some pre-established framework imposed on the earlier construed artwork: the frameworks he mentions are those that developed out of continental thought and chiefly from literary theory. The type of relationship dependency here might be outlined as follows: surface interpretation is necessary for artworks to emerge, but it is also prerequisite for deep interpretation giving us "the interpretanda for deep interpretation, the interpretaria for which are to be sought in the depths" (Danto 1986, 52). In other words, deep interpretation thrives on surface interpretation as it "supposes surface interpretation to have done its work so that we know what has been done and why" (Danto 1986, 66). But the whole of Danto's argument is to restate the centrality of surface interpretation, the activity which his philosophical school is preoccupied with, and to dismiss deep interpretation. If surface interpretation is central, static, historically-anchored and essential to understanding art, deep interpretation is endless, redundant,

playful, dependent on the creativity of an interpreter and unilluminating when it comes to art as art.

I definitely agree that surface interpretation, which I believe is roughly equivalent to Bullot's and Reber's design stance/artistic understanding and my aesthetic/artistic level of literary ontology/experience, is central to the ontology of art and it is only with the emergence of this level of response that we can reasonably talk about art as art. Moreover, I agree that there is a relation of dependency between surface and deep interpretations precisely of the nature Danto outlined. In fact, Danto's belief about the existence of such dependency contrasts with the opinions of many literary theorists who outright deny any kind of underlying aesthetic component to textualist deep interpretations, or to Lamarque's or Livingston's treatment of Barthes and Foucault which I investigated in Chapter 2, both of which were convinced about the insurmountable paradigmatic differences and did not pursue a thesis concerning different ontological levels being addressed by analytic philosophy and textualism respectfully.

There are however certain points on which I strongly disagree with Danto and whose alteration would actually have brought his argument much closer to my own. First, Danto's identification of surface interpretation with a single authorial intention seems to be rather strict, and to be honest, quite radical when compared to most contemporary stances on intentionalism within analytic aesthetics. To restate my point, though intentionalism's centrality to understanding art is undisputed, it comes in many flavors, most of which seem to be far milder and digestible than Danto's. Danto's stance is akin to radical or extreme actual intentionalism, where all the meanings of an artwork are set by the author and are thus fully determinable, the one labeled "intentional fallacy" and rightly banished from literary studies. Both literary theory and analytic aesthetics managed to produce more nuanced and more adequate accounts of the role of intentions in interpretation, all of which acknowledge both the centrality of surface interpretation to art existence and experience, and consequently, some degree of anchoring of its meanings onto artist's intentions. One might mention here Jerrold Levinson's hypothetical intentionalism (Levinson 1996), where informed audience is only required to make informed probable guesses about the work's meanings, but they are not reduced to one single interpretation. Modest or moderate actual intentionalism (Carroll 2000; Iseminger 1996; Livingston 1996; Stecker 2006; Swirski 2010) holds that artist's intention are relevant to appreciation and meaning but the latter is not necessarily exhausted by them. Perhaps an even more liberal theory (Davies 2006; Goldman 1990) holds that interpretations should be value maximizing where they strive to present the work in the most favorable light. I believe that for the sake of my discussion it is not necessary to declare myself being strongly committed to modest actual intentionalism, hypothetical

intentionalism or value-maximizing theory of interpretation. It suffices to say that I am against extreme actual intentionalism and that all other theories are not in conflict with Danto's outline of the aims and character of surface interpretation.

The other of Danto's points with which I do not agree is his dismissal of deep interpretation. Danto is rather hasty in denigrating what I call textualist approach to artworks, by claiming they are unnecessary for understanding art as art. This is true and perhaps we should not blame Danto for refusing to be involved in matters that go beyond philosophy of art, but if we reject Danto's intentional fallacy and accept that at least some meanings and value of an artwork might not come from the artist's conscious intentions, then a more careful look into the nature of the relation between the two types of interpretation is necessary.

Brand and Brand offer one interesting discussion of Danto's claims. First, they reconstruct and reject a strong dependency thesis between deep and surface interpretations, which apparently is the one Danto tried to defend but admitted to not having any serious arguments in favor of it, and which holds that "a deep interpretation of a work of art is correct only if the deep interpretation of the work is consistent with the surface interpretation and the deep interpretation is based on the artist's theoretical or conceptual framework" (Brand and Brand 2012, 76). Then, they proceed to investigate a weaker dependency thesis which says that "deep interpretation of a work of art is correct only if the deep interpretation of the work is consistent with the surface interpretation" (Brand and Brand 2012, 76) which they take as more promising. For instance, they claim, we know that Shakespeare had no access to Freudian theory and did not use it as a theoretical framework for his works, but this does not mean that on principle we must reject this framework in analyzing the work, as it might be consistent with the content of the work or even with the artist's own beliefs, yet verbalized differently. To look into this matter, and interestingly enough, Brand and Brand explore Danto's own texts on art criticism that offer an insight into the very practice he speculates about in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. One example they cite is Danto's assessment of the paintings of Anselm Kiefer, whose work sparked considerable controversy. Kiefer himself claims to be exploring themes of life and death, holocaust, nature of art and Nazi horrors of Germany, saying with reference to some of his works that he "attempts to become a fascist" (Brand and Brand 2012, 77) so as to reenact what Nazis did "in order to understand the madness" (Brand and Brand 2012, 76). In contrast, Danto believes that Kiefer's work deludes his audience with a message of German nationalism offering neither remorse, nor shame, calling it "farce of heavy symbolism" and a "visual lament for a shattered Vaterland" (Brand and Brand 2012, 76) that is "jejune and dishonest" (Brand and Brand 2012, 76). Quoting other similar examples, authors come to a conclusion that in

reality Danto often rejected author's intentions delving into deep interpretations. If that is true, the consequence, they claim, is that there is no dependency between surface and deep interpretations, of which the former they restate as accurate, best accounts of "artist's intentions in creating the work" (Brand and Brand 2012, 81) and the latter as "readings of the work within a theoretical or conceptual framework" whose reference to authorial intentions is at best secondary "if they refer to them at all" (Brand and Brand 2012, 81). Finally, they claim accurate surface interpretations may contradict correct deep interpretations, but this does not challenge either of the explanation types. It is just the case that criteria for deep interpretation correctness, of which they quote "internal consistency, grounding in a conceptual framework and others" (Brand and Brand 2012, 81), are independent of statements about artist's intentions.

There are key differences between my stance and Brands' development of Danto's thesis. I do agree that there cannot be any dependency between surface and deep interpretations understood in the above sense. But I believe a version of weak-dependency thesis is attainable after some revisions of their definitions. As pointed out earlier, surface interpretations need not be equivalent to artist's intentions, though they should take them into consideration while evaluating artworks. Note my references to value-maximizing theories or modest intentionalism. On this account, Danto's going against artistic intentions is not an example of deep interpretation, but a reminder that interpretations are institutionally established. They are formed, accepted or rejected by a community of critics and other competent consumers. After all, authorial intentions might fail or be outright lies, as Danto's own critical practice suggests, but the examples quoted by Brand and Brand do not go deep beyond basic constitution of an artwork. They chiefly rely on assessing author's intentions (negatively) in their art-historical contexts, and do not make use of any Theoretical frameworks for deeper explorations of art. But if this is the case, then a weak-dependency thesis holds, though only when surface interpretation is not reduced to actual authorial intentions.

