INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF TEXTS

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KATALOGIZACE V KNIZE – NÁRODNÍ KNIHOVNA ČR

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Texts have been occasionally developed, abbreviated, modified, and adapted to allow their proper communicative potential for audiences outside of the Czech context.

Publication of these texts in English translation relies on the assumption that the themes, issues, concepts, and materials exposed in all the essays can address a broader international audience of literary theory and aesthetics. The economic support for the publication comes from The Research Centre of the 19th and 20th Century Czech Literature and Literary Theory (Centrum pro výzkum novější české literatury a literární teorie FF JU) of the Faculty of Arts, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice.

Introduction

If we follow the history of science in the 20th century, or more precisely, the philosophy of science of this period, we would probably quickly discover that events in the field of literary scholarship, while not replicating the same movements, identical gestures, and identical ideas, modify them in some way so that the two disciplines can resemble a kind of free-dancing couple, within which the movements of the first dancer are varied and interpreted by the second, albeit originally, but in the same rhythm.

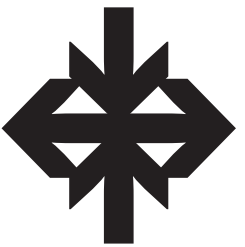
As the natural sciences triumph at the turn of the century thanks to successful experiments that promise high, if not 100%, agreement with the laws of external reality, literary scholarship, captivated by Carnap's attempts at an exact scientific language, turns first to formalism and from there to more sophisticated structuralism, believing that even the literary scholar, working with such fluid materials as language and speech, can find faithful methods for the study of prose and poetry. This belief is broken and completely dissolved with the advent of poststructuralist and postmodernist conceptions. In the philosophy of science, the debate is no longer about incontrovertible facts but rather about valid and less valid theories and the nature and veracity of data.

This loosening led first to a work-centric deconstruction, denying the possibility of a cognizable unity of the work and its meaning. Then to a culturally-based new historicism that embeds literary texts in the "text" of the whole culture and offers an examination of them within the practices and rituals of the time, to cultural materialism, and from there, the cloning continues to give rise to other varieties of -isms and -studies done from one or another perspective – postcolonial, gender, and others. These clones are a methodological mix of Derridean, Foucauldian, Adornian and many other approaches. All the new ones carry elements and traces of the previous ones in many modifications. The clones quickly become institutionalized and develop their own sets of legitimizing arguments and distinctive vocabularies. However, it is often unclear whether these arguments and vocabularies or newly emerging conceptual apparatuses are retrospectively verifiable in their logical flawlessness and their demonstrable connection to the actual and investigable objects of external reality, and thus whether they have anything at all to do with the

game called science. Carnap's failure to create a universally precise language of science led to an unprecedented proliferation of narrative concepts defining themselves as "scientific" in many fields of the humanities, including literary studies, especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, in which the rapid institutionalization of those clones led to their need for poiesis, and thus to evolutionary movements ensuring their survival. This evolutionary attempt to survive and adapt in the world of science can sometimes take the form of enforced authority, concerning the fact that the clone has created a university institute or a department or received a grant.

The authors of *Inside and Outside of Texts* felt a certain anxiety about this spontaneous generation of concepts, terms and narratives claiming legitimacy or authority without controlling what lies behind the relevant vocabulary and set of illocutionary acts. For this reason, they felt the need to turn their attention back to language and speech, that is, to the entities through which one can reflect on how those vocabularies and narratives that the literary scholar – theorist and historian – uses are produced. The path led logically to the analytic philosophy of language, where this reflection has a long tradition, and also to the works of the Neopragmatic philosophers and their realistic, instrumental thinking: the theory of speech acts (J. R. Searle, M. L. Pratt), to concepts such as radical interpretation (D. Davidson), root metaphor (S. C. Pepper), metaphysics and irony (R. Rorty), or reflections on popular culture (R. Shusterman). Neopragmatism, meanwhile, is understood as a broader current of thought, represented not only by those who explicitly subscribe to it, but which overlaps to a large extent with post-analytic philosophy with its instrumental and behavioural conception of language, and which has also influenced some literary theorists such as J. Hillis-Miller, Stanley Fish, and Wolfgang Iser. We therefore turn to these authors as well, where relevant. We attempt to interpret but also critically reflect on the essential characteristics, concepts and notions of Neopragmatic aesthetics. Still, our reflections are primarily directed towards the question of what possibilities such a broadly understood Neopragmatism opens up for contemporary literary studies and aesthetics.

Every scientific project is accompanied by faith, and in the case of a group of researchers based on similar theories, as Thomas Kuhn states in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, it is a shared faith. Although the authors do not aspire to any form of revolution, they share a common faith that their suggestions will expand and enrich the possibilities for literary scholars to think about a specific universe of signs structuring themselves in the form of poems, short stories, novels, critical essays, and other texts, while maintaining a dignified position in the game called science.



The Linguistic Turn in Philosophy, and Literary Scholarship: Speech Act Theory, Radical Translation, and Radical Interpretation as a Source of Inspiration for Neopragmatist Literary Studies

VLADIMÍR PAPOUŠEK

On the face of it, literary studies and philosophy of language (analytic philosophy) are unrelated and deal with different issues entirely. Philosophy of language – cultivated particularly intensively in the Anglo-Saxon world – tends to explore logical problems associated with the truth of sentences and with meaning and significance, but generally shuns literature. Literary scholarship, too, dwells on meaning and significance, but for the most part the intensions are completely different; likewise, matters of truth here are wholly different in character and follow a different method of inquiry.

Yet while it may seem that never the twain shall meet, works inspired by speech act theory can be found (especially among literary theorists such as M. L. Pratt and J. H. Miller), and there is an important collection entitled *Literary Theory after Davidson* (1993), which, as the title suggests, credits one of the leading figures in philosophy of language with a key role in the transformation of literary theory. The only possible way to read that title is that literary theory after Davidson cannot be the same as before him. Admittedly, this may sound hyperbolic, but it is a view shared by at least a smattering of scholars in literary studies. A bridge of sorts between literary theory and philosophy is offered by Richard Rorty, the American neopragmatist philosopher who, evincing an almost unflagging interest in literature in his writing, turned to the work of Donald Davidson time and again.

In the passages that follow, then, I am keen to explore possible initiations from the realm of speech act theory and philosophy of language with the

capacity to develop and productively enrich thinking in literary studies. In the first part, I will attempt to identify the areas of these initiations in classic philosophical theories. After that, I will discuss the history behind the thinking of literary scholars inspired by these areas, such as the aforementioned M. L. Pratt, J. H. Miller, and the authors of *Literary Theory after Davidson*. Finally, the third part will consider opportunities to apply these initiations to spheres of literary interpretation, questions of fiction, and general issues of communication within discourse on literature and literary history.

Initiations

The classic speech act theory J. L. Austin advances in *How to Do Things with Words*, first published in 1962, has nothing at all do with literature. Austin, primarily concerned with the distinction between speech acts, draws on the basic thrust identifiable in the title itself – an utterance is made in want of and to do something. This does not happen in an abstract setting, but takes place in a society – the speakers are living people. Speech is successful if it achieves the speaker's intended objective, but unsuccessful if it is wide of the mark. Seen through the prism of this theory, speech acts in literary works are irrelevant because it is impossible to judge either their truth or their success *per se*. These are fictional speech acts that are explicitly excluded from Austin's reasoning.[1]

The distinction Austin makes between descriptives and performatives later drifts towards the undoubtedly correct belief that most speech acts are performatives. Breaking them down into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts may further refine his theory for the sake of the theory itself, but again, as far as literary scholarship is concerned, it seems that they barely prise open the door. Locutions are essentially any meaningful sentence; perlocutions are the outcome of a speech act. Hence the sentence "I will shoot him dead." is an illocution, whereas the sentence "I shot him dead." is a perlocution, i.e. the outcome of an illocutionary act.

If we exclude perlocutions and locutions as irrelevant from the point of view of literary scholarship, we do so on the grounds that they are simply meaningless to our line of thinking. What makes locutions irrelevant is that they comprise a meaningful sentence, and while a literary work is teeming with meaningful sentences, there is no means of working with this label. Not to mention the fact that in literature we can also find many sentences that make

[1] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, p. 10.

little sense, such as the sentences of certain surrealists, sentences that are intentionally nonsensical because, for example, they simulate the speech of a madman, or, like many sentences in Lewis Carroll's work, they play with the poetic. Perlocutions, for their part, are meaningless because of the assertion that fictional speech acts need to be excluded. The sentence "I shot him dead." carries effect in a court of law or before an investigator, but not in a whodunnit, where, at most, it is a device to build up suspense or to entertain the reader.

Which leaves illocutionary acts. I believe that these are a significant initiation for literary studies. Austin arranges illocutionary acts rather elaborately into classes such as verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives. There is no need to dwell on the individual classes. In practice, most of the illocutions identified in this way occur in one form or another in those excluded fictional speech acts. Of particular relevance to literary studies, however, is the class that Austin calls expositives, which encompasses such acts as asserting, denying, stating, describing, classifying, and identifying.[2] It looks like the digression between fictional acts, as excluded by Austin from his theory, and literature, dealing with precisely such acts, can be conquered here. Assertion, given pride of place by Austin in his categorisation of expositives, is especially useful. First and foremost, pretty much any illocutionary act could conceivably be an assertion because it is an act that demands something, and yet its result is indeterminate.

Seen in this light, any speech act uttered by a narrator or poet could be said to be an assertion. Since both the poet and the narrator are or were living and breathing persons inhabiting and uttering sentences in our world, their assertions cannot be treated entirely as fictions that need to be excluded. When Cyrano de Bergerac utters an assertion about his stay on the Moon, this can be considered fictional on the grounds that it is made by a character in a drama that has a real author whose intention was for Cyrano to speak in this way, not in order to give information about his stay on the Moon, but in order to characterise this figure as a dreamer and an eloquent narrator. If, for example, Arnošt Lustig writes, "… such-and-such happened when I was in the concentration camp", it is impossible to decide whether this is complete fiction or non-fiction when we know that the person who uttered the sentence has actually borne this experience through his life, even if the sentence is part of a novel or short story he has written. Moreover, the knowledge that the author has experienced something in real life is collateral information carried not by the text, but by the reader's experience, if any, of who the author is.

[2] Ibid., p. 161.

My main point here is that no radical boundary defining what is and is not fiction can be drawn in a written text, and hence in literature.

Another area where expositives are cast in an important role in literary scholarship is in the contemplation of literary works and all operations relating thereto within society, appraisement, institutionalisation or, conversely, proscription, exclusion. All assertions in the vein of this poem is wonderful or contemptible, that work is nothing to write home about or is insidious, this book contributes to the education of our youth and should be a must-read, I recommend it, it bores me, it is hardly literature, it deserves a state prize, and so on, are part of the literary machine and the process of establishing values in a certain society using literature, and they are all illocutions subject to the scrutiny of literary criticism.

Broadly speaking, any poet or prose writer, by writing and publishing a text, could be said to be engaging in an illocutionary act of sorts – I assert that this is a poem or I assert that that is a novel. Incorporated into this must also be the assertion that this is a good poem and that that is a good novel. Wimsatt and Beardsley, in their classic study "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946), write that the author's intention is actually irrelevant and is realised by whether the work is good or bad.[3] Yet authorial intention cannot be excluded as, logically, the work could not actually have been created without it. On the other hand, Wimsatt and Beardsley may be inadvertently touching on what Austin addresses as a successful or unsuccessful speech act. Seen in this light, one might agree with them, in the spirit of Austin, that a successful book is also a successful performative. The question of intentionality, however, is more complex and I will revisit it in more depth later.

For now, suffice it to say that the area of initiation, as provided to us by Austin's classic speech act theory, needs to be explored in illocutions and in the premise that all literary works in general – seeing as they have not been and (we can only hope) will not be machine-produced by robots – have come into being because living beings have written a work in pursuit of an intention, identifiable as a certain type of illocutionary act, with the assertion that:

(a) what Anna Karenina does, what her fate is, and how I, Tolstoy, tell it is something fundamental;
(b) I contend that what I, Tolstoy, wrote is a novel able to compete against other novels in a contest that has never been instigated anywhere, except, perhaps, by the person who wrote the very first novel;
(c) I, the critic, contend that this is a great novel, or I, the censor, contend that it should be considered obscene.

[3] See Beardsley and Wimsatt, "The Intentional Fallacy".

A literary work is born of an assertion, an indirect speech act shaped by the gesture of creating and publishing that work. The existence of a literary work in historical time and in the society of its users then stems from clashes of other assertions (now also direct speech acts) intended to evaluate the work aesthetically, ideologically, and – to the same degree – economically.

The American philosopher John R. Searle has commented on and used Austin's speech act theory essentially polemically while trying to develop it further, particularly in two books of essays, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* from 1969, and *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, published in 1979. Searle, much more than Austin (whose main interest is in the causality of speech acts), addresses the complex context of the philosophy of language; in doing so, he cites Grice, Strawson, and Quine, taking issue with them and Austin. This is precisely why he repeats certain seemingly elaborate questions such as "how do words relate to the world?" with simplicity and with a naivety that Dezider Kambal, who translated Searle's first book into Slovak, recalls – with reference to Searle's critics – in his afterword.[4] Searle himself, at least rhetorically, admits to naivety: "So, in our era of extremely sophisticated methodologies, the methodology of this book must seem naively simple."[5]

That is not to say that Searle thinks his methodology or his questions are naive. I would say that his method of questioning was prompted by nothing other than the need to extract himself from the crusty mantle of discussions on meaning, sense, and truthfulness that establish certain rules in the discursive field of philosophy of language and that limited the very architects of that discourse so much that we witnessed the turn towards "post-analytic" philosophy experienced by Quine and, especially, Davidson. That Searle has chosen a specific path becomes increasingly evident in his later works, in which he turns his attention to the construction of meanings that establish institutions, boundaries, and functions in the human world, and explores consciousness and human perception in general. Searle is well aware that the problem of speech is not primarily one of the truth or falsity of sentences, of analyticity and syntheticity, of the precise determination of meaning and significance, but that the principle of Austin's basic premise – the success or failure of the speech act – concerns the complex framework of a particular language and the society that uses it.

4 Searle, *Rečové akty*, pp. 265–272.
5 Searle, *Speech Acts*, p. 15.

In essence, the most important finding that emerges from Searle's inquiry into speech acts is his reference to the functioning of language according to certain principles and rules. It is not grammatical or syntactic rules that he has in mind here, but rules of communication, of understanding, which arise from the user's practical knowledge. Searle compares this embracement of the principles of use to knowledge of the rules of a game, such as baseball.[6] The user simply knows how to play, and knows when the rules are broken in such a way that the game becomes meaningless. "I have said that the hypothesis of this book is that speaking a language is performing acts according to rules."[7]

Searle then confirms this hypothesis by analysing the problems of synonymity, concluding that no two words are completely synonymous,[8] that intuition plays a role in understanding, and that this cannot be otherwise,[9] i.e. meaning is identified not always on the basis of a precise representation, but on the basis of knowledge of a framework of rules. He also mentions the disconnect between the intention to say something and what is said,[10] touching here, in passing, on an age-old problem addressed by ancient hermeneuticists and St Augustine – the problem of the fullness of the word or the contradiction between speech and the inner logos.[11] But the basic point is that speech cannot rely on intentionally precise speech acts whose "job", in reality, is clearly determinable.

The logical corrective framework ensuring that the use of words does not become the meaningless arbitrary mumbling of self-contained beings is formed by the set of learned rules on the basis of which speech is conducted. In this framework, the relationship will always be one of expression, meaning, the realised act, identification, and reference; it is precisely on the basis of this reciprocity that those playing by the rules of the game rectify meaning and significance. Without this framework, the game would lose all meaning: "But the retreat from the committed use of words ultimately must involve a retreat from language itself […]."[12]

Another significant conclusion arising from Searle's examination of speech acts is a rather peripheral topic in his first book, but goes on to play a key role

[6] Ibid., p. 14.
[7] Ibid., pp. 36–37.
[8] Ibid., pp. 9–10.
[9] Ibid., p. 15.
[10] *Cf.* "The principle of expressibility" (ibid., pp. 19–21).
[11] See Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*.
[12] Searle, *Speech Acts*, p. 198.

in his later work and is broadly identifiable as an area of initiation for literary studies. I am thinking of the distinction between "brute facts" and "institutional facts". What Searle means here is the difference between facts existing independently of human will, strategy, or convention. According to Searle, these facts are the existence of products of nature and natural phenomena, such as the existence of a mountain, a river, or the planet Mars, whereas the existence of credit cards, money, schools, borders, armies, and parliaments are facts created by human action via discussion, i.e. through speech acts establishing, within a certain community, institutions whose scope – once established – is completely binding.[13] Searle develops this theory further developed in *The Construction of Social Reality* (1997) and *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization* (2009).

For literary theory, there is a remarkable opportunity here to begin thinking of literature as a specific kind of institutional fact, that is, a system of institutions that make up the complex of literary culture – writers, publishers, critics, censors, and prize committees. Literary types and genres with established rules and frameworks that are either very rigid (the whodunnit, the poem in bound verse, the tragedy) or comparatively more open to rule changes (the novel) should also be viewed as a type of institution.

Through the prism of neopragmatist reasoning, what is particularly significant is how Searle thinks of speech and the speech act as part of a particular community, of language as a framework of rules, as a game that is negotiated, again, in the practices of human society. Understanding and misunderstanding, identification and reference, representation, and metaphorics all figure in this game. Similarly, Searle's discussion of brute facts and institutional facts confirms the pragmatist's belief in the need to contemplate even such "sublime things" as art or literature as part of human negotiation dependent on time, community, language, and the rules used by that community.