The fact that all interpretations of art, not only those of the surface kind, are institutionally determined has some significant bearing on the surface-deep issue. For one thing, it implies that critics have some degree of creative liberty even at the surface level, and that both interpretation types exist on a continuum, as setting clear boundaries between the two might not always be easy. Danto held that there is no limit to deep interpretations, but if a weak-dependency thesis holds, then surface interpretations must have some constraining power over deep interpretations. We might not realize it from Danto's account of the matter, however, who trivializes deep interpretation as exploring "Leonardo's kinky unconscious, his economic locus, and [...] the semiotics of embellishment in Florentine culture" (Danto 1986, 66). Psychoanalytic and

Marxist criticism are multifaceted practices that might cover many types of relations, they indeed might explore author's unconscious or his/her underlying economic interests, though they might also explore just the representational tissue of an artwork, or its relation to other works of a particular culture and times, or its relation to contemporary readers and their responses to art. To claim that deep interpretation investigates a literary work to diagnose an author and her motivations is precisely to confuse the work of art with some putative causes that brought it to existence. This is a vulgarized vision of textualist interpretations. Semiotics of embellishment in Florentine culture might, in spite of Danto's quick dismissal, in fact contribute to the appreciation of Florentine art or might merely be part of background research one conducts in order to understand art. Danto gets bogged down in his false vision, concluding that critics who offer deep interpretations are just showing off their creativity by seeing in endless meanings in a play of critical invention, "the deep play of departments of literature and hermeneutics" (Danto 1986, 67).

To restate my point, I believe that surface interpretation need not be radically tied to author's intentions and that it is institutionally determined. Its ultimate point is explaining and evaluating an artifact or a performance as an artwork. Surface interpretation does not necessarily need deep interpretations, though at times and in critical practice it might not be easy to distinguish between the two. Almost anything might be a candidate for a deep interpretation, but accurate, convincing deep interpretations rely on surface interpretations, that is on the recognition of art-historical contexts, range of possible intended meanings (regardless whether failed or successful), the recognition of the form and content, awareness of thematic orientation, etc. They should also be coherent, complete and unified, reliably use a given theoretical framework and draw abductive inferences about the work. This means that criteria for accurate, compelling deep interpretations are to a large extent similar to those of surface interpretations. Apart from that, deep interpretations use specific theoretical frameworks and are more sensitive to tacit ideological or psychological content, which perhaps makes them more illuminating when exploring larger bodies of works.

Deep interpretations belong to the textualist ontological level which is partly autonomous from the artistic one, but still partly constrained by it. I do not think we might easily delimit or foresee what theoretical frameworks are apt for textualist analysis and which are not. They are all subject to general criteria for accurate interpretations. Consequently, the question of deep interpretations' admissibility ceases to be philosophical and becomes a technical one. To illustrate one fairly obvious way in which this artistic constraint operates, some works will be more inviting toward specific theoretical frameworks and others not. Trying to formulate a structuralist analysis of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and*

Loathing in Las Vegas might be a rather futile preoccupation, though in Danto's vision it should not be, as the only limit is the critic's own creativity when gazing at a meaningless spot of paint. Marxist analysis of the contents of Kerouac's *On the Road* is surely possible, but is also hopelessly predictable and trivial, unveiling the economic consciousness and bohemian ideology of a group of New York college hipsters. In other words, tacit class-related behaviors are surely there and it is important to be sensitive to them, just as with any other ideological or psychological latent content, and they might be rather quickly pointed out, but they are not prominent enough to be a basis for a comprehensive deep interpretation, as its formulation would unavoidably ignore large sections of the work. The same might be said about, say, Freudian reading of Gibson's *Neuromancer* or a feminist reading of *Neverending Story*. Anytime a given work contains a representation of social life or gender roles it invites Marxist or feminist approaches. But this does not mean that the representational content will be sufficient to fuel a complete and compelling deep interpretation. There is a reason why *Hamlet* or *Oedipus Rex* easily yield to psychoanalytic deep interpretations, whereas *Piers Plowman* probably does not and it has to do with proper surface interpretations of these works.

To further illustrate my point about the relation between the two types of interpretation and the technical nature of the question of accepting deep interpretations, take Slavoj Žižek, a prolific representative of Marxist-psychoanalytic theories. Žižek is notorious for using apparently random bits of various cinematic and literary works as illustrations of his ideas concerning late capitalist manipulation of desire. However, it cannot be said on principle that all his readings are wrong or correct as each of them requires a separate treatment in terms of assessing the surface-deep levels attunement. Consider three cases of Žižek's textualism.

In the first case, Žižek scrutinizes *The Fountainhead*, a best-selling novel by Ayn Rand, an author who promoted a rather ruthless philosophy of so-called rational egoism and turbo-capitalism. The story explores the life of Howard Roark, a radically non-conformist architect, whose belief in his own design vision paired with rejection of both social norms and popular demands led him to being fired first from school and later from work, after which he starts an unsuccessful company and finally gets a menial job in a quarry though none of this has any influence on his unswayed will. Other important characters in the story are Ellsworth Toohey, a socialist columnist who starts a smear campaign against Roark, Gail Wynand, a newspaper owner, who secretly admires Roark's work, Dominique Francon, a columnist who also admires Roark and is strongly attracted to (and at one point is raped by) him, but rejects his radical attitude as leading to misery, and Peter Keating, a popular, yet seemingly talentless architect. When Wynand

commissions constructions of a building, Toohey manipulates Roark into anonymously helping him with the design, to which Roark agrees, on the condition that nothing in his design is changed. Upon realizing that the construction contains alterations he blows the whole building up with dynamite. Condemned and arrested, Roark delivers a lengthy speech about powerful individuals carried by vision who move the world forward and mindless, tasteless masses who just follow the ride and is found not guilty. In the end, Wynand commissions another building, directly from Roark, who is now happily married to Dominique. The surface interpretation of the story would probably point to it being a rather straightforward and unreflective glorification of extreme, egoist individualism and wild, uncontrolled capitalism, though questions of failed intentions and unwitting self-parody definitely should be taken into consideration. Žižek elaborates on the psychological dynamics of the key characters using Lacanian theory. Roark, he claims, is the “being of pure drive” (Žižek 1998, 103) who follows relentlessly his inner impulses and who is in “no need of symbolic recognition” (Žižek 1998, 103), whereas others represent various ways of compromising one’s drive. Wynand is a “failed hero” (Žižek 1998, 102) who could have been a prime mover such as Roark, but ended up being manipulated by the masses. Keating is a “simple conformist” (Žižek 1998, 102) who is entirely externalized and oriented toward the symbolic, the Other’s gaze. Toohey is Roark’s true nemesis, a character who would never be able to be a prime mover and is perfectly aware of this. Paradoxically, Toohey, who delivers ardent speeches about the formative role of society and the need to contain Roark’s destructive rampant individualism is the “point of self-consciousness” (Žižek 1998, 103), he is the only one fully aware of himself and the overall state of affairs. Only he really knows who is who and what is going on. According to Žižek, Dominique is the most complex character, trapped in a dialectic of the Other’s desire. She is tormented by the fact that the Other, the masses, are profanely able to stare at the achievement of pure drive, Roark’s work, and thus blemish its sublime quality. For her “the greatest sacrilege is to throw pearls to swines” (Žižek 1998, 104) and in order to escape from the sacrilegious creation of a precious object and exposing it to the gaze of others, she attempts to destroy it and by treating herself as one of such objects, she seeks utter self-humiliation, marrying first the man she despises, trying to ruin Roark’s career or paving the way for him to brutally seduce her. Dominique at the same time admires Roark’s creative autonomy and wishes to destroy it, as only then could she finally direct his desire at her, “possess him” so as to constitute an ordinary couple. In the end, Žižek claims, the central conflict of Rand’s novel takes place not between prime movers and the masses, but between the prime movers themselves, the hypermasculinized being of pure drive and his hysterical sexual partner.

I believe the above is an example of an accurate deep interpretation. Žižek grounds it in a theoretical framework that makes it complete and coherent by explaining the meaning of the whole work and, at the same time, he is aware of and utilizes the surface meaning of Rand's novel and the intentions that pushed her to write it. His interpretation sheds new light on an earlier construed surface interpretation that unveils the general themes of the work, their developments, as well as character motivations, yet remains entirely congruent with it. It is the tissue of Rand's novel itself that invites and rewards Žižek's interpretation.

Consider two other short cases of Žižek's psychoanalytic explorations of fiction. On one occasion, Žižek claimed that in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the three floors of the Bates estate represent spaces that are dominated by behaviors that seem to belong to three respective levels of the mind in psychoanalytic theory, and particularly in its Lacanian version. The top floor is the perverse sphere of superego occupied by Bates' mother, the ground floor is the domain of his rational ego and the cellar is the dark cave of the unconscious (Fiennes 2006). Žižek was primarily interested in illustrating Lacan's theory and his remark is clearly too brief to be in itself a deep interpretation, but, taking into consideration the themes of *Psycho*, the relation between sexuality and violence and a twisted relationship between a son and his dead mother, Žižek's remark might serve as a promising foundation or a crucial element in a psychoanalytic deep interpretation of the whole work. On the other hand, when Žižek mentions that the three Marx brothers again represent the Lacanian rendition of the superego, ego and id triad (Fiennes 2006), this surely is neither a good deep interpretation nor has the potential to become one. It rather arbitrarily picks a motif from Marx brothers' oeuvre for purely illustrative purposes which otherwise would probably have to be considered wrong when serving as a basis for deep interpretation.

I suppose that the three above examples again indicate that the question of whether deep interpretations are good and acceptable remains technical and not a philosophical one. In the case of *The Fountainhead*, *Hamlet* or *Oedipus*, psychoanalysis or any other Theoretical framework is not necessary for appreciation that belongs to surface interpretations. But there is no need to reject these frameworks for deep interpretations on art-historical context grounds. Theories formed much after the days of the artists' creation might reflect, clarify or extend ideas expressed by an artist in a different conceptual apparatus, but this remains to be addressed case by case. Moreover, interpretation is an institutionally determined practice and we do not routinely or necessarily refer to actual author's intentions even on the surface level. On a deep, textualist level we assume that attention to a work might reveal its susceptibility to some Theoretical frameworks.

I should also stress again that my outline is an abstract model and the respective levels do not necessarily reflect linearly progressing actions

stretched over recognizably separate time units, but it should be thought of as a structure of logical dependencies or layers of perceptual input, processed data, assumptions, predictions, background knowledge, etc. In practice, interpretation might jump from exposure to tracing hypothetical deep patterns with the surface-level verification and art-historical context research as the final step. Moreover, we should not rule out the possibility of a feedback where deep interpretations also influence the surface-level assessment by enhancing semantic richness or a sense of ambiguity of the work, contributing to value judgments. Exposure will surely be affected too as gaining experience in forming surface/deep interpretations and one's personal store of art-historical knowledge will facilitate proper attention to the work, perception of patterns, tracing of references, etc. Finally, it should be kept in mind that surface and deep interpretations often remain difficult to distinguish not only temporally, but also in terms of their contents and in critic's own actions. This happens in particular when experiencing art that is contemporary to us: knowledge provided by art-historical context is less revealing as we have more direct and tacit access to it. Consequently, surface interpretations tend to be minimized to the point where we might not quite be aware of their operations. This is further reinforced by the fact that we do not obsessively consult authors' intentions when attending to a work. Since interpretations are formed institutionally, following a certain practice involved in attending to a work is typically enough for us to ignite surface and deep interpretations. Researching intentions and contexts is usually a secondary action.

It is true that textualist deep interpretations do not necessarily involve appreciation, but my point here was to argue in favor of a weak-dependency thesis that claims proper deep interpretations depend on prior surface construals of literary works, or rather, I rejected Brand's and Brand's rendition of Danto's thesis that claimed the opposite. But I do not deny that at times what seems to be a deep interpretation is in fact a creation incomplete in terms of its relation with the work and incongruent with surface interpretations. It makes the value of such quasi-interpretations questionable, apart from the possible value of being cherry-picked witty illustrations of some philosophical concepts. This is most often the case when the centrality of surface interpretation is ignored and an analysis of the work is reductive either to a psychological or textualist level. In the following section I wish to overview some famous cases of such reduction.

Naked Apes, Flocks of Seagulls, Procrustean Beds

In this section I am going to review several types of research which I believe ignore the multilevel nature of explanation regarding art/literature, and which adhere to some variants of reductionism, leading to

explanatory deficiencies. I will start with the type of naturalistic reductionism that sees literary studies as explainable in terms of evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, etc., and then move on to briefly review the textualist variant of reductionism.

One of the most vocal representatives of neopositivist reductionism in literary studies are perhaps the literary Darwinists. The movement, established with the publication of Joseph Carroll's *Evolution and Literary Theory* in 1995, has rapidly grown, publishing its own academic journals, producing numerous book-length works including both theoretical discussions and analyses of works, and drawing many fresh adherents of neo-Darwinism. The most important premise of the movement is that reliable knowledge in humanities should be consilient (reducible to) with knowledge produced in empirical sciences. The link between the two worlds is precisely evolutionary psychology, which is supposed to adequately explain the mechanisms that make up the human mind, as well as whatever the human mind produces, that is, the whole of culture. In other words, in this crude Darwinian paradigm, whatever exists in culture must be somehow explainable in terms of human adaptive or maladaptive relation with the environment. Needless to say, they reject all possibilities of the autonomy of the humanities. Whatever happens in art or whatever is about art should be directly explainable in terms of evolutionary psychology. Whatever is beyond that is meaningless babble.