Expression and Meaning, Searle's second book on speech acts, deals with the taxonomy of illocutionary acts, indirect speech acts, literal meaning, metaphor, and the logical status of fictional discourse. Virtually every one of the essays mentioned, with perhaps the exception of the taxonomy of illocutionary acts, indicates possible initiations for literary studies. "The logical status of fictional discourse", which I will discuss later in the section on fiction, is a study devoted directly to literature. The chapter "Indirect speech acts" deals with speech that contains an obvious intention but expresses it indirectly. Searle gives the example of a student conversation, where the first

[13] *Cf.* "The distinction between brute and institutional facts" (ibid., pp. 50–53).

student says, "Let's go to the movies tonight." And the second responds, "I have to study for an exam."[14] The first student utters an indirect proposition and the second responds seemingly directly, using the words "have to", which at first glance precludes a non-negative outcome for the first student's proposition. However, the conversation may result in a situation where the second student ends up preferring the movie to studying, so his sentence is not meant entirely seriously. This apparently trivial analysis shows how live speech actually works, where what is said often does not translate into what is ultimately done. Other speech devices – irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, metaphor, and so on – also come to mind in this respect. Searle's study, of course, is aimed at confirming the premise of the first book, namely, that language operates on the basis of learned and accepted rules, not on the basis of simple action and reaction, which he ultimately fleshes out in his critique of artificial intelligence in his famous Chinese Room Argument.

From the point of view of literary studies, and especially the interpretation of literary texts, it should be remembered that prose and poetic works are essentially made up of such indirect speech acts, and that they are impossible to interpret without knowledge of the rules of the game pertaining not only to language itself, but also to the context in which it is used. This is essential, for example, in the interpretation of historical texts, which are in fact all texts other than those constituting the interpreter's actual present, by which I mean the truly actual present, because, for example, a novel that an interpreter read as a twenty-year-old when it had just been published will be a historical text for him ten years later, as its language and the rules of the game will have shifted and changed over time. The text now exists in a different linguistic situation, both for the user-reader community and for the consciousness of the interpreter himself. Thus, for example, the original enchantment may vanish completely and the original appreciation may transform into criticism, as evidenced, for example, in Czech literature by the critic F. X. Šalda's two different views on the work of Karel Hlaváček. Speech producing certain meanings in its original reading may lose this ability in a new temporal and social context, both for the individual and for the wider community. The Czech writer Anna Sedlmayerovs'á star shone brightly in the 1960s, but had faded just years later.

Searle concludes his study by observing that the way indirect speech acts function is not a problem solvable by logic and a philosophical paradigm, nor by syntactic rules and a linguistic paradigm. Our response to such speech

[14] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, p. 33*ff.*

can be based on imprecise sensory input, as when we detect the presence of a car on the highway only by a passing flash of light.[15]

Similarly, it could be said that the intent of heroic speech in a novel or the speech of a poem is often perceived by the interpreter or reader on the basis of inputs that are not entirely accurate, but that allow them to identify what the text is about without being forced to interpret each sentence or paragraph separately. There is even the prospect that, were they to omit whole parts, they could still understand or appreciate the work they are reading, talk about it, and express a subjective opinion on it. This happens not on the basis of a systematic analysis and interpretation of the intentions of the individual speech acts, but on the basis of knowledge of the literary language, experience, and a familiarity with rules that allow the reader to identify a whodunnit, an exciting thriller, a historical novel, an avant-garde text, or a lyrical poem. This fact seriously undermines hermeneutic arguments about the universality of interpretation as a fundamental condition of human existential actuality (Heidegger, Gadamer, etc.).

Searle's conclusion suggests that we perceive many situations on the basis of our experience and knowledge of learned principles – in relation to both reality and language. This knowledge enables us to draw accurate conclusions from imprecise or vague data without the need to analyse such data in depth. If I know what a car is and what a highway is, when I see moving lights I will not deduce that they are a whirl of witches or a UFO. If, on the same highway, I see flashing blue lights and then a red police stop sign lights up in front of me, I will not interpret that as a command to step on the accelerator just because I saw something similar in a crime thriller. I know that I am not in an adventure movie or a computer game, but driving on a highway. Similarly, readers are often able, for example, to identify the killer not by following the author's exact logical progression of thought (not that there is always one in the first place), but by relying on their intuition and knowledge of processes employed by mystery writers, such as the fact that whoever seems to be the most likely culprit is sure not to have done it. In other genres, too, readers 'experience of the given type of work can be presupposed, whether it be a Gothic novel, a maudlin short story, or an expressionist novella. Depending on the specific experience readers have gained, they may even find it relatively easy to identify the style of a particular writer, distinguish the approximate period a work was written, or at least place it geographically or linguistically. When Karel May writes about the Wild West, readers have little

[15] I am paraphrasing Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, p. 57.

trouble recognising that, rather than wandering through a vast wilderness, they appear to be somewhere between two villages in Bavaria. One give-away is how frequent and friendly the protagonists 'encounters with each other are, as though they were gambolling around the neighbourhood instead of surviving the rough-and-tumble West depicted so fluidly by the likes of Bret Harte. Modernist or avant-garde prose is fairly clear to any readers familiar with the "rules of the game". If they know these rules, they have no problem understanding Faulkner's novels or Joyce. When readers with experience of the classic novel read, say, Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, they must be confused and frustrated because they are likely to apply the wrong rules to a different kind of game. And readers keen on May's works who pick up, say, Walter Van Tilburg Clark's classic American West novel *The Ox-Bow Incident* will be disappointed and will not make sense of it, even though it is set in the same place as May's novels and also features cowboys.

Plainly, to grasp a literary text it is necessary to know the rules of the game, not just understand individual words and sentences.

In his extensive study "Metaphor" (1979), Searle contributes to an equally extensive debate on the functioning of this device of figurative language. Negative though he is about previous theories of metaphor, from Aristotle to Beardsley to Max Black, Searle submits that the purpose of his study is not to dispute theories of metaphor, but to clarify the basic conditions underpinning such theory.[16]

First of all, he points out that a metaphor cannot be interpreted as a device functioning on the basis of similarity. We can use the sentence "Richard is a gorilla" to paraphrase the idea that Richard is wild, nasty, and prone to violence. And yet we cannot infer that a gorilla has those same characteristics, i.e. that it is mean, nasty, and prone to violence.[17] After citing further examples, Searle concludes, "We understand the metaphor as a shortened version of the literal simile. Since literal simile requires no special extralinguistic knowledge for its comprehension, most of the knowledge necessary for the comprehension of metaphor is already contained in the speaker's and hearer's semantic competence, together with general background knowledge of the world that makes literal meaning comprehensible."[18]

[16] Ibid., p. 86.
[17] Ibid., p. 89.
[18] Ibid., p. 94.

In this study, too, Searle thus keeps to his initial assumptions that broader competence is needed to understand metaphor in the case in point, and any communication in general. His probing will evidently lead to research on consciousness and perception in general. Searle's concept here is essentially indistinguishable from Black's theory, which envisages a frame of reference for a metaphor to be understood, only he does not explicitly limit this frame when he speaks of "general background knowledge of the world". Perhaps the difference lies in the fact that, by "frame", Black seems to mean a frame of reference of linguistic meanings, whereas Searle talks about general knowledge of the world possessed by an individual, which seems to include all – including non-linguistic – experience.

On the other hand, the temptation to identify Searle's reasoning with a hermeneutic interpretation of reality from the world itself clearly does not bear scrutiny. The slightest whiff of European metaphysics, any search for general truths emanating from the universe, is alien to Searle and his thinking. He feels a greater affinity, however inexplicably, with the perception of the human world as a practical experience, as the learning of rules governing how language works, and the laws of nature and society, which comes close to a pragmatist view of the world. To understand metaphor, as well as any communicative situation, the individual needs to know which rules are being used to play the game, not some higher metaphysical truth about the world. To understand language, metaphor, a speech act, the individual requires competence in the speech situation. From the perspective of literary criticism, then, in order to work with and interpret metaphor, we evidently need to know the context in which this figurative device is used rather than embark on a quest to glean its metaphysical secrets.

In his *Word and Object* (1960), the philosopher W. V. O. Quine outlined his theory of radical translation, which shifts analytic philosophy from an exploration of language's logical and syntactic relations to an inquiry into how speech functions in real communication, where not just linguistic devices, but real-world objects and events, come into play, where knowledge of the situation, events, and objects forming the context of the scene in which communication takes place is also necessary to perceive and understand the meaning of a word, sentence, or speech act. Quine uses the term "collateral information".[19] Using the well-known example of a field linguist compiling a foreign language manual and a native who uses the word "gavagai" when he sees a rabbit, Quine constructs an entire theory in which he shows that

[19] Quine, *Word and Object*, p. 38.

it is impossible to determine the definitive meaning of the word gavagai, as uttered by a native in a certain situation, because we cannot be sure whether it refers to a white rabbit, all rabbits, part of a rabbit, or the rabbitness of a rabbit. There is only a certain degree of semantic agreement that the translator can count on. Nor can an exact datum be provided by observation that would rid the word of the above uncertainties as to whether it is a part, a whole, a designation of an animal fit for consumption, or a specific species of animal with a certain characteristic (such as whiteness). A whole host of additional questions and information are needed to identify the word properly; that is, the linguist would need to know the language much more proficiently than he does when he is compiling the primary language manual. "There is no evident criterion whereby to strip such effects away and leave just the meaning of 'Gavagai 'properly so-called – whatever meaning properly so-called may be."[20] This implies that it will never be possible to dispense with what is called "collateral information" when determining the meaning of a word. Quine's theory is carefully and logically worked out, and I admit to reducing it to rough paraphrasing here, but I wanted to use it to justify why this sophisticated philosophical game should have any relevance to literary studies. And in no way am I referring here to translation theory as understood in the language of translators of particular works.

First, it is significant that Quine's theory of radical translation inspired Donald Davidson to take further steps, forming the basis for the development of his new theory of radical interpretation, further to which – underpinned by other essays such as "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" (1986) – he would present new possibilities for the functions of speech acts and the understanding of linguistic communication, which can play a fundamental role in the search for theories of literary interpretation or in the reception of a work in general.

Secondly, Quine's theory, in tandem with Davidson's follow-up theory, effectively makes the accusation that essentialist theories of literary interpretation (e.g. Hirsch), and all radically text-centric interpretations, are incorrect. By all accounts, a literary text cannot be interpreted solely from the set of characters that make up its words, sentences, and paragraphs, and nowhere here is there a covert essentialist meaning that can be simply decoded, because "collateral information" (or experience of reality) and evidence of the rules governing the text are necessary for interpretation. These theories also rule out hermeneutic beliefs about truth and meaning

[20] Ibid.

being interpretable on the basis of universal laws of truth. Our understanding of Mrs Malaprop and her mistaken use of words is derived from the fact that we are familiar with her behaviour and her habits, not from some truth revealed in reality, some metaphysical knowledge of the world.

Thirdly, and finally, from the position of logic, Quine's theory clicks with those views that are based on negotiation and experience, rather than on the belief that the meaning and significance of a text can be identified, whether simply or more complexly, in the text itself, and collateral information is associated with knowledge of a certain system of signification, laws, and rules applicable to the users of a specific language.

Davidson's theory of radical interpretation broadly confirms the above. In particular, it is important to note that, for Davidson, interpretation does not have the meaning usually ascribed to it by literary scholars, i.e. the interpretation of a literary or artistic work. For Davidson, interpretation means understanding what the other person is saying: "for Davidson, 'interpretation 'simply designates the process of understanding, or trying to understand – nothing more and nothing less."[21] In particular, he is interested in how different beings are able to acquire the competence to understand each other, even where this may not in itself be embodied by the simple fact that a sentence is uttered which the speaker believes should lead the other person to understand him. It is impossible to rely here on whether the sentence is inherently true or false. Davidson alludes to "Tarskian T-sentences": the sentences "It is raining" or "Es regnet" are true if, and only if, it is raining.[22] But this means that, for sentences in general, what really matters is the conditions under which they are true, not on whether the statement itself contains a truth or falsity. Thus, in principle, what matters for any sentence is the conditions under which it is true. In a situation where other conditions are necessary for speech, it is impossible for the mere utterance or writing of the sentences themselves to make anything evident about the reality *per se*. Only when essentially non-linguistic conditions are taken into account can we consider whether what is uttered is true. And whether it will make sense to the recipient. These conditions may even be more important than knowledge of the words themselves. If a German says "Es regnet"[23] and his companion does not know German, but this sentence is uttered when it is raining, we can assume that the recipient, despite not speaking German, will understand what his German friend means.

[21] Glüer, *Donald Davidson: A Short Introduction*, p. 19.
[22] Davidson, "Radical Interpretation", p. 135.
[23] The sentence beginning Davidson's essay "Radical Interpretation".

Put simply, if we want to understand an utterance made by another person, we find ourselves in a situation of radical interpretation, where we engage in a radical reading of that other person's utterance, rather than in a situation of the translation thereof, because in order to decipher the utterance we need to know the conditions under which the linguistic utterance comes into the world. The question of truthfulness here is thus more a question of a successful speech act on the part of both the speaker and the recipient.

Again, we must ask ourselves whether Davidson is actually pursuing, in a different language and from different vantage points, what certain hermeneuticists have already said when they speak of interpretation as a universal existential condition, i.e. the fact that every existing, thinking, and caring being is in a situation where it interprets its own being-in-the-world.[24] It will be necessary here to distinguish what Heidegger and others mean by that situation of the need for or of condemnation to interpretation, from Davidson's concept of radical interpretation as essentially a human initiative occurring where there is a situation of communication with another, not communication with a situation *en bloc* or a situation *an sich*, as in Heidegger. To wit: this is not a matter of interpreting our own existential situation, but of understanding the person who is telling us something that he is trying to make us understand, or that we ourselves are seeking to understand. This is not about the mysticism of existence, but about the mechanics and rules of communication.

Another question that logically arises concerns the very efficacy of this theory for literary scholarship, since interpretation as conceived by Donald Davidson is not the same interpretation addressed by literary scholars. So let's propose some topics to think about:

1) Under what conditions, for example, can a sentence by the hero of a novel be considered true or false?
2) Under what conditions is communication between the narrator, the lyrical hero, and the reader successful?
3) Why do critics and readers say that they understand works that are fundamentally constructed to be incomprehensible, or that place extraordinary obstacles in the paths of recipients (for example, works such as Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* And Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*)?

Other concepts that Davidson derives from his original theory of radical interpretation may also be productive for literary studies. In "A Nice

[24] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

Derangement of Epitaphs", he introduces Mrs Malaprop, who has a habit of confusing the meanings of words, e.g. by using the word "epithets" instead of "epitaphs". Davidson ponders a situation in which meanings are substituted in a different and quite unusual way. Drawing, *inter alia*, on the work of Joyce and Lewis Carroll for examples, he concludes that there is no word or verbal construction that cannot be converted to a new use. In doing so, he mentions the "ingenious or ignorant speaker".[25] Yet this reminder of Joyce or Carroll implies that the speaker may also be a narrator who happens to confuse meanings deliberately, i.e. meanings may be confused not because the speaker is ignorant or uneducated, but rather as part of a language game. After all, if we consider most literary works of the past, confusion of meaning, indirect expression, and metaphor are matter-of-course means of literary expressiveness.

Davidson infers that even this unusual mode of expression is decipherable in circumstances where the recipient knows the habits of the speaker, or is familiar with the broader context beyond the actual semantic content of a particular utterance. He proposes a concept of what he calls "prior" and "passing" theories, which means, very simply, that the recipient first establishes the possible meaning of the other interlocutor's utterance and, in the course of the conversation, may change this prior theory into a passing one after rectifying the meaning in response to the dynamics and development of the speech situation. A tentative belief in what it is assumed may be being said is transformed into an extension of the specific situation, i.e. in the course of the conversation, the recipient makes himself the understander in order to be able to understand. Davidson thus rejects the idea of a generally shared structure of language that is ready to be used here: "We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases."[26] Davidson relates this dynamic in particular to the possibilities of language, not just non-linguistic observation, as is evident in "The Third Man", an essay responding to the application of his theories to tangible visual art, such as sculpture.

Davidson's triangulation theory, discussed at length especially in *Literary Theory after Davidson*, concerns the relationship between knowledge of the self, knowledge of others, and shared knowledge of the world.[27] This knowledge, if I have understood it correctly, is characterised as linguistic

[25] Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", p. 100.
[26] Ibid., p. 107.
[27] See Kent, "Interpretation and Triangulation", with reference to Davidson's unpublished paper "The Measure of the Mental".

communication, not relatively defined objects of the world, such as paintings or sculptures. This linguistic communication is what primarily requires a prior and passing theory, a rectification of meaning and permanent triangulation.

In "Locating Literary Language", a response to *Literary Theory after Davidson*, Davidson recognises that literature poses a significant problem for analytic philosophy, in particular because analysts are mainly concerned with the question of the truth of sentences and speech acts – an aspect of literary output that is difficult to verify. At the same time, literature clearly represents a certain way of dealing with language, so it cannot simply be excluded from consideration.[28] Davidson goes on to say that "I will concentrate on two related problems: the role of reference in 'story-telling', and the changes that occur when we replace the triangle of speaker, hearer, and world with the triangle of writer, reader, and tradition."[29]

The triangulation system is reshaped when confronted with literary texts. However much we might be able to accept the synonymity of the writer as speaker and the reader as listener, tradition is detached from the real world and general reality. At the same time, however, we begin to wonder whether Davidson's substitution of the world for tradition is, in principle, something quite crucial. "World" is a very general notion that is difficult to grasp, if only because it requires us to imagine an assemblage of everything from objects, flora, and fauna, to events and institutions ad "almost" infinitum, which is hard to conceive. "Tradition", on the other hand, encompasses what the subject knows, what he has learned, and what he gleans from his forefathers' narratives, prohibitions, warnings, myths, and idiosyncrasies, juxtaposed with his own model for the acceptance and rejection of these incentives. The totality of these acquired images, practices, strategies, taboos, and cultivated anxieties form a more comprehensible structure of the individual's world. Moreover, that structure is largely defined by linguistic means – from myths, the ritual speech of priests or politicians, and the exhortations of parents and teachers, to learned traumas such as "If you drink straight after eating cherries, you will die." All this progresses as the individual acquires linguistic competence and the ability to understand.