In this neopositivist outlook, indeterminacy of claims must be a logical consequence of taking a textualist stance in literary and cultural studies. If one rejects the idea of the unity of knowledge where all of its branches are eventually reducible to empirical sciences, then one loses the only tool with which one can separate true knowledge from the unverifiable gibberish. Thus, without demarcation, all the produced "knowledge" must predictably fall into the category of the indeterminate. According to the Darwinists, every study of culture and its creation (including art and literature) must be entirely congruent with physicalist theories, through gradual reduction of the total body of knowledge that it produces to empirical claims, or else it cannot produce reliable knowledge. It is clear that Carroll's target is textualism itself, as the consequence of his assumptions is that indeterminacy is simply textualism's necessary, predictable conclusion. Of course, textualism, in the sense in which Carroll uses this term, is something much broader than any deliberations concerning the status of literary knowledge, and definitely something bigger than my idea of the cultural text. He seems to be suggesting that textualism is a form of linguistic idealism, in the sense of rejecting the possibility of accessing any empirical, non-linguistic reality, which again reminds of the neopositivist attacks on traditional metaphysics. If Carroll defines textualism as the claim that the study of human creations is fundamentally separate and autonomous from the hard, natural sciences, then it is hardly surprising to note that what he

really attacks is the Diltheyan distinction into *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*. Textualism, in this view, is merely a contemporary restatement of the nineteenth-century claim about the humanities being methodologically separate from the natural sciences. The point is that Carroll's idea of textualism could be perhaps attributed to some literary theorists, but it is far from being universal or the only construable one. Likewise, there is no reason to believe that undermining the nineteenth-century Diltheyan vision of science must immediately lead us toward positivist reductionism.

Carroll enumerates four key biological concepts of the positive aspect of the Darwinist program, which he contrasts with post-structuralist denaturalization of literature. The first of them is the centrality of "the relationship between the organism and its [biological] environment" (Carroll 1995, 2). The second is that some "innate psychological structures – perceptual, rational, affective – have evolved through an adaptive process of natural selection" (Carroll 1995, 2). Due to interactions with the natural environment, consequently, they "regulate the mental and emotional life of all living organisms" (Carroll 1995, 2). The third point is that all "human motives are regulated by the principles of inclusive fitness as 'ultimate cause'" (Carroll 1995, 3). The reproductive success which allowed the handing down of evolved mental traits also indicates that "reproductive success, in its twin aspects of sexual union and the production of offspring, is central to human concerns and thus to literary works" (Carroll 1995, 3). The last point is that literature, the "literary representation, is a form of 'cognitive mapping' [...] representation is an extension of the organism's adaptive orientation to an environment [...]" (Carroll 1995, 3). In other words, literature serves two purposes: it contains stories which eventually concern the central problems of human survival, prosperity and reproductive success, but those stories also have an adaptive function, as they are read to enhance our ability to understand and refer ourselves to the environment, thus potentially helping to increase our chances to survive and thrive.

The role of Darwinian literary criticism is twofold. On the one hand, it is supposed to illuminate the sometimes latent functioning of Darwinian motives in literature, and on the other hand, to demonstrate how they can serve the educational purpose, increasing our understanding of the mechanisms of survival and successful reproduction. Both the results of such analyses and the evolutionary assumptions concerning the adaptive value of literature have been criticized and mocked in the academia (Goodheart 2008; Holland 2009, 2010) and I am not going to investigate them at length, interesting as they may be. Instead, I will concentrate on their theoretical implications in an attempt to identify the problems with reductionism as such.

First of all, the view that evolutionary psychology constitutes not only the successful link between humanities and sciences, but also the only

link possible is, of course, highly controversial and naïve in light of what I said earlier in this chapter about varieties of physicalism and levels of explanation. Such a link would have to be based on an incontrovertible evidence of solving the mind-body problem, but it is doubtful that this can ever be attained.

The second problem concerns the reduction of the contents of literary narratives to basic strategies for survival and reproduction, as if literature was a medium for the virtual testing of survival-related hypotheses about modes of behavior for real-life situations. As some examples of the Darwinian analyses show, this entails treating works like Homer's *Illiad* as "a drama of naked apes strutting, preening, fighting, tattooing their chests and bellowing their power in fierce competition for social dominance, desirable mates and material resources" (Gottschall 2006) or treating Jane Austen's novels as a simulation of mating and spouse selection strategies (Boyd 1998; Carroll 2011). I do not claim that one cannot or should not look for Darwinian themes in literary works. What is problematic is the assumption that, somehow, this is the only valid research into arts.

Furthermore, the debate about the status of the contents of literary narratives does not exhaust the list of methodological problems that Darwinists face. One can hardly believe that Carroll and others embrace the naïve perception that literature is a set of relatively separate stories which are simply waiting, one by one, to be explained by the naturalist. The way we construe, understand and evaluate literary narratives hardly ever depends on identifying their merits defined as communication of important survival-related features, but rather, among other things, it is based on the narratives' mutual interrelatedness, their place in the literary tradition and history, their relation to the canon and to artistic conventions. Literary texts do not exist in a vacuum, but can only exist in terms of certain institutions, in terms of sets of certain practices. That is to say, it is highly problematic to treat literature as a natural object that of itself manifests certain properties, for they can only be understood and appreciated by a reader who is familiar with the rules that govern the practice. As Peter Lamarque has put it, "the existence of literary works depends on a set of conventions concerning how they are created, appreciated and evaluated; in other words, on attitudes, expectations, and responses found in authors and readers" (Lamarque 2009, 62). Clearly, these cannot be reduced to purely mental creations or evolutionarily established behaviors. Moreover, if there is a special role for literature in our lives, as the Darwinists suggest, this role must be due to the differences between the literary, artistic merits of narratives and the stories we normally include in everyday conversations, in newspapers, commercials, computer games, etc.

Consequently, what should really be significant for the long-term human survival, according to the Darwinist logic, is the artistic, rather

than purely thematic aspect of literature. To show this, one would have to demonstrate how the features that make up the artistic nature of literary institutions can be reduced to evolutionary psychology's total body of knowledge. This, however, seems to be impossible. One can, no doubt, attempt to correlate the hypothetical increase in the chances of survival and reproduction with some posited rates of artistic value inherent in specific literary works, but then one would have to formulate a separate theory of aesthetic values for literature. Darwinists not only fail to specify what they mean by the idea of artistic literariness, but even if they did, that kind of definition would be insufficient, due to literature's embeddedness in social institutions, and quite definitely non-evolutionary sets of material practices which shape how readers interpret and appreciate art. Any explanation of the evolutionary value of literature would have to go beyond the notion of artistic "literariness" (whatever it may be) and also encompass many purely institutional rather than formal or thematic facts and procedures concerning literature.

As Patrick Colm Hogan has observed, even the most basic concepts germane to literary studies, such as a writer's reputation, can in no way be accounted for on evolutionary grounds:

Consider, for example, something as central to literary study as reputation. It seems clear that, say, Shakespeare's reputation is the result of many factors. Some involve the possibility of making use of his work ideologically, as in the wartime cooptation of *Henry V*. Some involve the political economy of publication (e.g., the ownership of copyright—see Taylor). Some involve Shakespeare's incorporation into the English education system and the spread of that system via colonialism. Some involve network factors, such that Shakespeare connections reached a tipping point, while those for other writers did not. The list could be extended almost indefinitely. None of these explanatory systems is evolutionary.

(Hogan 2008, 202)

Hogan's argument is lucid and compelling, and the question he asks might easily be transposed to other issues. Would the Darwinists claim that Shakespeare's position is entirely due to his touching upon some questions important for our survival? Would Joyce's artistic merit lie solely in his skillful treatment of the issues concerning human reproduction? And how could that be measured or artistically vindicated when compared to treatment of such questions in popular fiction, romance or pornography? Art, just like literature, is clearly not reducible to evolutionary psychology.

A related type of reductionist approach to art can sometimes be found in the work of celebrated neuroscientists, such as V.S. Ramachandran. Ramachandran, holds that neuroscience offers the proper methodology

to study art, forming what is now fashionably called a neuroaesthetic approach. He believes that humans are hard-wired to respond, to take interest in certain forms, shapes, patterns, images, themes, etc. (all of which I entirely agree with), but, quite disappointingly, he claims that this is all there really is to art. In his own words:

Let me put it somewhat differently. Let's assume that 90 percent of the variance we see in art is driven by cultural diversity or—more cynically—by just the auctioneer's hammer, and only 10 percent by universal laws that are common to all brains. The culturally driven 90 percent is what most people already study—it's called art history. As a scientist, I am interested in the 10 percent that is universal. The advantage that I and other scientists have today is that unlike philosophers, we can now test our conjectures by directly studying the brain empirically.

(Ramachandran 2005, 170)

As I see it, the above claims amount to the following: the cultural layer of art is just a matter of random, arbitrary actions driven by fads and showing off. The underlying structure directly addresses the human cognitive architecture and can be studied empirically. Now, the first claim is surprising, to say the least, as Ramachandran tacitly suggests that the study of culture is not only strictly autonomous from natural sciences, but that it constitutes meaningless gibberish full of arbitrarily set fads, partisan agenda, etc. There is nothing to study there and neuroscience somehow cannot penetrate into culture in any way, which is, again, a repetition of the standard positivist fallacy. The second claim about the naturalistic dimension of art follows here immediately as Ramachandran seems to believe the only valid study of art is the empirical study of some instinctive response. The problem is that such responses are always already infused with cultural-specific content. Not to mention that appreciation of art is hardly a matter of instinctual, immediate responses.

Moreover, the positivist boasting that empirical sciences are the “true” sciences, whereas philosophers can only speculate inconclusively will not do, as every empirical study will need to address multiple philosophical questions about art. But Ramachandran remains in a state of blissful ignorance drawing analogies between the study of art and ethology. In his favorite example, it was demonstrated that seagull chicks are wired to peck at the red dot on their mother's beak, begging for half-digested food, which the mother keeps there. Experiments showed that chicks respond even more powerfully to a stick with larger dots painted on it, as it seems to activate their wiring more strongly, much like in Pinker's theory of “art as cheesecake.” Ramachandran concludes that with humans it is exactly the same story:

What I'm suggesting is that if those seagulls had an art gallery, they would hang the long stick with the three red stripes on the wall, worship it, pay millions of dollars for it, call it a Picasso, but not understand why.

(Ramachandran 2005, 176)

Ramachandran's theory includes laws of artistic experience which are supposed to explain evolutionarily where the sources of aesthetic appeal lie and provide a comprehensive framework for the development of higher-order principles of art's functioning. When Ramachandran comments on the peak shift principle which traces hyperstimuli to which we are instinctively attracted, or why isolation, grouping and contrasting of elements provided evolutionary advantage to our ancestors, he is entirely right, but not even in synergetic combination can these laws provide the ultimate explanation of why certain artworks are more appealing or valuable. It ignores the role of competence, background knowledge and art-historical tradition. The value of Duchamp would be as mysterious to Ramachandran as to Ingarden, were it not for his quick dismissal of contemporary art as merely duping of rich patrons. It is clear that one cannot generalize about the whole of art that its appeal lies in its hyperstimuli-like qualities, and thus it is false to claim that art functions like a caricature. John Hyman correctly notes that Ramachandran's theory is not really about art, as the hyperstimulus argument does not really discriminate between artworks, Pamela Anderson or cheesecakes and that it is based on a very limited knowledge of art. Moreover, he claims, Ramachandran possibly misrepresents the very idea of peak shift (Hyman 2010, 245–254). However, Hyman is not fundamentally against the possibility of reducing our understanding of art to naturalistic scientific explanations. It is Ramachandran's theory that is flawed and should be rejected, but we should not use this to generalize about scientific potential, Hyman seems to be suggesting. I do not agree and I believe that if we accept that our experience of art is modulated by historical and cultural-specific considerations and our personal level of cultural competence, and thus, we accept that culture can produce both data and knowledge that is autonomous and entirely reducible to natural science, then purely naturalistic explanations of the workings of art, which are typical of virtually all neuroaestheticians, will always fail. Overall, Ramachandran's theory would be potentially valuable and clearly subject to major revisions but only when incorporated into a broader psycho-historical framework, as without the art-historical component it remains reductive to the point of uselessness.

Semir Zeki, a neurobiologist who actually coined the term *neuroaesthetics*, espouses views about the relation of neuroscience to aesthetics that are vulnerable to similar criticism. Zeki holds that all human creativity is a product of our brains and subject to the laws of brain