Davidson broadly stands by his original division and does not substitute the world for tradition, but he does note that Joyce, in his writing, relies on the knowledge of his readers, on allusions to a common tradition. Deprived

[28] My bare-bones paraphrasing of the introduction to Davidson's essay; *cf.* Davidson, "Locating Literary Language", p. 167.
[29] Ibid., p. 168.

of this aspect, texts such as *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* become difficult to understand: "Joyce's desire to have his work read in the light of a tradition brings out a contrast between much literature and other uses of writing."[30] Davidson here is clearly thinking not only of tradition in the sense of the known world as such, but primarily the tradition of writing, of literature, on the basis of which the reader can distinguish the varied forms of literary expression, including differences and unusual modes of expression.

The issue of how an author relies to some degree on the reader's knowledge and experience in order for the text to be understood is also discussed by Davidson in "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty", an essay comparing two means of unusual authorial expression that cause the reader difficulties in interpretation. Davidson finds these two modes of language incommensurable. The means of expression used by the character in Carroll's *Alice* is that of an arbitrary innovator of language. "In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* Humpty Dumpty, the 'perfect 'innovator, thinks he can mean what he chooses by his words, at least if he pays them extra. At the end of a speech he says to Alice, 'There's glory for you! 'Alice says she doesn't know what he means. Humpty Dumpty replies, 'Of course you don't – till I tell you.'"[31] Humpty Dumpty makes up his own meanings of words without a care for his surroundings. This oddness entirely contradicts what language is used for, which is to communicate and understand. "You can't understand – till I tell you." This is a position representing the extreme of the extreme and essentially denies the basic function of language, although Humpty Dumpty does not deny the role of language as a means of play, which clearly makes sense through the prism of poetics or in terms of the functions of language as viewed by Wittgenstein and others. In fact, Lewis Carroll authored a book on logic, to which Quine devoted a separate study.

In a way, there are a good few poets who behave like Humpty Dumpty, from Edgar Allan Poe to the Czech Vladimír Holan. They, too, seem to be conveying to the reader the first part of Dumpty's message, "you can't understand…", but the second part, "… till I tell you", does not apply here. Poets do not want to determine the meaning of what is said. They prefer "… till you tell yourself". This diverts attention away from the original function of language as an attempt to communicate and redirects it to language as a means of understanding squared; this understanding is not predicated on deciphering the meaning of proper names, verbs, or on communicating some intention

[30] Ibid., p. 180.
[31] Davidson, "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty", p. 147.

that is meant to elicit a reaction in the recipient (to do something, to submit to something, to agree or disagree with something, or to affirm or contradict something); rather, the aim is to follow speech as a certain (mathematical) power, as speech itself, its movement, its aesthetic quality. When I speak of power, I am not referring in the slightest to the elevation of the poet's speech to the role of some metaphysical entity where the truth of the world is revealed in some higher quality and truer authenticity. Instead, we might ponder an alternative form of play that opens up new variations of human perception while allowing for the multiplication and mutual reflection of the very possibilities of language and the ways in which it can be used. Just as poets can square, others can root, e.g. so that the meaning of a linguistic message is reduced ad absurdum and is interpreted literally without regard to the triangulation situation, as exemplified by Hašek and Kafka. We often see this used to express absurdity or black humour.

The recognition of wit or absurd speech and the appreciation of Poe's abstract metaphors are different ways of playing with language, in which the point is never the truth or falsity of communications, but their success or failure, their appreciation by the recipient. In other words, the author assumes a certain competence on the part of readers and their ability to distinguish between modes of speech. Here, Davidson sets James Joyce apart from both Humpty Dumpty and Mrs Malaprop. Whereas Humpty Dumpty is the master of his speech and the meanings he confers upon it, and Mrs Malaprop does not realise that she is confusing words, and whether or not what she is conveying can be deciphered depends on how her surroundings recognise the peculiar ways in which she expresses herself, the point with Joyce and other writers is that recipients are assumed to be competent and able to distinguish and recognise the rules of the game guiding the author's speech. These rules are more or less encrypted – less so in the case of traditional writers, who follow the writing conventions practised in a given time by a given community so as not to break the rules of the whodunnit, lyric poetry, or the historical novel; they merely insert new sentences into existing schemes, or, conversely, invent new rules, but in such a way that they remain recognisable, since not to be decipherable would condemn them to the role of Humpty Dumpty. Sometimes this decipherability is subject to critical and scholarly debate, and sometimes the question of the cipher changes over time, but the debate itself means that what is said in the work is not nonsense, but a puzzle worth solving. Sterne, Joyce, Proust, Faulkner, Hašek, Poe, the Surrealists, the French *nouveau roman*, and others exemplify these language games.

In relation to Joyce, Davidson observes: "In speaking or writing we intend to be understood. We cannot intend what we know to be impossible; people can

only understand words they are somehow prepared in advance to understand. No one knew this better than Joyce. When he spent sixteen hundred hours writing the Anna Livia Plurabelle section of *Finnegan's Wake*, he was searching for existing names of rivers, names he could use, distorted and masked, to tell the story."[32] Although Joyce conceals or skews direct meanings, he wants the competent reader to discern clues, references, allusions to actual history, geography, writers, or styles that are not direct references to reality, but part of the narrative. They resonate in the service of the narrative and go some way to enabling the narrator's and reader's position in the world to be calibrated.[33] That is, Joyce is not infinitely inventing meanings like Humpty Dumpty, but respects certain constraints on the use of words so that their use and association is intelligible under certain conditions. Joyce's creative invention relies on the reader's creative invention, but also to a large extent on the reader's readiness to accept the rules of the game that have been proffered. An incompetent reader with very little experience of literature and literary texts – i.e. of the existing rules of the game – will plainly be unable to make head or tail of the content of Joyce's or Proust's novels, and will derive no pleasure from reading Poe's "Tamerlane" or Březina's *Svítání na západě*. What Davidson uses as a metaphor in his reflections on Joyce, when he speaks of "flying by the net of language" at the end of his study,[34] requires the reader's ability to learn to fly, to learn how to move through the net without becoming trapped in it, to feel free. This competence cannot be acquired except by reading and knowing about the world.

In "Locating Literary Language", Davidson also raises the issue of the relationship between fact, fiction, and constraints on the interpretation of a literary text. When Davidson discusses Joyce's intention of presupposing that readers have the awareness and competence needed to perceive, through his writing, a relationship to tradition and various allusions to real persons or historical events, he points to the contradiction that arises between literature and other uses of writing: writers of proclamations, declarations of war, warnings, or sales catalogues know their audience well; that cannot quite be said of novelists or poets.[35] But novelists and poets can assume that readers have a knowledge of other books, that they are familiar with literary tradition at least in their own language, i.e. literature itself can create a "background" for the interpretation

[32] Davidson, "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty", p. 147.
[33] Here I have indulged in some loose paraphrasing combined with the author's interpretation (see ibid.).
[34] Ibid., p. 157.
[35] Davidson, "Locating Literary Language", p. 180.

of a text belonging to the same tradition. At the same time, the language employed in a literary work and, likewise, used by the reader, is broadly the same as the language commonly used outside literature. The only problematic area here, according to Davidson, is that of proper names, where literature may contain the names of actual persons and events, or – if actual persons or events are referenced indirectly – proper names alluding to existing persons.

Davidson does not concur with Gadamer's view, expressed in *Truth and Method*, that "A text is understood only if it is understood in a different way each time."[36] According to Davidson, as there is no rule that is binding on others, a text is open to multiple interpretations, because, among other things, no text is the product of a single motive, and likewise no one interpretation is made. Davidson's view brings us back to his method, or rather methods, of triangulation, in that the adequacy of interpretations at any given time will depend on the degree of convergence with the opinions of others, and on negotiation, rectification, and triangulation, a dynamic process that also defines the possibilities of interpretation in the sense of whether an interpretation will be an isolated rhetorical act or whether it will be accepted or at least discussed in some wider community. Similarly, the ability to decipher allusions in a text, to compare the proper names of real persons and real events with their actions or the form they take in a literary text, will depend on intersubjective negotiation, the degree of agreement or disagreement among those who – with varying degrees of competence – use literary texts. A general line determining contemporary interpretations of literary texts is also inconceivable, no matter how much the notions entertained by totalitarian ideological censorship may try to tell us that this is possible. Ever since the days of the Roman Empire, through various despotisms to the totalitarianism of the 20th century, there has never been a generally accepted consensus on the value and possibilities of interpreting literary texts, let alone on their meaning. There have always been variously competent readers capable of grasping allegory or irony, and of variously interpreting poetic and prose works, not just understanding straightforward pamphlets.

In "The Second Person", Davidson writes that "Belief, intention, and the other propositional attitudes are all social in that they are states a creature cannot be in without having a concept of intersubjective truth, and this is a concept one cannot have without sharing, and knowing that one shares, a world, and a way of thinking about the world, with someone else."[37] It is in

[36] Ibid., p. 281.
[37] Davidson, "The Second Person", p. 121.

these moments that Davidson's thinking is very close to neopragmatism, or, more accurately, appears to be highly productive for neopragmatism. Here we have the problem of truth, events, action, and the need to negotiate reality, and the question of social consensus, of sharing and belief – in the sense of believing that something is right, harmful, or that such action will lead to expected results.

Rorty, in "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth", notes the parallel between pragmatism and Davidson's thinking. Rorty compares Davidson to James and, especially, to Dewey, finding a link in the way they break down the boundary between philosophical reductionism and its opposite, extreme anti-reductionism: "Attack from both sides is the usual reward of philosophers who, like Dewey and Davidson, try to stop the pendulum of philosophical fashion from swinging endlessly back and forth between a tough-minded reductionism and a high-minded anti-reductionism."[38] According to Rorty, 20th-century logical empiricism was a reactionary movement, but Davidson's disruption of the original schema allows us to align Davidson more closely to Dewey and his holism. It also establishes a basis for the synthesis of pragmatism and positivism. No matter how disagreeable Rorty's rather Marxist rhetoric on logical empiricism may be, there can be no denying the fact that Davidson's pattern of thought yields numerous new impetuses not only for neopragmatism, but also for thinking in the humanities in general. It is significant in that, *inter alia*, it draws on logical empiricism as a basis to affirm a number of assumptions that had been floating around in philosophers 'minds as conjectures or intractable assertions. Davidson used language and logic to prove a host of ideas revolving around actions, negotiation, intersubjectivity, the image of actions and human acts, speech strategies, etc.

His ideas on interpretation, his theory of radical interpretation, his theory of triangulation in both its original and modified forms, his essay on truth, and his thinking on metaphor are, I believe, of critical importance to literary studies. Davidson's work is so central to literary theory that entitling a collection of essays *Literary Theory after Davidson* appears to be remarkably apt. The stimuli introduced by Davidson and developed by the contributors to the collection seem to point to the need for a shift in thinking on literary texts away from the current ossified and conservative systems defined by structuralism, hermeneutic initiations, and even deconstruction, to a new field of thought, where the search for dynamic instabilities will be pursued via methods built on an understanding of speech acts, speech communities,

[38] Rorty, "Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth", p. 347.

and individual and collective experience, with a swing towards the tracking and analysis of intentions through linguistic operations. However, the problem then becomes all the more complex because it is no longer possible to separate and isolate individual values – such as text, sets of texts, reader response, language, the canonised appraisal of works, or power moves with texts, historicity, and periodisation – from the processes under study. All variables will have to be pondered in relation to one other.

We have attempted to identify areas that, from the point of view of literary scholarship, can be considered productive in speech act theory and, by extension, in the thinking of analytic and post-analytic philosophers, if we were to contemplate literary studies from the philosophical positions of neopragmatism. From this perspective, it seems tenable to consider:

(a) in the interpretation of literary texts, the possibilities afforded by illocutions and performative acts as elements shaping literary discourse, both externally through talk about literature and internally as narrator-created illocutions uttered in direct and indirect speech in the performatives of protagonists and lyrical heroes. Then there are the questions of triangulation and negotiation, and the issues of radical interpretation and radical translation;

(b) fiction, the nature of the truth of sentences in relation to events and situations, and the existence of a rigid designator between fiction and non-fiction. It seems that this distinction can only be thought of here as a genre operant, not as some kind of indicator of how a text relates to reality;

(c) how metaphors and figurative speech function, and the nature of metaphors;

(d) literary history and its methodology, canonisation, the negotiation of the value of literary texts, allusions to tradition as an element forming a background to understand literary texts;

(e) intentionality and the relationship between individual and collective intentionality;

(f) the functioning of literature as a specific institutional fact.

From a neopragmatist vantage point, there are tools and arguments here for understanding a literary text, and thus literature, as a permanent process of creating positions and counter-positions at the time that the literary text is actually used (its reading, interpretation for the reader, interpretation for different types of communities), much like positions and counter-positions in the concept of literature, combining personal and collective experience with the current intention of "use" in speech acts and with the varying and changing degrees of belief shared by individuals and groups.

Inspiration

In 1977, Mary Louise Pratt published *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, the first major work inspired by speech act theory and focused on literature. She drew on Austin's classic theory. In the list of works cited, we find Searle, with Grice mentioned among the analysts. Lakoff crops up frequently, as do Havránek, Matějka, the work of the Prague School, Mukařovský, Jakobson, and formalists such as Eichenbaum. Clearly, then, the author is keen to discuss matters closely related to classical structuralism and linguistics in general.

In the preface, the author explains her ambitious aim – to devise a unified theory that would make it possible to talk about literature in the same terms as those who deal with language. "The chief aim of this study is to suggest, to the people in both hotels, that it is both possible and necessary to develop a unified theory of discourse which allows us to talk about literature in the same terms we use to talk about all the other things people do with language."[39] Although the author plainly did not and could not succeed in this mission, the attempt itself is impressive. Pratt wanted to bridge the gap between the language of literary scholars and that of linguists by coming up with a sort of common discourse with generally accepted terminology; in doing so, she had designs on the more appropriate use of linguistic tools by literary scholars and, conversely, the more substantial use of the power of literary texts in the field of linguistics. She did not want to create a unified theory of literature, and conceded the limitations of her sources, which are mainly – as is evident from the literature cited – formalist and structuralist, accompanied by speech act theory, which she considers to be a more or less private tool of linguistics.[40] On the other hand, bearing in mind the date of publication, it would be remarkable had the author not been influenced by other sources of literary scholarship of the time. At least one indication can be detected at the end of the preface, when, among other things, she thanks Stanley Fish for his criticism and commentary.

Her own analytical work rests on a premise defined by the formalists and structuralists, i.e. on the conviction that literary speech is radically different from other modes of speech. There was a logic in enabling these schools to distinguish the realm of literature from other writing and speaking by bracketing it, especially in order to allow formalist and structuralist methods of laboratory analysis to be implemented at all. I believe that, in the very

[39] Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, p. vii.
[40] Ibid., p. viii.

formulation of her task, Pratt erred by relying on the traditional concept of literature as a dead animal prepped for dissection. The act of segregating literary speech and other speech, of talking about literature and linguistics, was a vehicle driven by these schools of thought, but it did not, in essence, recognise the reality of literature and linguistics. Even so, Pratt, obviously brought up in the spirit of classical structuralism, senses how structuralists aspire to investigate language and literary texts cheek by jowl.

At the same time, the author's thinking is guided by the core intention of structuralism in general, namely the ambition to become a science similar to the natural sciences, i.e. to develop methods that would allow empirical validation: "By establishing a systematic relation between literary and non-literary data on which to base their work, poeticians would be able to claim for their observations the same empirical validity granted to the statements of general linguistics."[41] She concludes, however, that classical structuralism does not have a big enough toolkit to dissociate literary and non-literary speech, and the implements it does have at its disposal do not completely solve the problem. Which leads her, in the second chapter, "Natural Narrative: What is 'Ordinary Language 'Really Like?", to discuss what constitutes ordinary language, which had served the structuralists as a means of distinction from literary language. Here, she leans particularly heavily on quotations from the work of the sociologist Labov. She then essentially transplants the problem of the distinction between colloquial and literary speech (abstracted by structuralists) to a sociological level, where she picks up on a study of a natural speaker's speech that is based on how a young man from Harlem describes a fight. Again, she breaks this down into several abstracted terminological positions, but the fundamental result here is that speech is conducted in communication with the speaker's situation; it is linked to situation orientation and evaluation. Pratt then identifies speech treated in this way in various examples of literary works from Brontë's *Jane Eyre* to Camus's *The Fall*. It is here that the author broadly sets the stage for the book's central proposition, namely that, as a matter of principle, natural speech cannot be separated from literary speech, and that the exact tools for investigating speech in both literature and the natural world will have to be extracted from research within the social sciences.

She conflates two fundamental problems: the distinction between literary and non-literary speech and the relationship between linguistic and poetological discourse. She continues to turn for support to Labov, who, she

[41] Ibid., p. 4.

argues, has found a bridge spanning the disparate domains of literature, non-literature, linguistics, and poetics. "The fact remains that linguistics is perhaps for the first time equipped to offer a description of literary discourse that answers the need for a contextually based approach to texts and that at the same time bridges the gap between literature and nonliterature, and thus between linguistics and poetics."[42] Immediately after, she supplements Labov's sociological implementations in linguistics with the speech act theory as presented by Austin, Searle, Strawson, and Grice, which she believes can be a useful starting point for further inquiry and for finding or confirming the bridging between the above-mentioned areas of discourse.

While we can agree with the author that speech act theory plots a path of sorts for literary studies and perhaps even for linguistics, we cannot accept in the slightest the view that this is how the different domains can be universally bridged. I do not believe that speech act theory provides enough distinctive designators to separate the fictional and the non-fictional within "literary" and "non-literary" discourse, that is, what can be found in, say, a novel and what is contained in the colloquial speech of individuals in the real world. As much as Searle argues in "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" that, for example, Capote's *In Cold Blood* may be construed as non-fiction, and as much as Pratt, using this very example,[43] judges that such a boundary exists, and then goes on to treat the terms fictional, non-fictional, literary, and non-literary as though they were easily distinguishable entities, rather than presenting new evidence, she is simply espousing conjecture here. We have to consider whether such a boundary can be drawn at all, and whether it is worth looking for one. If only because literary and non-literary language is permanently transformed in time and in the culture of its users, and speech acts uttered in non-literary settings are used in literary settings without fundamental limitations, as perceived by the author herself, of course, when she questions the rigidity of the structuralists. But, then, is it even possible to latch on to some conceptual relevance and universal conceptual correspondence between linguistics and literary scholarship, between the study of non-literary texts and literary texts, when quite different goals are invariably being pursued? A linguistic examination of the speech of the Harlem gang member will contribute nothing to a critical evaluation of Miller's *The Cool World*, nor will the speech of the Harlem blacks in that novel be of any benefit in addressing the disjunction between literature and non-literature.

[42] Ibid., p. 79.
[43] Ibid., p. 94.

As much as "natural speakers" may have been heard saying this, it is speech that is contextualised not by a real situation, but by the author's intention to write a novel set in Harlem. Speech acts, however natural they may have been originally, are subject to new rules when used in a literary text. It cannot be said that "this is how black people in Harlem talk", but only "this is how black people in Harlem talk in Warren Miller's *The Cool World*". The Czech title of the novel (*Prezydent Krokadýlů*) illustrates how the translator was looking for a means of expressing "a certain way of speaking" in a language that has nothing to do with Harlem historically, locally, or ethnically, and that is in no way identifiable with the way it is actually spoken in real life. It is only an imitation of it, or rather, let's say, a metaphor; it is not a transcription, because this language would be useless in a simple transcription.

The field linguist gets something very different out of learning the vernacular used in Harlem than the novelist listening in on it. And a literary scholar studying Miller's novel will be more likely to compare it to other novels set in Harlem, such as *Beale Street Blues*, rather than to linguistic research. It should also be borne in mind that this language changes from one generation to the next, with each new wave of young people. An acquaintance of mine who went to art school in Harlem said, "Until you've been here a fortnight, you won't understand a thing." He was referring to the radical changes in the speech of young people, the ever new figuration that is, of course, well known in the speech used by rappers, for example.

The problem is not that literary language is so distinguishable from ordinary language, but – and this needs to be repeated – what the rules of the game are. Readers reading a literary story – a short story or a novel – will not perceive it in the same way as a neighbour's story about what "our" cat got up to. And if, say, I use a literary-sounding turn of phrase or metaphor in a conversation with a friend, they certainly won't think I'm crafting a "literary work". What matters is the situation and how the social compact – here the agreement between speaker and recipient, or between text and reader – has been cut.

Pratt attempts to rise beyond the limits of structuralism, yet remains trapped in the structuralist idea of an exact conceptual language allowing for a more faithful connection between the worlds of linguistics and literary studies, because – as she rightly observes – it is the structuralists who operate with linguistics and at the same time pounce on the problems of literary scholarship in the belief that they have the right tools for the job. Pratt is aware that these tools are not sharp enough, so speech act theory offers her a glint of hope that she is cutting loose from the isolated study of individual phenomena and reaching out to the speech used in real life, which is also similar to the speech used by the characters in novels and short stories.

However, this assumed similitude is insufficiently analysed, and somewhat hastily solutions are drawn here on discursive domains that are so different as to make their connectivity via a single conceptual apparatus highly problematic.

The first questions that need to be asked are what good it would do, how such an act would benefit linguistics, and what literary scholarship would stand to gain from it. A second issue is the unexplained distinction between the literary and the non-literary, and the precise use of the fictional/non-fictional disjunction. In the case of a literary text, in what sense is fiction fiction, and what relationship does that text have to truth? Is every literary text untrue because it contains no speech acts acting directly on and somehow altering reality? And do we have the capacity to determine this precisely? How, then, are we to deal with texts such as the Bible, where there is an argument that it contains something that is true and acts on reality, but also an argument that it is literature. And how do we treat texts by historians, where they may be believed to be communicating a factual narrative and, just as equally, there may be a view that they are simply fiction shaped by references to possible real persons or events.

In the fourth chapter, "The Literary Speech Situation", Pratt explores the difference between the situation of the speaker and the audience in ordinary speech and the situation where neither the speaker nor the addressee is directly represented in the literary text. Here, for example, there is a narrator and a person who is invited to occupy himself with the narrative proffered (i.e. the reader). In this respect, she draws on the theory of H. P. Grice, who concerns himself with what is known as the cooperative principle, which, in simple terms, encompasses the rules shared between the speech act producer and acceptor that enable them to understand each other. She concludes that the principle of formal regulatory rules is gradually being abandoned in favour of "the emotive or expressive side of language";[44] this is viewed as beneficial to literary scholarship, which works with precisely these types of speech acts.

Here, too, this seems to be a rather superficial observation. It would not appear that the rules of speech communication governing ordinary speech are essentially valid in the field of literary output. Even here, a request uttered in a novel, perhaps "could you pass the salt, please?", is not expected to elicit the response "yes, because I am the Queen of England". Grice's cooperative principle touches on layers of communication other than that represented by the literary text. It concerns the relationship between the

[44] Ibid., p. 150.

speech act and the context of the given situation, i.e. the assumption that the request "could you pass the salt, please?" is not uttered to a neighbour in the middle of an opera performance, but in a situation where it is, in fact, possible to "pass the salt". Although such situations may be unverifiable in a literary text, the context that, for example, the narrative evokes is verifiable. That is, the logical rules and the cooperative principle expounded by Grice apply here as well. As far as literature is concerned, expression evidently prevails here, especially in certain types of texts, but as stated above in the discussion on Davidson's theories, neither the poet nor the novelist can be Humpty Dumpty, i.e. they cannot determine meanings and rules of reasoning at will. My point is that the notion of emotionality and expressiveness cannot be a sufficient identifier of literary discourse, just as it does not resolve the disjunction between the actual speaker producing a speech act directed at reality and "imitation speech acts": "In distinguishing between the fictional speaker of a work of literature and its real-world speaker, the author, I have tacitly adopted the view that many literary works are, as Ohmann puts it, 'imitation speech acts[45]."' The author tacitly, perhaps with a certain hesitancy, adopts a distinction that, on the surface, is suspect. Who, in truth, is the producer of fictional speech acts? The author? And, if so, should he be considered a liar? Certainly not. But what if all speech acts produced by the author are directed at reality through suggestion and allegory? With an arsenal of irony and figurative speech at his disposal, he is not limited to subliminal messaging, but can evoke an impression or frame an expression suggesting a sense of similitude, of connection, however unprovable this may be in either direct communication or shallow obfuscation.

Pratt, aware of many of these difficulties,[46] argues that many narrators simply fall short of Grice's notion of the cooperative principle. What we need to ask is whether this finding is in any way surprising considering that no speaker – either the narrator or the actual producer of a speech act – can predict what effect his speech will have or identify whether the fault lies in the way he speaks or in the recipient's reluctance or inability to understand. In this discussion, Pratt would clearly benefit from Davidson's prior and passing theories, in other words the chance to figure out the dynamics of speech and its situational changes over time.

Pratt observes that "The fictional speaker thus produces a lack of consensus, and the author implicates that this lack of consensus is part of what he is

[45] Ibid., p. 173.
[46] *Cf.* ibid., pp. 173–174.

displaying, part of what he wants us to experience, evaluate, and interpret."[47] I would say that this quote is a good example of the paradigm used by Pratt as a starting point. The broad assumption is that the speaker, or the person vouching for the literary text, is somehow in control of the text, that is, he knows when he is acting in a way that breaks certain rules and relies on a more active reader role. It is difficult to establish when such a situation has arisen; rather, we might presume that the author is conducting some sort of test, probing the potency of his own speech and how it could be received. There is little point in doubting that the writer is attempting to convey a message in his speech that, under certain conditions, such as the reader's imagination, erudition, or ability to decipher cultural allusions, will cultivate some sort of appreciation, but not in a way that authorial intention controls the text and its effect on the reader. I suspect that this is an area rife with so many variables that it is unpredictable and uncontrollable except in trivial texts such as pamphlets and period satire.

This idea of a certain distinctiveness and determinacy, of detectable disjunctions and functions, dominates Pratt's entire text. However much she attempts to step out of the exact discourse of structuralism and however much – often wittily – she applies the speech act theory, she remains in thrall to the scientistic approach typical of structuralists. Her desire to establish groundwork that will bridge the conceptual machinery of linguistics and literature, in addition to defining and then uniting the literary and the non-literary – in the sense of potential theoretical inquiry – fails. Speech act theory is not thought through in sufficient depth, and the whole monograph, despite promising an almost monumental groundbreaking gesture, winds up instead as a jumble of fragmentary observations of disparate value.

J. Hillis Miller's *Speech Acts in Literature* (2001), taken as a whole, is essentially a defence of deconstruction against logical empiricism. Right off the bat, Miller commits to a careful reading of those authors who work on speech act theory. The term "careful reading" here is synonymous with deconstructive reading. First, though, he has to deal with the problem of the philosophical discourse and logical argumentation of speech act theory; here, he clearly wants to step off the path of discourse and argumentation trodden by philosophers. His phrase "How to 'Bog, by Logical Stages, Down'"[48] deliberately echoes the title of Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* while implying that

[47] Ibid., p. 199.
[48] Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature*, p. 2.

he has the task of dealing with structured logical argumentation. Miller's solution is that literary scholars, because they do not have to talk about the same things in the same ways as philosophers, can proceed freely and quite differently in a domain originally delimited by philosophical discussion; again, this is a principle of deconstruction that seeks aporias and voids where a certain ordering of the speech of texts and the speech about those texts is established that might appear to be finished, definitive. In the very introduction, then, Miller defends his method and extricates himself from the duty to discuss a philosophical problem by philosophical means; more specifically, he opts out of the commitment to enter a given discursive field and play by the rules that have been agreed upon there.

He singles out the work of three authors for his analysis: J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Paul de Man. Somewhat surprisingly, Searle does not logically stand alongside Austin as the most prominent figure furthering speech act theory. There is perhaps a very simple explanation for this that can be gleaned from what Miller indicates in the introduction, i.e. he does not want to be hobbled by the logical argumentation pertinent to a given field of philosophical inquiry. Hence his choice of Austin, the founder of speech act theory, whose example-ridden essayistic and mutable style suits him better than Searle's logically argued and more exact style. He then shepherds the discussion to the pastures of deconstruction (Derrida and de Man). John Searle is mainly covered in the section on Derrida, where their debate is discussed. The final chapters of the book then revisit Austin and Derrida in conjunction with certain references to Wittgenstein. One chapter is given over to an analysis of passages from Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.

Miller views Austin's concept of speech act theory as a kind of fun game rather than a serious theory. He points out, for example, that in each section of Austin's text the terminology changes, with the initial performatives and constatives replaced by locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions. In connection with literature, Miller starts by noting Austin's "exorcism": "Literature is, for Austin, the prime example of the not-serious, the insincere."[49] Miller attempts to show that, on the one hand, Austin excludes literature from the discussion, and yet, on the other hand, he does skirt it in the way he expresses himself in his own discourse: "[…] but that his own discourse is, necessarily, by his own criteria, often literature. What do I mean by that, and what is its effect on the performative felicity of *How to Do Things with Words*? Literature or 'literariness 'appears in *How to Do Things with Words* in at least

[49] Ibid., p. 33.

three distinct ways: in the pervasive irony, in the constant introduction of imaginary examples, and in the frequent use of little fictional dialogues, often presented in indirect discourse, a basic resource of narrative fiction."[50] Miller regards Austin's work as literature rather than serious theory because of the ever-present irony, the author's use of imagery, and the essentially playful nature of the entire text. The first time we see him make a comparison with Searle is when he discusses how Austin's examples are more memorable than the examples in Searle's *Speech Acts*.[51]

If I were to ask myself what Miller is doing with Austin's text, I would answer that he is trying as much as possible to extricate it from the effects of philosophical discourse and to show that, quite the opposite, it is a literary narrative. As outlined above, he engages in a deconstructive reading that draws attention to the stream of the "différance" and "dissemination" of meaning. Here, Miller's text would seem to be a means of challenging the potency of logic and analytics in the field of literature. It emerges that, in this respect, speech act theory serves simply as a kind of vehicle for the self-affirmation of another theory. There is no wrangling over speech acts in the vein of a debate thereon, nor are they analysed in any way in relation to or in opposition to literature. The concept of speech acts is beyond loose: they are nothing more than manifestations of spoken or written expression. A theorist applying the vocabulary and strategies of his own theoretical paradigm does not engage with another theory except as a means by which to demonstrate the correctness of his own theoretical assumptions and to arm himself with negation as a defence against another person's theory that somehow encroaches on the paradigm he had adopted.

Miller then uses the same approach in the book's pivotal and longest chapter, which is devoted to Derrida. At the heart of this chapter is the dispute between Derrida and Searle: Searle attacked the way Derrida had treated speech act theory in his essay "Signature Event Context"; Derrida then responded in "Limited Inc a b c…".[52] Significantly, Miller pays Searle's arguments no mind here. Instead, he focuses his undivided attention on the ways in which Derrida shreds his opponent, with only one side being heard and the other being a kind of echo, a passive instrument at the mercy of Derrida's wit. Miller watches Derrida at play with such naked delight that we would

[50] Ibid., p. 40.

[51] *Cf.* ibid., p. 45.

[52] This is followed by other contributions, including Searle's essay "Reiterating the Differences", which is also mentioned in the debate. *Cf.* Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature*, p. 223.

be forgiven for thinking this was an idolatrous text rather than an analysis. "Irony is mixed with austere and difficult philosophical argument. The latter involves careful citation of and commentary on practically all of Searle's essay, 'Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida'. The reader experiences a kind of overkill in Derrida's use of both styles. Moreover, the styles shade into one another, without an identifable frontier between them. *Limited Inc* is one of Derrida's most joyous and exuberant works."[53]

Miller tracks the fluidity of Derrida's style and seems to take aesthetic pleasure in how he is faring. He has no interest in logical argumentation, but instead marvels at how Derrida is a wizard at taking the arguments raised by the empiricist Searle and making them melt away in the mist of his own eloquence. To be sure, the way in which Derrida presents his case is entertaining, but it is not entirely unproblematic because, rather than responding directly to Searle's arguments, he keeps to his own path, a tactic that enables him, in particular, to chase down opportunities to represent his own theory. For example, Searle's addition of a copyright to his text prompts Derrida to discuss what copyright means and to ridicule Searle as someone who thinks he owns the truth and that his text will be stolen by his opponent. I suspect, though, that Searle copyrighted his text not out of some ludicrous fear that it might be stolen by Derrida, but to convey irony, a metaphor referring to *différance* and *dissemination*, a gesture representing the right to one's own speech – speech that says what it wants to say, and not that what is said is scattered in a web of meanings. It is a polemical gesture, but one that Derrida, as was his wont, bends and turns. In a situation where two authorities have clashed and are taking issue with each other, this strategy is ultimately natural and permissible. What tends to happen in these debates is that authorial intention – the meaning of the author's speech – is missed entirely by the opponent, the opponent's speech is then combed for marginalia that morph into greater significance, and so on. The problem is when such a debate is quoted, or perhaps used rather than quoted, by another person in another situation. Here, this decontextualisation is naturally wielded as a tool in the service of a new intention, a new semantic structuring. Thus, as far as Miller is concerned, Derrida is clearly the dominant figure, while Searle comes across as a grumpy, conceited philosopher who is also stupefyingly dull and humourless (unlike Derrida, who uses the term Sarl, the French for a private limited company, or literally "society with limited responsibility", in reference to Searle).[54]

[53] Ibid., p. 68.
[54] Ibid., p. 73.

Of course, in "carefully reading" Derrida, Miller fails entirely to read Searle, who here is nothing but a victim of Derrida's eloquence. Miller unquestionably buys into this style, which largely denies the plausibility of logic and empirical argument in favour of the disjointed shuffling and constant regrouping of meanings. He makes no attempt at all to engage in philosophical discourse on speech act theory because then he would have to change his vocabulary and mode of argumentation. The fact that he does not do this also prevents him from making any meaningful use of speech act theory in literature. When he does talk about it, he does not dig deeper, and the discussion remains superficial. This approach allows him simply to confirm his own Derrida-based theory and feel comfortable in his own paradigm. He was not particularly concerned by anyone else's theory.

Derrida's approach to theorising is characterised by the effort he invests in deconstructing every theory as an insupportable illusion, as the creator's lust for power, to usurp and possess the truth, and to put an end to the inexhaustible movement of signifiers. Virtually all his language is tailored to this. All of what Miller admires – irony, the bending of meaning, allegorisation, the interweaving of styles – serves, I would say, to upturn and dismantle all conceived assumptions. Derrida's language defies any empirical confirmation, including any empirical confirmation of the logic and logical argumentation behind the theory itself. His language is a denial of the possible intentionality of speech, which may seem paradoxical, but is entirely logically consistent with his own theory of dissemination and différance.