functioning. Consequently, artistic creativity is subject to the laws of neuroscience and, finally, “no satisfactory theory of aesthetics that is not neurobiologically based” (Zeki 2001, 52) can exist. Though in other publications Zeki’s claim has been put forward with “profound” replacing “satisfactory” (Zeki 1998, 90). There are several grave problems with Zeki’s stance as pointed out by David Davies and others (Hyman 2010; Noë 2015). First, it only addresses creativity, ignoring reception and appreciation. Second, it is not really clear what “neurobiologically based” should mean. Likewise, “satisfactory” remains unexplained. Davies rightly points out that it is uncontentious that “at least some questions in aesthetics should be neurobiologically informed” (Davies 2014, 58) and hence, if not entirely redundant, Zeki’s argument should be interpreted in a strong form that suggests the “foundational explanatory role” (Davies 2014, 58) of neurobiology addressing core issues of aesthetics. It is definitely true that philosophy of art depends on empirical evidence and that there are philosophical questions and presuppositions that can be illuminated or revealed mistaken as a result of empirical research, and this is precisely where philosophical aesthetics can be enriched by cognitive or neuroscience but, overall, crucial issues in aesthetics won’t be addressed by neuroscience (on the other hand, addressing crucial issues in empirical aesthetics should involve snatching a body of knowledge from philosophical aesthetics). There is no way one can significantly alter discussions of art’s definition, value, appreciation or hypothetical vs. actual intentionalist debate by recourse of neuroscience. Apart from that, Davies is wary of what appear to be typical problems of empirical studies of aesthetics. In the studies of response to dance he overviews, among the problems he notes is the fact the responders are only “naïve” or that no neural correlates for complex aesthetic qualities tested, such as “simple/complex” or “dull/interesting” were found (Davies 2014, 67). The type of empirical evidence that is salient for philosophy of art is that of the artistic practice “and the ends that it pursues” (Davies 2014, 74) along with the research carried out by “art historians, anthropologists and other scholars” (Davies 2014, 74). In other words, it is mostly empirical evidence about what goes on at the level of the artworld. Zeki’s strong claim, then, should be rejected. Alva Noë made a related point against such formulated neuroaesthetics, emphasizing that art is not just a thing or a stimulus, but it is “an act of communication” and transactions. Responding to it is not a matter of mere trigger-experience or just being affected but a complex procedure that takes place “in a landscape of shared ideas and understanding” (Davies 2014, 97) and further, he correctly maintains, looking inside brains for art is like looking inside the minds of individual baseball players in order to understand the game. To put it in accordance with the typology proposed in this book, art as we understand it nowadays is a concept that emerges in relation to art-historical contexts and the practices of the artworld and, as such, its

workings are tied in with the level of philosophical aesthetics and this is where one should explore fundamental questions about art as art, and not at the level of human cognitive-emotive architecture.

John Hyman scrutinizes two other serious claims by Zeki, which might be called “artist as neurologist” and “neurobiological definition of art” (Hyman 2010, 254–261). The first one is, roughly, that artists explore and manipulate the human visual system, and although, as Hyman notes, the idea goes back at least to the nineteenth century, it can be updated by neuroscience thanks to which we can say more about how fauvism engages those areas of visual cortex that respond to colors while De Stijl activates those associated with responding to horizontal and vertical lines. The second claim is that it is ambiguity, by which Zeki means art’s ability to represent multiple facets of reality and its ability to trigger numerous interpretations, that defines great art. Unfortunately again, standard objections to empirical aesthetics follow. Regarding the first claim, it is undeniable that we need vision to understand visual arts, but we learn little from Zeki’s theory about why certain artworks are valuable. There seems to be no discrimination between art and non-art, since Zeki’s claims could equally apply to hamburgers or ice cream, as Hyman correctly observes. Zeki apparently ignores the possibility of philosophical aesthetics, along with related historical or anthropological studies of art, producing a body of knowledge in its own right (which would deem them redundant), and thus his idea of neuroaesthetics which regards art history, culture or consumer’s competence as entirely transparent and reducible to neuroscience. Zeki’s second claim is, disappointingly, another rendition of the defamiliarization fallacy against which I have been arguing through and through and which acknowledges neither that there can be multiple qualities contributing to overall judgment about artistic value with some type of *ambiguity* perhaps being one of them, but surely not the central one, nor that there are art-historical contexts to artworks which considerably affect their value. Regrettably, for Zeki as for many other neuroscientists, human response to art is straightforwardly biological and unmediated as if really responding to random stimuli or to clearly non-artistic artifacts.

Further forms of neuroscience abuse in humanities were pointed out by Reuven Tsur. Commenting on recent empirical research into the study of story comprehension and theory of mind, as well as some putative benefits of reading (improving one’s mindreading skills), Tsur acknowledges that the research is valuable, but apart from correlation, there is little evidence that fiction actually improves one’s theory of mind skills. Indeed, it might be impossible to demonstrate it. Moreover, it remains doubtful that such research will tell us something about the relationship between reading particular works and our empathy. Similarly, our current knowledge that words activate not only linguistic entries but traces of memories, sense impressions, etc.,

does not mean that we should “read out lists of such words instead of muddling about Baudelaire’s complex poems that abound in olfactory imagery” (Tsur 2012, 430). In other words, neuroscience leaves the central questions of the experience of art open, which is perfectly understandable according to the model I propose.

The project of empirical studies of literature, which often makes extensive use of research carried out in neuroscience and related areas, is also prone to the type of reductionism outlined above. This is how authors of one famous empirical study of literary response summarize the aim of their experiment, “we invited 30 readers of two Coleridge poems to comment on the passages in these poems that they found striking” (Miall and Kuiken 1999, 122). The group studied consisted of undergraduate students, but only those who were unfamiliar with Coleridge were accepted. In many ways, such an approach is fairly common in empirical studies of literary response. What I find problematic here is the unclear status of the research: what does it really study apart from a momentary response to a short linguistic passage? Appreciation is not a matter of instinctive, unreflective response. Likewise, it is hard to understand why empirical studies refrain from studying more competent readers, reinforcing the erroneous belief that there is a deep divide between naïve responders and connoisseurs. The conclusion of the above study, which is, again, a leitmotif of many empirical researchers, is the repetition of formalist assumptions about literariness, defamiliarization/dehabituation, which are disputable owing to the dubious status of empirical research, and the philosophical problems that haunted formalist theories of art which I reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2.³

All of the abovementioned reductive flaws are also present in the work of Anjan Chatterjee (2004), another prominent neuroaesthete. Chatterjee proves to be an author of another sweeping and simplistic generalization about the nature of art. Drawing an analogy between the development of birdsong in domesticated Bengalese finches who were no longer under selective mating pressure, he claims human art grew and become more elaborate as a result of it losing practical functions. Stephen Davies, however, pointed out that it is quite probable finches’ song became more complex as a result of domestication and not reduced mating pressure (Davies 2016, 718–719). Moreover, the very idea of art as being detached from practical concerns can, at best, refer to some modern Western art forms, but in no way can this be true about art in general. Contemplation of art for its own sake is reminiscent of archaic Kantian aesthetics that remain oblivious to consideration of art categories and art-historical context which are, in fact, prerequisite for proper appreciation of artworks. There are severe flaws to neuroaesthetics as it functions right now, but, to concur with Stephen Davies’s view, the search for continuities between human creativity and the art behaviors

of other species is generally worth exploring (Davies 2016, 719). It must however be rid of the reductive tendencies of neuroscientists.