How he achieves this is evident, for example, from a reading of his *Of Grammatology*:

1. by presenting absolute performatives implying the impression of a complete and known truth, whereby such performance sounds impassioned and dramatic. For example: "The trace is nothing"[55] and "Semiotics no longer depends on logic";[56]
2. through existentialist personification, where objects, tools, and signs gain a fatal influence over the world of living beings. For example: "Writing in the common sense is the dead letter, it is the carrier of death. It exhausts life"[57] and "The image is death";[58]
3. by means of a convoluted and obscure "prophecy", including a focus on an object or event with subsequent universalisation, scientific argumentation

[55] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 75.
[56] Ibid., p. 48.
[57] Ibid., p. 17.
[58] Ibid., p. 184.

with metaphor. For example: "We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations […]."[59]

Complicated phrases that cloud the content of the message, phrases that seem to point in different directions from different angles, the metaphor of the violent act as though from an ancient tragedy ("The mere presence of a spectator, then, is a violation"),[60] these are just a few examples of Derrida's performatives and his rhetorical strategy.

This style is a natural object of Miller's defence, since it is obvious to him that speech act theory, built on empirical foundations and always assuming, in principle, that the intention of speech can be identified to some degree, undermines the very kernel of deconstruction, which negates this. In the next chapter, Miller then quite naturally turns to Paul de Man, who made a name for himself as an attentive reader of Derrida in "The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau",[61] an essay reaffirming the positive direction taken by deconstruction and the premises outlined for deconstruction by Derrida.

Miller draws on de Man's *Allegories of Reading*, concentrating primarily on his findings about the problematic distinction between cognitive and performative elements in any text. According to de Man, as quoted by Miller, a performative is a narrative, while theories are inherently constatives.[62] Miller continues: "Any text – this essay by de Man, for example, or my essay here on de Man that you are at this moment reading – is both constative and performative through and through, though it is impossible to distinguish between the two operations and though we cannot know for sure whether they are compatible, though we surely suspect they are not."[63] For Miller, Paul de Man serves both as a good argument for the consolidation of the deconstructivist paradigm and for Miller's own particular variant of deconstruction. First, the notion of theory as something determinate, that is, as a constative as defined by de Man, is undermined, because no clear boundary can be found between constative and performative in the speech of a theorist, a conclusion that is not unacceptable in understanding theory as a series of speech acts. However, this does not apply at the moment when a theory is presented to others and invites falsifiability, as discussed by the

[59] Ibid., p. 12.
[60] Ibid., p. 113.
[61] See de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 102–141.
[62] Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature*, p. 153.
[63] Ibid.

philosopher Karl Popper.[64] This falsifiability means encouraging opponents to find the weak points in an argument and thus to correct a theory so that it becomes acceptable and becomes a source of shared scientific belief, or, on the contrary, is rejected as unsubstantiated or insufficiently justified. This is a process that takes place not just by confirming empirical observations, but primarily through speech acts searching for the logical consequence of a theoretical claim. With the effect of logical inquiry having been challenged, after a fashion, right at the beginning of Miller's book as untenable for the field of semiotics and literature, it comes as no surprise that here, too, the language of theory is viewed merely as a hotchpotch of assertions and narratives, and is removed, in a rather text-centric way, from the social environment in which it is supposed to exert influence. It is stolen from scholars and played up as essentially a literary text.

This is another consequence of Miller's treatment of speech act theory. He gradually makes his way to the conclusion that each theory is, in fact, literature, a text that can be read and interpreted differently each time. Miller confirms this in the final chapters of "Passion Performative" and "Marcel Proust", where he reflects on the problem of how to express the innermost feelings of the individual through a speech act. In Miller's analysis of certain aspects parts of *In Search of Lost Time*, which he describes as an extremely long text riddled with contradictions and juxtapositions, he ultimately surmises that a novel can only be read as a permanent allegory, as a set of mutually illuminating allusions and metaphorical transpositions: "Behind Marcel's performative positings, registered in the text of his narration, stands Marcel Proust, the narrator's maker and the ultimate source, in lordly self-effacement, of all these metaphorical or allegorical transpositions effected by acts of language."[65]

The ending of Miller's book then reads like a confirmation of his own theory of the unreadability of text – in the sense that it is impossible to grasp a text other than in a series of transpositions and transformations that vary with each act of reading and with each recipient. "The episode just analyzed, like the *Recherche*' as a whole, 'is an allegory of allegory, that is, of the activity whereby impassioned language posits transformations. To put this in de Manian terms, the episode is an allegory of reading and of the attempt to read reading, that is, to understand the activity that I have been calling speech acts in literature."[66] When all is said and done, then, the whole speech act theory

[64] See Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.
[65] Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature*, p. 212.
[66] Ibid., p. 214.

serves Miller simply as a vehicle for the affirmation of his own theory. In fact, he does not dwell on the theory itself in the slightest, but merely proffers a deconstructive reading of several authors who have dealt with it so that, ultimately, he can present the elegant universe of a theory of infinitely multiplying allegories, acts of reading that are readings of readings *ad infinitum*.

Zealously caught up in his advocation of deconstruction, I think Miller completely missed the opportunities offered to literature by speech act theory, e.g. as a framework structuring the performatives of the work itself – the narrator and heroes – or as a framework of performatives structuring the very institution of literature and affirming the variants of shared belief held within it by a particular historical community. Miller started by determining what, for him, the speech act in literature would be. In doing so, he employed terms such as constative, performative, and illocution only very vaguely so that he could fit the fragments thus contorted into an affirmation of deconstruction theory in general and his personal variant of belief within it. The more strenuously he disavowed the possibilities of theory in general, the more intensively he was able to give shape to his own theory. Miller does not make the slightest distinction between the imaginative text and the theoretical text. However imaginative a theoretical text may be, its basis must be argumentation, not imagery *per se*. Fear or misapprehension of philosophical discourse on logic, of empirical inquiry into language, of the possibilities of intentionality, ultimately leads to the concretion of one's own position in a domain that is secure and proven, consigning to the world outside its borders hideous spectres, such as the book's portrayal of John Searle as a sullen, humourless bore driven from the gates by Derrida the successful enchanter.

However much Derrida ironises Searle, he always does so in terrain of his own making. In other words, he fights with his own weapons. De Man takes up Derrida's weapons in his debate with him in order to confirm the efficacy of the tools of deconstruction essentially by portraying Derrida's blindness.[67] Both approaches are productive, functional, and broadly entertaining, both in the case of Derrida's light fencing with a foil against John Searle's two-handed sword and in the case of de Man's friendly duelling. Miller's approach here is rather toothless, as he fails to harness speech act theory except by incanting and repeating deconstructive formulae.

Literary Theory after Davidson, edited by Reed Way Dasenbrock, was published in 1993. It is a collection of very disparate papers united by an interest

[67] See de Man's essay "The Rhetoric of Blindness" (de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 102–141).

in how Davidson's philosophy may benefit literary theory. In both scope and content, it is one of the most comprehensive sources of information on the initiations that Donald Davidson – along with Quine, Wittgenstein, and speech act theory – gifted, in particular, to the American framework of literary theory. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse all the contributions in detail; moreover, some of the impulses prompted by these studies will be used in the discussion on fiction, interpretation, or literature as an institution. With that in mind, at this stage I will limit myself to certain observations that I consider of crucial significance.

Most importantly, it comes as no surprise, not least because of when the collection was published, that a number of the contributions are fixated on the link with Davidson's post-analytic position, in which the philosopher abandons his scrupulous investigation of meaning and significance within singular sentences and utterances in favour of thinking about the meaning of a sentence within an action, a context in which the logico-semantic perspective is enriched with pragmatist elements and socially dynamic contexts – the relationship between living agents and total knowledge of the self and the world. Davidson's ideas have been compared to the initiations that Jacques Derrida introduced into continental philosophy and then into the deconstructive strand of literary scholarship. Some of the views expressed in the book draw on the idea that there is a certain affinity, or not too vast a distance, between Davidson and Derrida.[68] There is a fairly clear effort here to interlink the American philosophical tradition and continental thought, but on account of the very stark difference in vocabularies and strategies, as outlined in the previous subchapter, I do not believe that this line of reasoning is especially productive. Still, I suspect, despite all the differences in their methods, that Davidson will be closer to Searle, whom Derrida so radically negated in his polemic. Davidson and Searle may differ in their views, but they build them on similar foundations – logic, analytic philosophy, speech act theory – whereas Derrida's vocabulary is radical standalone innovation whose sources are difficult to identify outside the context of the author himself. Not only that, but when Davidson moulds the original labours of analytic philosophy into a new shape, his innovation seems to be closer to the tradition of American pragmatism, although, bearing in mind his different choice of words, a certain resemblance with some points in Derrida's thinking cannot be dismissed entirely. As noted by Rorty, in reality Davidson's thoughts on action, experience, and orientation have much

[68] See Wheeler, "Truth-Conditions, Rhetoric, and Logical Form: Davidson and Deconstruction".

in common with pragmatist philosophers thanks to his prior and passing theory.[69] Moreover, Davidson employs strictly logical tools to deduce the consequences of analytics, and turns to contextualism when he considers radical interpretation based on his use of the work of the logician Tarski and his "T-sentences". Miller may not have not studied Davidson, but it is clear from his reasoning how incompatible the vocabulary used in the deconstructivist paradigm is with vocabulary based on the tradition of analytic philosophy and its transformations. The crucial difference, I believe, lies in feedback, back-checking. Whereas with Davidson the process behind his argument can be analysed retrospectively and is thus auditable, with Derrida and Miller nothing of the sort can be done. However much we concede that both paradigmatic domains are ultimately based on some form of belief, there is the question of how justifiable that shared belief is.

For me, the three most important studies in *Literary Theory after Davidson* start with Thomas Kent's "Interpretation and Triangulation: A Davidson Critique of Reader-Oriented Literary Theory", which offers serious initiation into the discussion on the validity of Fish's theory of interpretive communities, which assumes no outside influence beyond a given interpretive community[70] and brings Davidson's concept of triangulation into play. The second is "Analytic Philosophy's Narrative Turn: Quine, Rorty, Davidson", in which Bill Martin discusses the relationship between philosophy, literature, and literary studies and uses Derridean initiations more plausibly than those who seek a direct binary relationship between two distinct concepts and vocabularies. He does so by considering the narrative nature of philosophy, literary scholarship, and literary texts, i.e. by drawing on the performativity of all three discourses. The third significant study, from my perspective, is Paisley Livingston's "Writing Action: Davidson, Rationality, and Literary Research". In the following chapters, I will return to these studies and include a fourth study, perhaps the most significant of all: the aforementioned "Locating Literary Language" by Davidson himself.

To conclude this chapter, a distinctive finding has been how a certain theory, specifically speech act theory, is always used within the framework of vocabulary adopted by authors. Pratt clearly strives to forge a path from the structuralist tradition and structuralist vocabulary to new impulses, only for her attempt to end, inevitably, in failure. She fails because the power of the structuralist vocabulary hamstrings her efforts, because the thinking behind her chosen speech

[69] See Rorty, "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth".
[70] Kent, "Interpretation and Triangulation", p. 40.

act theory is inconsistent, because her sources are too meagre, so she ends up with some sort of hazily formed sociological theory of literature.

As for Miller, we bear witness to a rather defensive strategy intended to affirm the initial vocabulary and impregnability of his chosen paradigm, while speech act theory is shorn of all original philosophical sources from the very beginning, so that it is served up in a totally lobotomised form and in metainterpretations outside the actual field of the original discussion.

The third publication I have mentioned does not deal with speech act theory directly, but approaches it through an analysis of Donald Davidson's work and potential initiations for the field of literary studies. Most of the texts come with the benefit of a familiarity with analytic and post-analytic vocabulary, plus a knowledge of the context of the discussion in question, so the transformations or comparisons conducted in each text are undeniably made on the basis of a truly "close reading" of the original sources and a knowledge of the context of the analytic and post-analytic discussion; even excursions into continental philosophy, especially Derrida, seem in many cases to be productive if they forgo direct comparison.

Variations (fiction, metaphor, interpretation, literature as an institution)

I. Fiction and truth in literature

Proponents of classic speech act theory take little interest in literature, or, perhaps more precisely, they exclude it from the discussion by imposing the aspect of truth. Austin disregards literature entirely and dismisses the speech acts that occur in it as false. Searle touches on literature when he considers expressive acts, as it is this domain that literary expression inhabits, and attempts to analyse fiction in "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse", an essay that ushers in numerous important initiations for literary studies (but is also fraught with questions and trouble spots).

Searle approaches the problem as an examination of fiction, not literature. He suggests that literature is difficult to define because '"literature 'is the name of a set of attitudes we take toward a stretch of discourse, not a name of an internal property of the stretch of discourse".[71] Consequently, no rigid designator can be found to strictly determine what is literary and what is

[71] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, p. 59.

non-literary, because it is impossible to identify, with any satisfaction, a set of elements that all works have in common. This view is entirely acceptable, as is the statement that "the literary is continuous with the nonliterary".[72] All attempts, especially by formalists and structuralists, to find such a rigid designator were ultimately ineffectual. There are many reasons why a notion of literariness relying primarily on the argument of "defamiliarisation" and the rich figurations that distinguish literary discourse from colloquial speech is untenable. For one thing, it is a known fact that aristocratic letter writers, as well as, say, sentimentalists or romantics, employed a plethora of literary devices and had a variety of reasons for doing so. Some to flaunt their learning and command of fine style, others in a frantic search for words to express their inner emotional irritation or ambivalence. Some letters may have a literary quality, but others, similarly written, are nothing more than empty posturing, even though they, too, employ devices which, through the prism of a theory that presupposes the existence of an identifiable "literariness," belong to the sovereign domain of literature. On the other hand, there is an abundance of works imitating colloquial speech so that what they express is as close as possible to the real speech of a certain type of people (Kerouac's *On the Road*, Jan Pelc's *...a bude hůř*, and even, long before them, the naturalists, for example). Both sets of writers use rich metaphors. Chandler's hero Philip Marlowe, inhabiting the metropolitan underworld and moving among Hollywood's rich, and Dashiell Hammett's heroes do their best, in their speech acts, to approximate the setting they find themselves in so that it comes across as authentic. Their speech is teeming with metaphors.

The other distinctions proposed by Searle are rather more complicated. He suggests that comic books and jokes are examples of fiction but not literary works, while Capote's *In Cold Blood* may qualify as literature, but cannot be viewed as fiction.[73] In making such a decision, that is, in distinguishing between non-literary fiction, such as comic books, and literature that is not fiction, to some extent he is, I believe, denying his own characterisation of literature as a stretch of discourse that requires us to take a position but has no identifiable common features. How is it possible to label *In Cold Blood* as non-fiction simply on the basis that the book refers to a real event? The same goes for Mailer's novels – Searle singles out *The Armies of the Night*, but *The Executioner's Song* or *Of a Fire on the Moon* could also be cited. There is, after all, no defining device to distinguish fiction from non-fiction.

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., p. 58.

Is Capote's novel really a non-fictional record of witnessed fact, or simply literary construction? I believe that it is full-blown fiction, as are other novels of this type: a narrative cloaked in verisimilitude that cannot be proved to correspond with reality. A certain type of narrative can still be tenuous even if neither the speaker nor the recipient doubts that it corresponds with reality. That is why, for example, investigators look for witnesses to an accident, try to verify a statement, look for errors in logic, in reasoning, in correspondence with "facts", and even here nothing is determinable with definite certainty, as evidenced, for instance, by miscarriages of justice. If a text takes the form of a book sold in the same shops as collections of poetry or novels, then it assumes at least a certain institutional mantle imputing it to literature. After all, there are many comic books that allude to something real, say, a comic about Emil Zátopek, and we cannot judge whether or not they belong to literature merely by their degree of "picture-ness". The comic books that Searle works with seem to be defined by his experience of the American commercial comic books of his time – think *Superman* or *Batman*. And how do we judge the fictional or non-fictional in memoirs or diary entries? Again, these are usually not an accurate record of reality, but a narrative construct that is difficult to verify, even if they are one of the many authentic accounts of war and the like. We know of many cases where the witness's memory constructs a narrative of personal experience rather selectively and with literary licence. I suspect that there is no clear designator here to distinguish between the fictional and the non-fictional in the written text. For that matter, the outright exclusion of comic books from literature is perhaps not altogether feasible either.

According to Searle, the reader decides what is literature and the author decides what is fiction.[74] This is another designation we would do well to ponder. First, the reader, I believe, is not the determining factor in what makes literature literature. That factor is a more complex process that plays out in the creation, sale, promotion, ideational use, and other actions in the domain of the discursive formation we call literature. I believe it may be useful here to consider Davidson's method of triangulation and Searle's later explorations of institutional facts. Second, the author has very little say in what is fiction. This sort of decision-making is limited to the situation presented by Searle in his example: an author who says "it's raining" in a novel when it is not raining in real life is creating fiction. All other operations, though, are largely beyond the author's control. For example, when an author reconstructs an event, as

[74] Ibid., p. 59.

Capote does in *In Cold Blood*, he can never be sure of the boundary between fiction and non-fiction. Likewise, when he draws, say, on autobiographical experiences, it will be unclear what is true and what is a fanciful reconstruction that is supplementing, or shaping itself in, his memory. Readers, for their part, may often regard the fictional as autobiographical. A classic example is the life and work of Jaroslav Hašek, who was personally active in devising mystifications about himself and his friends, and who became a rich source of speculation on who the true Hašek was, what he had experienced, what he thought, and so on. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which, incidentally, Davidson, too, mentions in his essay "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty", also incorporates certain autobiographical features, but they are essentially indistinguishable from fiction, from the literary expression presented to the reader by Joyce's narrator in the text.

In his study, Searle engages in operations intended to pave the way for genuine speech acts to be distinguished from those that cannot be meant literally and that he labels as "nonserious". I am not sure this is an apt label. Searle explains, of course, that he in no way means to disparage literature as such, which I would never even suspect him of, but, again, I find the designator he has chosen problematic, especially in that both author and reader simply struggle to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction. Sometimes an author writes fiction to convey something significant about his life; sometimes, on the other hand, mystification is considered non-fiction by the reader, and only in this case is Searle right, i.e. where intent, an intention, is plain. However, where, for instance, an author creates a literary character who wields profound influence over him – witness how, as attested by Shklovsky, Tolstoy struggles with the figure of Anna Karenina, or consider how an author uses a literary character as a device to explore a real philosophical problem, as Sartre does in *La Nausée* or Camus does in *La Mythe de Sisyphe*, or how an author implicitly lets us in on something from his autobiography, as Joyce does in *A Portrait of the Artist* – I hesitate whether to accept the label "nonserious" label. Broadly speaking, such a distinction is plausible for the author of "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" and for his strategy of argumentation, but it is difficult to apply from other positions, especially in relation to literature. Of course, Searle does not deny this – he says he is concerned with fiction, not literature – but the very way that fiction is handled in literature shows that an approach based on the empirical identification of truth and falsity is inapplicable in literature.

The Czech crime writer Hana Prošková sets one of her novels, *Smrt stopařky*, in the real-life town of České Budějovice. When the book was published in 1976, I was living in Budějovice, so I know the place fairly well. In the text, Prošková uses the place names of various localities that really exist, such

as Čéčova Street and Husova Avenue, but sometimes she gets it wrong, referring to the road leading to Trhové Sviny as Novodvorská, when in fact it is – and even back in 1976 was – Novohradská. There was not and is not a car repair shop in Čéčova Street; indeed, no establishment of this kind would fit in there as it is an ordinary residential street. You would have been hard put to find a pub in Husova Avenue in 1976, especially in the scene where the heroes are moseying downtown and fancy a pint – aside from the fact that Husova Avenue is not exactly in the centre, it was hardly a street heaving with commerce in 1976. And yet, despite being able to identify a number of errors and untruths in a novel simulating local knowledge, it doesn't detract from my enjoyment of the tale spun by the author. It is impossible to tell whether the author is deliberately confusing local names and places.

The identifiability of places or events does not seem to play a significant role in a literary text. To be sure, an erudite reader would probably take exception to a historical novel setting the Battle of Gaugamela in the Ukraine or portraying Rome as a city in North Africa. And yet there are quite possibly readers who would not have a problem with that simply because the historical and geographical context eludes them. Nor is there any way of empirically verifying testimonies, experiences, or anything else passed off as non-fiction in a written text. My point is that in the domain of literary texts – and by literature I mean even those texts that Searle calls non-fiction – verifiability and truthfulness, in the sense we understand it in the real world, is problematic. This is not to say that literature abandons the notion of truthfulness altogether. But the truth should be grasped as such only within the framework of the literary text itself. For example, in a genre like the whodunnit a role is played by the consistency of arguments and the believability of the narrative because these are central to a successful detective story. Similarly, this principle of believability is embedded in the historical novel, where readers weigh the text against their own experience of history and perhaps other texts and, parallel to this, they divine how successful the narrator is at relating a story in, say, a believable setting; when reading poetry, they must believe and appreciate the truthfulness of what the poet is expressing. In any event, the notion of truthfulness here can be paired with the work done with language, with expressivity, with the illocutionary acts that make up the text, rather than with the need for any empirical verification, unless there is a fatal flaw in the triangulation formed by the narrator, the reader, and tradition and experience of the real world and that fatal flaw is not part of the narrative strategy, as witnessed in the German writer Timur Vermes '*Er ist wieder da*, a novel in which Hitler wakes up in our present reality decades later. Thus, as problematic as the distinction between fiction and non-fiction in literature seems to me, the notion of truthfulness can be applied where the Czech

critic F. X. Šalda speaks of "verisimilitude", and, even more precisely, where the recipient appreciates the author's ability to "fly by the net of language",[75] as Donald Davidson states in the conclusion of his essay on Joyce.

In addition to his identification of literature as "a set of attitudes we take toward a stretch of discourse", there is another of Searle's observations I consider to be crucial in that, I would say, it significantly challenges what we call the theory of fictional worlds: "Theorists of literature are prone to make vague remarks about how the author creates a fictional world, a world of the novel, or some such."[76] This remark clearly applies to authors behind the theory of fictional worlds, such as Lubomír Doležel or Thomas Pavel, who base their observations on the concept of "possible worlds" created within the framework of modal logic by Saul Kripke and developed by other logicians. Although Kripke used possible worlds as an operand in mathematics and logic to deal with issues encountered when tackling logical problems, and in no way intended to unleash into the wild the ghost of mysterious alternative metaphysics, he triggered a great deal of thought among literary scholars. Some of them considered this a reliable means of identifying and investigating the various segregated domains of a literary work (Doležel), while for others it was a vague device that seemed to offer a quick fix to numerous complicated problems thrown up when exploring a literary work – we simply declare the text to be a world with its own set of knights, princesses, cows, elephants, villains, and so on.

Searle's very definition of literature largely demonstrates the impossibility of separate fictional worlds. If the definition of a work, or literature, is determined by position-taking, by the defining of a stance, then it is an action, a process, that does not and cannot have an unalterable definitive form. Logic dictates that any framing of a separate fictional world is valid only for that moment of definition, is accidental, and carries no metaphysical validity. The argument that in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, for example, every time it is read there will be the same number of characters, soldiers, actions, and fires, the same amount of winter, and so on, is untenable for the simple reason that such quantities are intangible and elusive for individuals; nor is it meaningful to seek a consensus, because no delineation of this type can in any way approximate the text of a novel that is formed not by the objects and actions that are being spoken of, but by the actual speech and speech acts themselves. Moreover, a novel can be translated into different languages

[75] Davidson, "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty", p. 157.
[76] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, p. 73.

not only with different choices of words, but also with different grammatical structures, whether morphological or syntactical. This transformation necessarily results in fundamental changes. There are also various types of editorial interventions. And since it is a position-taking action, this position naturally changes over time, both in the course of repeated readings by the individual and in the tradition and general awareness of the novel *per se*.

In this context, Searle discusses the principle of ontological acceptability and coherence, adding that, again, "there is no universal criterion for coherence: what counts as coherence in a work of science fiction will not count as coherence in a work of naturalism."[77] In other words, any assessment of coherence will, again, be part of the position-taking process. Ultimately, what some readers may judge to be coherent, others may not, because they are inattentive, hold different cultural and educational values, or draw on different experiences. Some may find Joyce's *Ulysses* or Ladislav Klíma's *Glorious Nemesis* incomprehensible and unreadable, but others may derive maximum pleasure from them. The question of coherence may become a matter of negotiation among critics, censors, ideologues, politicians, and university scholars. The fictional world as an object is not identifiable except as an object appearing to a certain subject in one way at one particular moment, but it has no definite "invariant mass".

There is another reason why the fictional-world argument is problematic. A literary work consists not of objects and events, but of speech acts that refer to them, simulate them, transform them, with the aim not of referencing such objects and events, but of referencing the speech acts that constitute the literary form in question. Speech, as Searle also observes, seesaws from fictional operations to references to non-fictional objects or events, but the point of the whole exercise is to fashion a short story, a poem, or a novel in such a way that the work is integrated into a stretch of discourse in respect of which the position can be taken that this is part of what we call literature. The French-language letter in *War and Peace* is part of the way the narrative is structured, not a reference to some external reality.

Illocutions, metaphors, and other speech operations are part of a single natural language that functions both in the real world and in the world of the literary text. Just as fiction and non-fiction oscillate between text and reality, so does language, however embellished, hyperbolised or transformed, but for a work to be identified as literature in a given community there is at least one attribute that it must have: language intelligible to that community.

[77] Ibid.

Someone writing a science fiction story about a world, a planet, that speaks Xax will give an account of it not in Xax, but in the language they naturally speak. And if that writer invents his own vocabulary and syntax for that "possible world", he is hardly going to enter into that stretch of discourse we treat as literature.

Comparisons of facticity between actual reality and the realities in a literary text, i.e. whether what is said about real objects, persons, or events in the text is also true in the real world, play a minimal role in literature. Even a bizarre statement such as "Mount Everest is a volcano in the Pacific Ocean" may be part of a narrative strategy and authorial intention and hence may make sense within the text. The counterfactual conditional[78] is a popular device among writers of science fiction and negative utopias. An exploration of what would happen if the sun stopped shining, Europe sank, the Martians landed. "It was me; I shouldn't have let the captain in,"[79] philosophises Mr Povondra, a character in Čapek's novel *War with the Newts*, in the face of an unstoppable invasion of newts. For the most part, these counterfactual operations are caught up in the author's strategy; they are not direct references to reality, but nor are they geared towards the creation of fictional worlds based on the possible worlds theory. This is about alternatives, a game where possible positions and current configurations are developed. It is tempting to say that, with quantum physicists, every object, person, or event is merely a current configuration of forces, energies, particle motion. It seems to me that this is also the case in literature, or rather in literary language and in talk about literature. It is always more a matter of identifying and capturing current configurations of forces and energies than of fixed "materialities" whose stability is open to full verification time and again. This is why it is so difficult, in a literary work, to determine the degree of fiction and non-fiction, the seriousness or unseriousness of speech acts, and why the notion of truthfulness, too, must be used here with consideration for flowing, shifting networks of signs.

II. The liberated metaphor (Searle, Davidson, and Derrida)

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in the preface to their influential book *Metaphors We Live By*, take issue with philosophical inquiry into metaphor up to that point in time: "We were brought together by a joint interest in

[78] For a discussion on the counterfactual conditional, see Goodman, *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*.

[79] "To jsem udělal já: neměl jsem toho kapitána pustit dál." Čapek, *Válka s mloky*, p. 208.

metaphor. Mark has found that most traditional philosophical views permit metaphor little, if any, role in understanding our world and ourselves."[80] A bold statement, but rather bereft of meaning. Such an opinion is illogical when we consider that philosophy has been interested in metaphor as a speech phenomenon since Aristotle's time, and that, unless I am very much mistaken, philosophy serves precisely what the authors are denying it in relation to metaphor. Admittedly, though, their book has been extraordinarily successful, especially in fields outside philosophy and literary studies, that is, the greatest response has come from psychologists, educators, a particular group of cognitive linguists, and sociologists. The voluminous *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* draws heavily on Lakoff, who was also a contributor to that publication, and all but ignores existing philosophical discourse on metaphor. Searle and Davidson are mentioned only in passing; Ricouer, Derrida, and even Max Black are omitted entirely. A browse through this monumental collection of papers with titles such as "Metaphor and music", "Metaphor and art", "Metaphor in literature", "Metaphor and psychoanalysis", and "Metaphor and education" tells us why *Metaphors We Live By* is so popular and why the complicated views espoused by philosophers are more or less ignored. Lakoff and Johnson, in their cognitive approach, offer practical solutions and essentially declare an end to a thousand-year debate. They wrench metaphor out of language and project it into the relationship between the individual and the objects or events of reality, creating a kind of systematic structure and categorisation of types of metaphor for different situations (ontological metaphor, orientational metaphors). Whereas philosophers usually defer or suspend judgement for the sake of keeping the discussion going, Lakoff and Johnson encyclopaedically curate a unified world in which they lock metaphor as something relatively easy to grasp in everyday practice. At the same time, they do not give up the idea of building a unified universe (see, for example, the chapter "Complex Coherences across Metaphors"). Metaphor thus seems to be something that is relatively easy to grasp and to place in the context of cognitive sciences. The world is read as interpretativeness that can be clearly seen, grasped, and construed. Old Cartesianism appears to be making a comeback here. Lakoff's and Johnson's arrest and imprisonment of metaphor strikes me, I am sorry to say, as pure speculation, if not quackery, and the line of inquiry established by the book seems to me to be invalid and theoretically problematic. The implication

[80] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. ix.

here is that meaning and significance are entities shaped according to fixed structurations dependent on how reality is cognised, and that this cognition is determined by laws recognised by cognitive science – in this case, by Lakoff and Johnson. That is, the world is knowable and the functional linguistic structures by which the reality of the world is signified are knowable. It is not a question of situational and group beliefs at a moment in history, nor a question of a permanent movement of signifiers, but an essentially codified, exposed, and systematic movement that can be observed. It therefore seems inconceivable for metaphor to be able to discover anything new; rather, it is a tool within the observable movement of the individual, of society and its objects and events. No wonder, then, that the system proposed by Lakoff and Johnson is so popular: it allows us to work with metaphor as a controllable and assimilable tool. It can then be used to produce new tool-like applications.

And yet, from another perspective, we might ask whether Lakoff and Johnson, with their book, have created a new metaphor which, precisely because it is innovative, serves as a source for the subsequent production of ideas, theorising, and reflection. If we were to accept this, it would mean that the two authors, through the claims they make in their text, deny its very meaning; in other words, the content denies what they have ultimately produced. An image that seems perfectly understandable and applicable, but that, on account of its actual cognitive elusiveness, can become the inspiration for and generator of new ideas. Thus, however much the two authors seek to explain the relationship between metaphor and cognition and in doing so attempt to trap the notion of metaphor in their conceptual machinery, in the end the metaphor itself wins out, escaping, thanks to those very same authors, the trap that had been set. What is implied here is an apparently attainable idea of a kind of "image of the world", which at first sight appears to be a natural fact attainable by anyone endowed with sight. In reality, such an image of the world is nowhere to be found and cannot be captured in any way; it is no metaphysical entity on which a cluster of observers can reach a consensus. The image of the world is itself a metaphor and part of a language game, a part that is undoubtedly usable but, at the same time, is devoid of any cognitive content. Such an image can only be an image depicted by someone for someone without any guarantee of universality, or even of the certainty of common ground between just two users.

Drawing on the observations above, I will try to arrive at a more general conclusion that will serve my aim of defending the approach I see in the research into metaphor as conducted by the authors mentioned in the heading of this subchapter. The problem I have with Lakoff and even certain metaphor-pondering philosophers is that:

(a) they generally ascribe to metaphor cognitive significance, which they seek in earnest;
(b) they have a tendency to think in the context of substitution, similitude, or a frame;
(c) theirs is a quest for the essence of metaphor, but they overlook how its status has evolved over time.

Ad (a) – in the search for cognitive significance, metaphor is excluded from language as a specific element thereof that allows movement in language, without us needing this cognitive significance for the moment of the speech in question. Metaphor is thus deprived of the possibility of being a free variable with no permanent value, whose essential function is to enable the continuation and transformation of speech, and at the same time to serve as an indication of what has hitherto been unknown and, in a way, is external to the ordinary experience of signification.

Ad (b) – here, too, if we speak of substitution, it is assumed that we are replacing, in the Aristotelian tradition, one thing with another; similitude also assumes that one thing is similar to another thing and all these similarities and substitutions must be part of a frame (Black). As important as the significance of substitution and similitude for metaphor and Black's explorations of literature may be,[81] one cannot help but point out that, in the net of language, some similarities and substitutions are difficult to identify, or are identifiable only through a complex dynamic of cultural references (Schrödinger's cat, the string universe, or the superstring), or are completely unidentifiable (surrealist metaphors that rely directly on dissimilarity).

Ad point (c) – in certain social and historical contexts, substitution theory, for example, is quite satisfactory, while in others it fails. Vítězslav Nezval, in Moderní básnické směry (Modern Poetic Directions), gives an example of metaphors used in the work of Svatopluk Čech that are essentially substitutionary and serve to characterise the object of depiction in a more complex way – here the tailor's clothes are compared to a grasshopper's robe. This type is contrasted with the metaphor as conceived by Karel Hynek Mácha and to which the modernists in Nezval's circle subscribe, a metaphor perceived more as a discovery, the establishment of a new reality.[82] While rhetoric had once sufficed with substitution and simple similitude, the modernists grasp metaphor as a new

[81] See Black, *Models and Metaphors*.
[82] See Nezval, *Moderní básnické směry*, p. 9ff.

message, a new reality (undoubtedly inspired by the metaphorics emerging at the same time in the realm of science), whose discourse rose to prominence in the 20th century.

Using a rigorous analytical approach, John Searle reaches the logical conclusion in his seminal study "Metaphor" that metaphor gives us two ideas instead of one: "The expressive power that we feel is part of good metaphors is largely a matter of two features. The hearer has to figure out what the speaker means – he has to contribute more to the communication than just passive uptake – and he has to do that by going through another and related semantic content from the one which is communicated. And that, I take it, is what Dr. Johnson meant when he said metaphor gives us two ideas for one."[83] Searle is working with the idea that metaphor cannot be paraphrased; it yields new content. I feel that Searle is close here to what the surrealists and other modernists eventually saw as metaphor – discovery. At the same time, we perceive that the existence of a metaphor initiates some activity between the speakers, that the recipient cannot remain passive, but also cannot draw on previously expressed and easily interpretable idea. Searle notably speaks of "good metaphors", which tend to incorporate expression. A good metaphor can be interpreted as a successful metaphor, that is, one that arouses attention, initiating activity on the part of both the speaker and the receiver in speech. A dead metaphor does not arouse any attention and brings no new discovery, no new reality – like an old joke, a hackneyed story, a failed attempt at wit. The question remains, however, as to what this new content, this new idea, is, or rather how it is new. In any case, metaphor, if successful, evidently brings something new. But is it possible, strictly speaking, to suggest that – say – alongside the original meaningful sentence another equally meaningful sentence arises? Plainly, such reasoning is not right, if for no other reason than that the problem of metaphor would be solved once and for all by simple mechanics. A good metaphor, or a successful metaphor, attracts attention, but this attention is initiated precisely by the difficulty in determining what it actually means. It is a puzzle with an uncertain solution rather than a simple mechanism for the spontaneous generation of new ideas.