So far, I have discussed reductionism *per se*, that is, accounting for phenomena from a higher disciplinary level as entirely explicable in terms of a lower-level discipline. But one can also point to a type of explanation that ignores lower-level constraints and attempts at self-contained higher-level explanations. What I specifically have in mind is a tendency within textualist literary and cultural studies that tries to reduce the cultural artifact to an arbitrary symbolic/linguistic construct, diminishing the role of lower explanatory levels, in particular, the aesthetic level. I discussed some problems with this approach in Chapters 1 and 2, and I wish to illustrate it using some famous analyses of Poe's "The Purloined Letter." The choice is not accidental, as the story has frequently been the material of literary-theoretical analysis. Luminaries of literary theory, such as Lacan and Derrida, argued about the story's meaning. For Lacan, the letter's contents are irrelevant as the story touches upon the displacement of the signifier in the symbolic structure. For Derrida, the letter is, in fact, a castration of the King by the Queen. Another scholar argued that the letter is a substitute for the phallus (Johnson 1977). And yet another analysis reached the following conclusion:

Lacan equates the possession of a letter-defined as a "lack" of content-with "literal" as opposed to "symbolic" castration, hence the odor of the feminine. In other words the "possession" of the lack otherwise displaced by language identifies the possessor with the lack "she" thinks she possesses. So femininity exists as an "effect" of the delusion of possession of a lack otherwise displaced (as a masculine effect?) by the endless purloining of the letter.

(Pease 1983, 19)

I consider the above interpretive conclusions as suffering precisely from the marginalizing of the underlying aesthetic level of existence of the studied artifact. What the above inquiries do is ignore both the relevant art-historical facts about the work, as well as treat interpretations rather light-heartedly, cherry-picking whatever they consider to be of interest, while leaving large portions of the text unexplained by their interpretive theses. Bo Pettersson likened the approach to the mythical Procrustes, a rogue who placed his victims on a bed and then chopped off those body parts that did not fit its size (Pettersson 2008, 19–33). The type of abuse resulting from ignoring the surface interpretation of the work is not necessarily a product of post-Saussurean textualism. Earlier scholars also fell victim to dubious deep interpretations rejecting the prior surface level. Take Marie Bonaparte's vulgar Freudianism that equates Poe the author with the narrator and analyzes the story in terms of the author's infantile sources (Pettersson 2008, 23). Indeed, the procedures involved

in the above explanations are incoherent: they use some assumptions about the work's status and agency but ignore others, producing merely arbitrary illustrations of their authors' idiosyncratic philosophical theories. Ironically, this is also exactly what literary Darwinists do: they put their neo-Darwinian matrix on the textual tissue of an artwork and, consequently, risk producing arbitrary results. I suppose that in order to produce a reliable body of knowledge about a given work, or about broader cultural phenomena (which textualist critics strive to do), one has to acknowledge the proper identity of the artifact's status, including understanding its aesthetic dimension along with everything that it entails. In other words, the aesthetic stratum must be somewhere in the total body of knowledge the theorist produces, for it to be valid. The idea that one already has a matrix, a skeleton key to read all texts (e.g., "the deferral of meaning" and "the phallus") can give nothing more than an endless repetition of the original assumption. But then, there really is no research but just arbitrary cookie-cutting in an undifferentiated textual dough. A proper identification of the artifact studied (for instance, an artwork) makes it possible that an application of a theory fails. This is important, as some universalizing tendencies within Theory seem to go against this possibility (as in, say, a crudely deconstructionist approach whose aim is to demonstrate that all stories are, in fact, about an infinite deferral of meaning). Pettersson makes a related point when he says what literary scholars typically do when focusing on disciplinary studies, rather than adapting foreign Theoretical frameworks. They:

not only imaginatively analyse the text but also go beyond it to place it in relation to Poe's oeuvre, to the genre of detective fiction the three Dupin stories in some sense created, and to the relation of the story to subsequent developments in the genre, just as they should be able to contextualize Poe and analyse his diverse literary qualities.

(Pettersson 2008, 28)

Note that the above accounts what belongs to Danto's level of surface interpretation. However, Pettersson is not against the possibility of formulating Theory-driven interpretations, Danto's deep interpretations, though he makes a proviso that if borrowing a foreign Theoretical framework it "should be subject to as close an examination as any one in literary studies" (Pettersson 2008, 29) and that no Theory "should be applied without heeding the literary qualities of the primary material [...] and without letting that material lead to possible changes in the theories applied" (Pettersson 2008, 29). I take this plea to reflect my own claim about the primacy of surface interpretation and a weak dependency between it and its deep counterpart. As I argued in Chapter 2, we should be instrumental in choosing what Theories to apply in textualist research (choosing those which can really illuminate either something about the

work, or something about a broader cultural phenomenon), but this choice must depend on our prior understanding of the literary work as a literary work.

Moreover, I believe that textualist research yields more promising results when applied to a broader scope of artworks or artifacts in general, rather than single works, much less individual short stories. This is simply because research into cultural texts presupposes studying broader tendencies within culture. After all, the most celebrated works associated with studying cultural texts (Said's *Orientalism*, Marxist analysis of realist novels, Gilbert and Gubar's work on nineteenth-century fiction, Hoggart's cultural studies, etc.) usually focused on a large corpus of works in their research.

It is ironic how a proper appreciation of Poe's story suggests that one of its themes actually reflects the textualist abuse. The story about the two different approaches to crime-solving, or rather, two approaches to drawing inferences (Prefect's and Dupin's) contains the following comment about the inadequacy of the Prefect's method: that he uses his highly ingenious resources as "a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs" (Poe 2004, 128) The story's epigraph, "Nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio," "Nothing is more hateful to wisdom than excessive cleverness" is clearly something for a literary theorist to think about. What must be emphasized, though, is that literary theory-driven research is not necessarily flawed with the type of abuse outlined above. Flawed analyses can be found in all types of disciplines, and text-based inquiries are no different.

Reductionist explanations tend to overlook the importance of the hierarchy of explanation and focus excessively on one level. Naturalist reductionism can mean ignoring the cultural and historical importance of the object in question. An excessively narrow approach to art can lead to high-brown aestheticism, emphasizing art's special status or art for art's sake attitude. Ignoring aesthetic and the cognitive aspect of art can lead to a radical cultural constructionist stance where individual texts are only illustrations for arbitrarily chosen philosophical theories. The existence and the cognition of the aesthetic dimension of artworks is not discontinuous from general human cognition. Seeing a given artifact as a cultural text is not discontinuous from identifying it as an artwork. The point is not to ignore the fact that one's own respective field relies on certain assumptions derived from other areas of research. As the above discussion shows, this is not a trivial remark.

Notes

- 1 This, of course, leads to broader considerations about the political potential of reading and analyzing texts, but I do not see a reason for exploring it here as it is not directly relevant to my discussion.

- 2 This also hints at my views about the canon which I partly discussed in the previous chapter. Following my general thesis, I do not believe the canon could have been formed in a radically different way (e.g. following the assumption that criteria for artistic value are purely ideological and subject to major revisions or formulations of numerous different canon), granted that our factual, art-historical knowledge about literary works is mostly correct. In other words, the conditions under which an artwork is considered valuable or not are not fully conventional as it is not a matter of convention how and what we tend to value.
- 3 The above are only illustrations of certain trends within empirical literary studies which I see as overreliance on untutored responses to art, and correspondingly, lack of concern for competent audience, along with uncritical use of formalist theories. But this should not be treated as an argument against empirical studies or reader-response studies as a whole. Needless to say, empirical studies of literature, largely inspired by Siegfried J. Schmidt's work, as well as various reader-response studies which adhere to psychoanalytic, cognitive or phenomenological theories, are an immense and heterogeneous research project. I voiced some objections about phenomenological theories, about strong constructionism and applications of formalism sometimes associated with various scholars within the fields, but all in all, due to their more complex relationship with psychology and cognitive science, empirical studies and reader-response theories would require a separate detailed analysis in order to place them within the scope of my discussion. I have not explored this topic partly because empirical/reader-response theories have little to do with the common understanding of Theory, and partly because both disciplines are already incorporated in various forms in cognitive literary studies and related areas of research.