Donald Davidson, in "What Metaphors Mean", observes that "The central mistake against which I shall be inveighing is the idea that metaphor has, in addition to its literal sense or meaning, another sense or meaning."[84] Davidson

[83] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, p. 116.
[84] Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 246.

essentially rejects most existing theories of metaphor, from the simple ones of Aristotle to the complex ones of Max Black.[85] He states the reason very clearly – the assumption that metaphor carries no meaning other than its literal meaning. I would say that what metaphor is carries some new initiation that cannot – if we agree with Davidson, and I tend to agree with him – be expressed simply in terms of a "new meaning" or "new idea". On the other hand, it cannot be denied that some new meaning or new sense emerges as soon as a successful metaphor appears, even where this new meaning or sense is manifestly not baked into the actual form of the metaphor.

Davidson also rejects the notion of metaphor as a kind of vehicle for conveying ideas: "The concept of metaphor as primarily a vehicle for conveying ideas, even if unusual ones, seems to me as wrong as the parent idea that metaphor has a special meaning."[86] It would appear that this radical negation of both theoretical tradition and of metaphor as a vehicle conveying special meaning in addition to the literal one, or as a vehicle of ideas, is a suicidal gesture terminating all consideration of what metaphor is and does. Davidson, however, is not arguing that metaphor lacks room for exploration, nor is he arguing that it does nothing; rather, he is disagreeing with how what it is and what it does have been interpreted thus far. Moreover, Davidson appreciates metaphor as a plausible device not only for literature, but also for science and philosophy.[87] That is, metaphor is a productive device in human speech, whatever the discursive formation.

What is not clear, however, is where this significance of the metaphor is situated, where it resides. If it is nowhere outside of itself, then the very thing that the metaphor is saying is the thing that is doing something. Davidson draws attention to the fact that it is impossible to paraphrase a metaphor successfully, which problematises the principle of similitude that interpreters of metaphor often work with. But to say that one thing is similar to another conveys nothing more than what that says, i.e. that something resembles something else. Davidson takes issue with Black's view that metaphor is a condensed or elliptical simile.[88] The problem then is what metaphor, through this condensed or elliptical simile, could contribute that is new. Then there is this type of metaphor as conceived by Svatopluk Čech, who, in his poetry, wants to intensify the impression of a particular characteristic, but

[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., p. 254. See also Black, *Models and Metaphors*, p. 35.

this is nothing new, just a device to render an aesthetically more effective expression. Yet the meaning of metaphor is not shifted anywhere by such an act, and there is no explanation as to why such a banal operation should be discussed any further. If metaphor both ended and began with this condensed or elliptical simile, there would be no reason to pursue any discussion of metaphor itself. Davidson goes on to mention the view expounded by Nelson Goodman, who believes that the distinction between metaphor and simile is negligible, and disagrees with his view because, if something is accepted as a metaphor, the similes that the metaphor itself suggests need not be sought in some entirely different context.[89]

What Davidson presents here leads us to the outcome that the identification of a metaphor is an invitation to engage in some interpretive activity, some search, though not for the meanings primarily offered by the very utterance of the metaphor. At the same time, it is evidently difficult or impossible to find a key that would unlock a second meaning of the metaphor itself, because there is no such thing – neither a key nor a hidden meaning. Metaphor exists as a kind of call to action, to apply oneself to creation and produce new meanings. For Davidson, in keeping with his post-analytic theory, the event of the metaphor and the actions that this event elicits are more important than the actual search for some hidden meaning. Metaphor, as conceived by Davidson, is an invitation to enliven the mind, to enliven the imagination, to enrich speech, which must be removed from its utilitarian stereotype of speech acts so that the closed circle of tested actions and reactions, the closed circle of imagination and knowledge, can be opened up to new initiations, which are aimed principally not at creating another closed circle of speech energy, but, on the contrary, at paving the way for possibilities of speech where, mired by the impossibility of continuing or by banality, it is in danger of collapsing. I would add that it is perhaps essential to take into account the aesthetic aspect of speech, not only in a literary sense, but in those situations threatened by banality, helplessness, repetition, and digression, where the discovery of a successful metaphor can overcome a hiatus in speech and at the same time hide or remove the embarrassment or awkwardness of impotent speech going nowhere.

On the surface, this is a concept echoing Black's interaction theory and his system of "commonplaces", which Davidson criticises for its element of inconsistency. Black's theory, he argues, does not assume that metaphor has no cognitive content, but only that its paraphrase does not achieve the force

[89] Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 255.

of the original message.[90] Up to a point, then, interaction theory dovetails with our assertion that metaphor, as conceived by Davidson, indicates some new activity, a new search for the possibility of speech, and thus sets in motion the imagination of those who encounter metaphor. Davidson, however, challenges Black's interaction theory and shows that if there is a mechanism whereby metaphor bears some special cognitive meaning, "Finally, if words in metaphor bear a coded meaning, how can this meaning differ from the meaning those same words bear in the case where the metaphor *dies* – that is, when it comes to be part of the language?"[91] Lexicalised metaphor thus means exactly what it says. A dead metaphor is one in which we feel no tension, one that flows into common parlance and carries no meaning other than that which it literally has. This, it seems, is fairly convincing evidence that metaphors do not encode a special meaning, with Davidson opining that "What I deny is that metaphor does its work by having a special meaning, a specific cognitive content."[92] Thus, according to Davidson, metaphor does not necessitate a search for some cognitive content, but, rather, requires appreciation. "Joke or dream or metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact – but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact."[93] Metaphor, then, initiates a certain action, one that entails not a search for special content, but, rather, a certain reframing or transformation of our thinking and imagination, allowing us to look at facts differently or to restructure them completely, to change our language and vocabulary, without the initiating metaphor itself having to contain pathways to what such reframing will ultimately mean, what it will lead to. Metaphor may thus result in a new act of thinking.

Both Quine and Davidson, in their post-analytic writings, move increasingly towards a concept of the speech act as an action, an event in a real context.[94] Insofar as Davidson speaks of appreciation, it is worth reiterating that appreciation is an act that is contingent on aesthetic aspects. Appreciation implies the attraction of attention, a liking, or the act of adopting a stance, which, whether negative or positive, can initiate thought, argumentation – the emergence of new ideas or the birth of a new vocabulary. Richard Rorty, inspired by Davidson, shows how a metaphor can initiate a radical transformation of vocabulary that leads, almost overnight, to a transformation of institutions, laws, social thought.[95]

[90] Ibid., p. 260.
[91] Ibid., p. 261.
[92] Ibid., p. 262.
[93] Ibid.
[94] See Davidson's theory of triangulation, or *Essays on Actions and Events*.
[95] See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* pp. 3–22.

Jacques Derrida's consideration of metaphor in "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" seems to come from a completely different direction. But despite the differences in discourse and vocabulary, Derrida's understanding is not so distant from Davidson's. For one thing, I believe that Derrida, too, is not straitjacketed by a search for the cognitive content of metaphor, but is more concerned about how metaphors group, transform, and die. His vocabulary is made up of words such as duration, passing, wear and tear, missing, i.e. words that imply some kind of change and transformation. He comes closest to Davidson's conception when he writes: "To reconstitute the grammar of these metaphors would be to articulate its logic with a discourse that presents itself as nonmetaphorical […]."[96] What Derrida says could be construed not only as the impossibility of paraphrasing and interpreting metaphors, but also as his conviction that searching for some cognitive content in them would be pointless. A similar idea can be read into another of Derrida's statements: "One of these courses follows the line of a resistance to the dissemination of the metaphorical in a syntactics that somewhere, and initially, carries within itself an irreducible loss of meaning […]."[97] And a little further on: "Henceforth the entire teleology of meaning, which constructs the philosophical concept of metaphor, coordinates metaphor with the manifestation of truth, with the production of truth as presence without veil, with the reappropriation of a full language without syntax, with the vocation of a pure nomination […]."[98] However difficult it is to interpret Derrida's ideas, it is at least clear from the two statements above that he attributes to metaphor a power that is lost in attempts to see in metaphor something other than itself, when it has the property of renewing speech, but is itself lost in speech and dies when speech makes a grab for it. We could say that Derrida, like Davidson, sees the power of metaphor and what it does in its potentiality to transform and reform. Parallel to this, like Rorty, he recognises the power wielded by metaphor in the transformation, constitution, and dying of human vocabularies and cultural structures.

It might be argued that Searle, Davidson, and Derrida are responsible for liberating metaphor from its cognitivist trappings. These are not metaphors that we live by, but metaphors that live us – meant without any mystical or metaphysical undertone. Metaphors wax and wane, and in doing so constitute a necessary means of reformatting human speech, thought, and

[96] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 266.
[97] Ibid., p. 268.
[98] Ibid., p. 270.

imagination. In this unrestricted concept, new possibilities open up for metaphor to be explored within literary studies, not just as a poetic device, but as a means of structuring the environment in which literature is produced and negotiated. Metaphors structure and reformat entire paradigms, that is, what is considered literature and what is not considered literature in a certain spatiotemporal setting and in a certain society. A novel transforming the idea of what a novel is – the novels of Zola, Flaubert, or Tolstoy at one time, and the works of Joyce and Proust at another – can be thought of as a dominant metaphor. These metaphors transform and establish certain vocabularies, and those vocabularies reach into reality, like the *bovarysme* born of *Madame Bovary* or the excited sensibility emanating from Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Repetition and the confirmation of their canonisation erase their power (*usura* in Derrida) and they gradually die, so that new metaphors are born in their place, like on a coral reef (Davidson, Rorty).

III. Literary interpretation and speech acts

Post-analytic philosophy, especially as conceived by Davidson and speech act theory, augments literary theorists 'endless and never-ending debate on the nature of interpretation of a literary work with numerous significant initiations that support positions usually held by pragmatists and neopragmatists alike – particularly where the part of the discussion that concerns the essentialist nature of the meanings and significance of a work, but also how the process of interpreting a work can take place, is excluded.

Derrida demolished the untenable ideas mooted by essentialists like E. D. Hirsch and today there are evidently few literary scholars who would subscribe to this essentialism. However, the thrill of iconoclasm has led some of those engaged in the debate to imagine some sort of infinite cosmic process of semiosis, while others are spooked by such an idea. Umberto Eco, in *The Limits of Interpretation* (1991), voiced this fear. Eco draws on Derrida and, in particular, on Derrida's relationship to Peirce and his notion of "unlimited semiosis". For Eco, however, the notion of synonymity between infinite semiosis and infinite interpretation is unacceptable, and he addresses the issue of the adequacy of interpretation, the possibility of distinguishing the good from the bad. He attempts to protect the reading of Peirce rather than open it too much,[99] partly out of fear of the neopragmatists, specifically Richard Rorty's opinions. He also trades views with Rorty in *Interpretation*

[99] Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 37.

and Overinterpretation (1992). It is here, too, that he defends an empirical author's entitlement to interpret his own work in the sense of "No, I did not mean that."[100]

Eco's interpretation of Peirce allows for a multiplicity of interpretations, plus the fact that an interpretation may not coincide with authorial intention. He refers to his own *The Open Work*,[101] but stands by his opinion on the adequacy of interpretation: "Thus even though using a text as a playground for implementing unlimited semiosis, they can agree that at certain moments the 'play of musement 'can transitorily stop by producing a consensual judgment. Indeed, symbols grow but do not remain empty."[102] Though Eco seems to be closing in on the pragmatists 'notion of the need to negotiate the text, as well as the idea that there is a certain dynamic of control accorded by the presence of others, that is, the notion of a living and dynamic, changing process, this is not entirely true. What seems to persist in Eco's notion is a kind of mysterious network of fixed meanings allowing for the adequacy of interpretation.

In his polemic with Eco, Rorty criticises this idea of a kind of "big code" and the notion of a text that presupposes certain interpretations, or that one is able to discover more in a text, and more adequately at that, than another user: "More generally, it is opposition to the idea that the text can tell you something about what it wants, rather than simply providing stimuli which make it relatively hard or relatively easy to convince yourself or others of what you were initially inclined to say about it."[103] In his polemic, Rorty refers to the post-analysts Quine and Davidson. Clearly, the essence of the dispute with Eco stemmed from post-analytic philosophy rather than simple pragmatist distrust of the traditional hermeneutics and semiotics constructed by Eco.

A literary work is a set of speech acts, sentences – locutions, performatives – illocutionary acts, although here they are not in spoken form but have been moulded into a written text. Thus, a literary work cannot be exempted from the rules of human communication, however much Austin, for example, did so in his desire to define truthfulness. Donald Davidson, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", his essay "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty", and his treatise on metaphor, points to a negotiation that involves our subjective knowledge, the knowledge of others, and knowledge about a shared world;

[100] Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 66.
[101] Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 41.
[102] Ibid., p. 42.
[103] Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 103.

that is, it is a triangulation between several entities in the real world. Above all, Davidson is referring to a dynamic process – something happening over time without a definitive end being specifically determined. Nowhere does Davidson speak of triangulation as anything other than something that is ongoing; nowhere does he refer to a definitive final judgement. Similarly, his prior and passing theory ("A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs") is about an apparent movement – an action, an agency, not a completed process. That is, the semiosis is still ongoing, with a certain state applying to a certain situation and a certain moment, not definitively. It would seem – if my understanding of Davidson is correct – that, from a different perspective and in a different field, he has stumbled across what physicists call quantum states of matter, where what we perceive as matter is not defined by solid lumps of material particles, but by states of particles and energies that are going on right now. While Davidson, in my view, and after him his admirer Rorty, defend this processuality in interpreting speech, or the speech of a literary work, Eco sticks to the idea of a mechanical universe composed of fixed and essentially immutable ratios of energies and material entities.

On the other hand, Eco's claim that there is a certain limit to interpretation does not sound illogical. Arguably, this limit and its possible adequacy are not determined by the text, but by the process of use, the process of triangulation, the creation of prior and passing theories that are valid for that action and that time, for the event that is happening. In "Locating Literary Language", Davidson refers, in relation to literature, to the replacement of the speaker-hearer-world triangulation with the trinity of writer-reader-tradition.[104] This replacement is not a subversion of his original theory, but rather an acknowledgement of the fact that literary communication forms part of human communication in general. Tradition is knowledge of the world, while the writer is the speaker and the reader is the hearer. According to Davidson, one can assume that, when a speaker utters a speech act, there are several variants of the intention behind it that do not concern the linguistic domain but are focused directly on reality – for example, speech where the intention is to be elected mayor, or to warn a pilot of icing on the wing, and so on. Another type of intention straddles multiple possible reasons for speech; according to Davidson, "See you in July", for instance, is part promise, part prediction. A speech act often includes what Davidson calls an "ulterior" intention, another possible variant of interpretation facilitating both the example above and an utterance like "thin ice", which may be a direct warning

[104] Davidson, "Locating Literary Language", p. 168.

of a real situation in response to atmospheric conditions, but also a symbolic message, a warning in a more general sense, or in relation to a given situation and given speakers. The third type of intention, according to Davidson, is strictly semantic intention, where the speaker assumes that his words will be interpreted and that they will be understood in some way, or that a certain meaning will be attached to them.

This is the situation of the writer crafting a text, the situation of his readers assuming that what they are going to read contains some meaningful message for them, and ultimately the situation of the whole literary communication taking place in the real world. The words that a writer uses tend to be words that are part of the language used in natural speech in the real world: "Most of the words in a literary work have an ordinary extension in the world. Predicates, adjectives, verbs, common nouns, and adverbs do not lose their normal ties to real objects and events when they are employed in fiction [...]."[105] The question of proper names is part of a long-standing debate in analytic philosophy about how to view the issue of persons living or sometimes living in the real world who are transferred to the world of fiction. If we apply Davidson's passing and prior theory and the theory of triangulation, this problem does not appear to be fundamental at all through the prism of literary interpretation. For example, in a prior interpretation, the reader may identify a real, actual living person or a historically documented figure, such as Donald Trump or Jan Žižka, only to identify, in passing theory, whether the speech about them is part of an anecdote, a novel, or a historical or journalistic treatise, and then use triangulation to interpret that person's function in the text, without thinking too much of comparing this figure with reality, if for no other reason than that a reader usually has no experience of that individual other than that gained through texts (which is invariably true of historical figures) and his intention is to identify the type of text or narrative so that he can respond to it, whether it be satire, irony, lyrical reflection (virtually impossible in the two examples given), anecdote, historical novel, or... Clearly, in this sense we must envisage interpretation as an event and an action, something taking place in a specific time and place, while also changing and transforming over time. A reader will put aside a book that promises an amusing account of Bohemian queens 'love lives in disgruntlement, not because the characterisation of the characters is divorced from reality, but because the narrative was unsuccessful and did not meet his expectations. According to prior theory, he accepted a promise

[105] Ibid., p. 178.

made, perhaps on the book cover, or as a result of previous experience of the same writer or a similar type of text, only to find, according to passing theory, that he gained nothing from his experience or expectations initiated by illocutions like "the funniest book of the century".