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Conclusion

The book set out to demonstrate how the three seemingly disparate research outlooks in literary studies can be brought together and can be proven to be bound in a relation of continuity and hierarchical dependence rather than being entirely incongruent with each other. Even though the disciplines do have different aims and different methods, one can liken their preoccupations to different levels of explanation in sciences. The only conceivable foundations for phenomena such as language or literature is that they are rooted in human bio-psychological as well as socio-cultural frameworks. Broadly, textualist literary theories use the notion of the “cultural text” to investigate certain cultural phenomena, tendencies, latent beliefs and structures which can be traced across artworks (and other artifacts), but which are not fully accountable by the patterns and conceptual systems generated by the aesthetic level of experience, or by philosophical investigation into art. Consequently, they constitute the top of my hierarchy, but they are not fully autonomous, as the simple fact is that in order to produce reliable knowledge about cultural artifacts, one must first identify and understand them properly. This means that in the case of verbal art, one must first recognize a literary work as a literary work in order to carry on with further literary-theoretical investigations. Aesthetics is, then, one of the layers of knowledge that literary theory needs.

Likewise, investigations into the nature of art, or the experience of art, are not fully accountable on the purely autonomous level of philosophy of art. This entails that art’s creation and reception is not, strictly speaking, a matter of convention or art-historical traditions. Art behaviors are traceable to the beginning of mankind and it is a brute fact that art engages human cognitive-emotional architecture. In the end, how art is created and experienced is partly explainable with reference to cognitive science. The constitution of the human mind sets broad limits on the patterns of art that can emerge, but again, aesthetics forms a partially autonomous level.

Generally speaking, each of the disciplines introduces its own conceptual framework, as well as positing and accounting for the emergence of a new set of phenomena. The patterns, concepts, objects and laws

that apply to the study of human cognition cannot on their own account for everything that comes under the category of art. A mixture of non-aesthetic phenomena, standard human cognitive processes, as well as the development of human culture result in an emergence of the domain of art, whose main focus is, on the one hand, the creation and appreciation of certain artifacts, and on the other hand, self-reflective investigation into the nature of the practice. Whatever patterns emerge on the aesthetic level, they are likewise unable to fully account for broader tendencies in a culture. The notion of the cultural text, when applied to the study of artworks, can account for the more complex emergent relationship between art, other cultural texts and the latent ideological beliefs of a given culture.

As it was indicated, depending on the specifics of a given literary research, some other configurations are possible, just as other disciplines can be helpful in a given type of investigation into art and culture. The hierarchy proposed here is fundamental as it attempts to trace the continuity from natural cognitive processes, through fully developed art to broad cultural phenomena, indicating the gradual emergence of each partly autonomous object of study, along with the tools used for its analysis.

Simultaneously, my project outlines dependencies, continuities and breaks between three necessarily interrelated domains. One is the domain of the disciplines that define and investigate their respective areas of study, another one is the outline of the objects of their study and the last one concerns the types of responders or the types of procedures associated with the experience of these objects. So, to supplement the above sketch of the disciplines, the level dominated by cognitive psychological approaches studies literature as a set of activators whose experience resembles pushing buttons, reacting instinctively to what we are hard-wired to do. At this level, literature is not differentiated from natural phenomena such as everyday storytelling or everyday language or semiotic forms, just as visual arts would not be separate from appreciating the beauty of landscapes, animals or other people. The type of processes studied are the ones that make up our commonly shared cognitive-affective architecture and involve tracking of observable and representational features, pattern recognition, forming predictions and abductive inferences, implicit learning as well as basic acoustic, syntactic and semantic processing, recognition of narrative structures and seeing metaphoric conceptualizations into the work. Various types of activations within short-term and long-term memory, such as full activation or priming within our semantic memory, are started along with the networks of personal associations and multimodal representations that trigger simulation. Theory of mind and empathy come into play, helping to navigate within fictional world and to ascribe mental states to speakers and characters. Basic affective responses are triggered, such

as enjoyment, sadness, fear or disgust. The experiencing subject at this stage might either be considered a universalized abstract of the common mental architecture or whatever is closest to the natural experience of art of untutored, ordinary audience.

All these actions trigger and are infused with considerations leading to the next stage, which marks the emergence of an artwork as an artwork, that is experienced with proper attention and understanding leading to its appreciation. At this stage, the readers, or audience, explore the art-historical contexts of the artifact's creation within the scope of the institutionally determined practice of interpretation and appreciation. This is triggered by causal and abductive reasoning that traces the origin of the artifact, determining it as being designed in specific ways and belonging to a convention and tradition. Next, competent surface interpretation and evaluation of the work takes place including considerations regarding form and content. Thus, the object at this stage is the artwork, its cognition is proper appreciation, and audience involves competent responders or critics.

Finally, surface interpretation and proper artistic recognition of the artwork may trigger deep interpretations where conceptual frameworks from outside mere art-historical and formal approaches are borrowed to explore tacit ideological, psychological or semiotic contents under the banner of textualist reading. The procedures involved in this type of analysis are not distinct from the ones involved in appreciation and subject to the same criteria, though appreciation is not necessarily key here, as critical readings or exposing what is hidden on the surface begin to take hold. Their application might depend on the level of competence of the responders. At this stage, the object is the text, or cultural text, and the responder might also be a competent reader or a critic, though this type of reading is most common to professional scholars and academics.

Of course, the vast area of research to which I am alluding accounts for the fact that my considerations are merely scratching the surface, for just as lower-level explanations leave large portions of emergent structures indeterminate, my book leaves vast areas unexplored. Virtually every topic that I touched upon can be elaborated upon by bringing together various types of research in cognitive science or philosophical aesthetics. To name but a few, one can further explore the conditions under which a literary-theoretical analysis tends to be abusive toward the studied works, or one can investigate other possible components of artistic value and their relation to our cognitive architecture, along with the related questions of originality and creativity. Other areas might include a detailed account of the procedures involved in informed aesthetic appreciation and their relation to types of information processing, the status and scope of empirical research in literary studies, the types of inference and processing involved in interpretations, etc.

The number of topics is vast, which I consider as a good sign for developing research programs. I take no personal merit here, as any type of further explorations in the above require stronger interdisciplinary cooperation and involvement of multiple researchers. What I envisage as my role here is merely knocking on the doors of the numerous scholars that investigate related issues in literary studies using different methods.

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