Thomas Kent, in "Interpretation and Triangulation", points out that Davidson's approach overcomes the problems of radically characterising "interpretive communities" as defined by Stanley Fish.[106] The processuality of Davidson's approach makes it difficult to believe that relatively stable and closed groups of subjects sharing the same beliefs could be formed. Fish's arguments in this regard are not entirely convincing, if only because relatively immutable states are assumed. Thus, for example, the authority of a professor in a seminar will lead a set of x students to accept the view of a given work as communicated by that authority. A problem arises, however, when we want to demonstrate something of this sort. Does it mean that this group retains a defined view, that no one in the group will have a dissenting, perhaps unstated, opinion? The authority of the community has no way of affirming his interpretive authority except by a kind of professorial complacency, but this is a supremely subjective feeling. If, in keeping with the Kuhnian spirit, a certain group shares a paradigm, it bases this on a number of regularities in the operation of that paradigm, such as the shared problems being addressed, and the belief that the chosen methodologies and methods will lead to the resolution of the questions being asked. In a real situation of perhaps a seminar or a class and its authority, no such mechanism is assured. There are no laws here, except for the greater or lesser persuasiveness of the authority convincing his charges, for example, that what he has written on the blackboard is a poem.[107] If there are no rules except the power of suggestion of the authoritative speaker, how would it be possible to know that the agreement of others is not merely feigned, or defined by a desire to "get it over with and move on", by indifference, or by a completely different opinion?

At the same time, Fish's concept overlooks entirely what Davidson, in his innovative triangulation, calls "tradition" and what we can identify with the concept of "world" in his original triad. That is, that every subject in a certain community has prior experience. Suppose we were so bold as to assume that, say, a literature student, before coming to university, had read some books, had had thoughts about them, and had talked about them in other communities. And that by arriving in the new environment of, for instance, Fish's class,

[106] See Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?*
[107] Ibid., pp. 322–337.

he corrects his prior theory to a passing one. This in no way marks the end of the process itself. How do we guarantee that this corrected passing theory is stable? I suspect that there is no way to do this; it is simply not possible. Even a correction made on one particular day may change completely the next day. Another aspect that is not taken into account here is the aspect of time, that is, the interpretation of a certain novel made at the time one authority was active will be changed by the action of other authorities or simply by new experience, new reading, and further modification of the passing theory.

There can be no denying the fact that there are fairly stable groups who share similar beliefs, such as those who will be convinced to their dying day that the greatest work in the world is *The Lord of the Rings*. However, it is necessary to make a distinction between groups organised on a fan-based principle and those who actually interpret the work – interpret it at least in the sense that the text serves as an initiation for them to return, to take a new turn in the search for meaning, or simply to enjoy the way the work is treated, to appreciate its wit, its aesthetic qualities, that is, to model or revisit their passing theory. After all, even the semantics of the word "passing" implies incompleteness.

It seems to me that Davidson's initiation of an open-ended dynamic system of interpretation, which, in particular, is a current description of the current state of our theory, but nothing definitive, inviting us to view interpretation as events and action, is extremely plausible for literary scholarship.

IV. Speech acts, and the institutional fact of literature

Thinkers contemplating human communication, including communication in the field known as "literature", try to find a conceptual grasp of the phenomenon capturing the fact that an action such as literary communication takes place in historical societies and has its own specific dynamics. Thus Foucault mentions biopower in the transformation of discourse, a movement of thought;[108] Greenblatt refers to the "circulation of social energy".[109] While these attempts identify the phenomenon in perhaps the same way that a force we will call "electricity" operates, they do not, strictly speaking, explain in principle how this "beingness" actually works and what components it consists of. In both cases, we get the impression that there is some hard-to-describe energy, a new unknown force, whose presence is apparent,

[108] See Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 166–177.
[109] See Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*.

but whose values are difficult to determine, and it is hard to identify this force other than by believing that it is there and at work. We may ask ourselves whether there is a solution that eliminates this rather mystical presence of an unknown force and at the same time facilitates a description of what is an undoubtedly complex phenomenon that establishes a world of literary speech, and of speech about literature, as it transforms and perseveres. I feel that Searle's reasoning, based on speech act theory and aimed at a description of phenomena constituted within the social use of speech, could offer a starting point here.

Searle distinguishes two kinds of facts: "brute facts", which are entities existing independently of human will, and "institutional facts", which are facts that emerge as sets of binding laws created through human speech and communication in a particular society. The first type of facts is represented by mountains, rivers, and other natural entities that impose physical resistance on humans – denying the existence of a mountain does not relieve humans of the effort of climbing it, denying the existence of a sea or lake does not give humans the ability to walk on it unless they are Jesus Christ. The essence of institutional facts is the so-called deontic powers.[110] These are various declarations, commands, prohibitions, established laws. The boundary that needs to be crossed to transcend them is not physical, but mental, and is created in the course of speech communication. Searle gives the example of a primitive tribe's wall that has been reduced to a line of stones or stakes driven into the ground, but still functions within that tribe as a means of defining its right to use a certain territory.[111] He shows how the mechanism of deontic powers constituting institutional facts is evolutionarily ancient. We might even consider a pre-speech mechanism, for example, among troops of primates that define their territorial claims by certain active gestures intended to prevent others from entering. It transpires that this mechanism is preserved in cultural societies, where it takes on more elaborate and sophisticated forms by evolving into performative rituals for the appointment of a chief, king, or president, or into the establishment of laws and rules governing the running of society, from the Code of Hammurabi to the Bible, from the Geneva Convention to contemporary laws regulating specific areas of human activity, such as the penalty points we might accrue

[110] In this section, I attempt to briefly explain and comment on the principles of Searle's theory. For greater precision in the details, I refer the reader to his *The Construction of Social Reality* and *Making the Social World*.

[111] Searle, *Making the Social World*, p. 94.

when we are at the wheel of a car. Many of these regulations, which were originally a body of unwritten rules, have taken on a written form – see the cases above. In human practice, then, originally non-institutional mechanisms are transformed into fixed institutions, such as money, banks, courts, and seats of government and parliaments. This whole construction of social reality[112] then embraces a range of mechanisms constituting conventions, group beliefs, laws, and institutions, all of which are dominated by speech acts as a kind of particulate unit shaping these structures. Here, Searle draws on his original speech act theory, in which he argues that individual speech acts take place against the backdrop of an accepted set of rules and laws marking out a field of play for speech. At the same time, however, this field of play is delineated by the negotiation and gradual establishment of rules, conventions, prohibitions, much like a group of children agreeing on what is and is not allowed in the game they are about to play – for example, in a game of hide-and-seek, one player closes their eyes and counts, say, to ten, otherwise the game becomes pointless and the other players penalise the rule-breaking by rejecting the outcome or excluding the cheat.

I may harbour scepticism about the actual notion of "fact", which implies something definitive, irreversible. It would be difficult to deny the irreversibility of the existence of a mountain or a wall that stands in my way, but in the longer run, the existence of even these brute facts may not be something immutable – mountains shrink into meek hillocks, walls crumble and disappear. So I can judge "brute facts" to be unstable entities, much like, say, current human beliefs about the harmfulness of certain foods. In the context of a cultural human society's communication, however, Searle's theory can be deployed very well to describe the role played by the relatively stable convictions or beliefs of groups, where there is an institutionally shared acceptance that Trump is the president of the United States, and, to a different degree of stability or instability, a shared acceptance that he is a good president.

We will now try to observe literature and literary communication, by which I mean both the process of creating a work, the rumination of the reader and the critic, and even other societal implications shaping the belief that a work is necessary or harmful, that it is art or rubbish, that a book is literature and at the same time a valuable testimony to reality, or that it is an ideological pamphlet, and so on. It is conceivable that all these processes happen through a certain type of performatives at different levels. The first level

[112] See Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*.

consists of performatives that construct the work itself – performatives for which form the poet or prose writer is responsible. When William Blake writes, for example, "Spectre around me night and day / Like a wild beast guards my way", this is a performative by which the poet asserts something. Within the accepted rules of the game, we know that the poetic subject is not describing his actual paranoia, but that it is a metaphor shifting a certain paranoid phenomenon into a new context, with the focus here being on how something is said rather than what is communicated. Similarly, when, for instance, Tolstoy opens his novel with a scene where the lady-in-waiting Anna Scherer welcomes Prince Vasily in French, it is a performative in which Tolstoy is introducing what are essentially minor characters in the novel, but is also using their speech to indicate France, and at the same time he fits the cruel Antichrist and the impending war into the content of the sentence. Napoleon may not be mentioned by name, but the coming subject of the narrative is readily identifiable.[113]

These performatives shape a poem or novel and simultaneously imply a second level, created by the illocution of the poet or novelist saying: this is a poem or this is a novel. This second level of performatives is then enacted against a backdrop of certain rules and conventions that determine what groups of performatives can or cannot be accepted as a literary act. At this level, various types of deontic powers come into play; these are produced by authorities ranging from publishers, critics, and university scholars to censors and politicians, who use what is called literature not for aesthetic evaluation or pleasure but as a sort of instrument wielded as part of the power struggle within the social discourse of the time.

The very forces that are interested in stabilising the phenomenon of literature as a certain instrument of power then contribute to the creation of a fourth level of performativity, on the basis of which institutions with the authority to deal with literature – academic institutes, university departments, ministries of culture – are established. These churn out lists of required reading, lists of banned or unadvised literature, and state prizes; their activity revolves, in a way, around the formation of a "literary canon" – that is, stabilities moulding their permanence or eternity in the process of use by a certain social community. This stability is then defined not only by special editions or prescribed reading in schools, but also by other signs, such as monuments to writers, the graves of the great, literary anniversaries, plaques on buildings telling us where such-and-such a writer was born

[113] Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (Vol. 1), pp. 14–15.

or grew up, sites of pilgrimage, or vantage points where this or that writer gazed out over the landscape and conjured up a poem. Collections of first editions, books signed by the writer, and items that were once in a writer's possession are the objects of specific cults that structure certain types of convictions and shared beliefs around selected individuals.

At all these levels, performatives are part of the system of what Searle refers to as "the construction of social reality". The first and second levels are fundamentally steeped in "individual intentionality",[114] whereby the writer or poet creates the first level in order to represent, in the second, his belief that this is a poem or this is a novel. The second level forms a boundary between purely individual intention and collective intention, because it is at this boundary that the text, once published, encounters judgement defined by a certain collective negotiation, a shared actual belief as to what can or cannot be accepted as a literary work. We need to bear in mind that this is a dynamic state that has no resting value, that it can only be captured as it moves along a certain dynamic path, following a trajectory whose direction need not be and usually is not linear. Let's imagine this process in the form of a multiple triangulation as described by Davidson. That is, there is a negotiation going on between the creator's illocution, readers in the broadest sense, and tradition, i.e. what, in the realm of tradition, is currently regarded as the relatively stable stock of belief that this is literature. At the same time, however, there is another level of triangulation between the creator of speech acts, the recipient, and the world, that is, the written work is evaluated not only in relation to literature but also in terms of the acceptability of its speech in the real world. No matter how much a work may be built on fanciful phenomena and bizarre metaphors, it must still be assessable in terms of language belonging to the real world, from the aspect of speech and vocabulary applicable in reality. Generally speaking, it is axiomatic that, in a text, x makes z, or x is y, or perhaps x is x, but the text cannot lack syntax, or intelligible verbs and other parts of speech, apart from proper names, which may belong to reality as the names of historical figures, to reality in general as the names of persons, such as Otto or Francis, or may even be entirely preposterous, such as Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky or Jubjub.

The two types of triangulating negotiation are related and it could be said that movement in this part of the literary spectrum is the most dynamic; it

[114] For the relationship between individual and collective intentionality, see "Intentionality" and "Collective Intentionality and the Assignment of Function" in Searle, *Making the Social World*.

does not exclude the birth of new words, new practices that shift the more general ideas of what a poem is or what a novel is. Deontic powers clash here in their rawest form; a writer's claim that his novel is full of new words and new practices may meet with radical resistance from those who will argue that this is not literature because it violates the rules of the game, but this in no way means that, in the process of negotiation, the existing rules cannot be rethought so that the work is accepted and expands the horizon of what is accepted as literature. This resistance to a work, or its acceptance, affects the third level of performatives, which is dominated by those who judge the work, i.e. readers, other writers, critics, academic authorities, publishers, censors, ideologues, and officials dealing with literature. The third level of performatives produces more or less conservative vocabularies and rhetorical acts that rely on "tradition", that is, on what has already been discussed and is considered a relatively stable environment. The deontic powers coming into play are varied and diverse: judgements that base their arguments on previous indicators of stability (such as benchmark canonical works), the settled conservative judgements rendered by authorities, the competitive negation of those vying for attention in the given field, and forces defined by the market, publishing practices, or ideological and censorship interventions.

Notice that the higher up we go in the hierarchy of deontic powers and performatives, the more the dynamics of movement slow down and the literary field, or rather the phenomenon of literature, appears more stable. The maximum impression of stillness is conveyed at the fourth level of institutionalised literature, where dynamic triangulation and negotiation become a fixed, closed world of literary houses, such as institutions, publishing houses, university departments, libraries, ministries, all the way through to literary prizes and monuments to writers. This stability is symbolised by those immovable material objects – buildings, inscriptions on bronze plaques, monuments, and tangible prizes in the form of cups or other useless articles of symbolic value. The institutional fact of literature, stabilised in matter, was born, and the dynamics of speech became trapped in an institution.

But there is no need to take this statement overly apocalyptically. This is essentially a natural process by which a particular community wishes to stabilise certain values, and, from the point of view of this institutionalised position, literature may seem like a deadened, immobile object. Yet this immobility is merely a manifestation of certain deontic powers and is not factual, because if literature is a phenomenon that appears to be necessary or applicable to a human community, then its dynamism is the only possible way for it to survive, i.e. all movement takes place continuously, is born of the lowest levels of performatives, and stems from living speech, negotiation, the clash of assertions that this novel of mine is literature and perhaps is even

better than others, going up against the resistance of those who claim otherwise, who argue, who allow themselves to be persuaded, or who stubbornly stick to their guns. This permanent movement, this permanent instability, affects even the seemingly highest level, which, on the surface, appears to be motionless. But it moves too, only more slowly, because in practice the community is an excessively material and rather inert object whose changes and rotations are glacial. Just as banks and the monetary system do not change overnight, except in the gravest of crises, so the institutional fact of literature does not change overnight; just as in a bank the exchange rate is constantly negotiated and transactions never cease, so in literature there is constant movement, exchange, and transformation.

The symbolic boundaries between literature and non-literature, between what is acceptable and unacceptable on ethical, political, and ideological grounds, are constantly changing and shifting. Tabooed texts are put back into circulation and others are withdrawn because of objectionable words, thoughts, or ideas. The question in each community is to what extent this movement is perceived as free at the first two levels and to what extent the third and fourth levels of deontic powers enter into the process. The more the authorities of officials, censors, politicians, and ministerial institutions intervene in the rules of the game in their quest for stabilisation and a certain immobilisation, the less the whole process can be considered natural and free. The layered nature of the whole process shows that the phenomenon of literature, literature as an institution, is a fundamental social force that is never free of the exertions of power play. All these movements of dynamisation and stabilisation happen on the basis of human speech, speech acts, speech that wants something, demands something, and does something.

For literary scholarship, methods of description and analysis that affect the processes of movement at different layers of the discursive formation of literature (such as conflicts between individual and collective intentionalities moving towards stabilisation or, conversely, towards instabilities – ruptures caused once more by the contradictory pressure of intentions at different levels of a given formation) could conceivably be productive. For example, a work is created that pointedly violates contemporary convention, social expectations, contemporary taboos. This may be an individual gesture by an individual rebelling against the mechanisms of the time, but it could just as well be the manifestation of a community forming new ideas or ideology. It is difficult to determine whether a single gesture or a cluster of similar gestures is at the root of a shift ushering in substantial change. We can also eliminate almost entirely the possibility of determining the unique origin of a shift, i.e. we cannot say that any single work has triggered a radical shift and change, that we are in the presence of Peircean "firstness"; the scholar will

always be more likely to be in a situation where shifts in a given formation can be determined only with a degree of probability, not with certainty. On the other hand, close observation and analysis of speech acts of assertion, belief, and faith at different layers of the process can spawn a more faithful description of relations between isolated analyses of details and synthetic judgements about what is going on in the broader circle of speaking and acting on the subject of literary works and literature in a given community, language, and period.

However, this description cannot take the form of fixed definitive entities; rather, it should capture the direction of movement and the degree of dynamism. Just as the trajectories of elementary particles in the cyclotron have limited existence, so the work of the literary scholar should be directed towards trying to capture certain types of statements in energy and motion in and of that time. Here, as in any science, the synergy of intuition and logical reasoning will be necessary.

Conclusion

At this point we need to summarise in what ways speech act theory and the resulting thinking of philosophers such as Quine, Davidson, and Searle can be used to address issues in literary scholarship, since we have noted that most of them were only marginally concerned with literature. In particular, the poststructuralists 'discussions loosened the vocabularies of literary scholars and yielded numerous new ideas on how to look at literature. Their problem is that the very word "science" that is in Czech used in connection with literature (literary scholarship is called "literární věda" [literally "literary science"] there) does not sit well with them. It is a word that we are very fond of using and that may not bother the Anglo-Saxons so much (what with their own term of "criticism"), but even where this semantic problem does not exist, those who deal with literature talk about their "theories". The word "theory", of course, belongs to science, and there are certain logical rules governing what can be called a theory, as philosophers of science such as Karl Popper tell us.[115] The structuralists sought, not entirely successfully, to make their theories strictly scientific, much like the empirical natural sciences. In a way, poststructuralism, for all its deft theorising, abandoned the word "theory". There are even titles theorising about how not to theorise, such as *Against*

[115] See Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.

Theory.[116] Enchanted by Derrida's artistry and Foucault's superconducting abilities, poststructuralism was quick to adopt a loose vocabulary and devise new terminological apparatuses applicable only within the epistemological world of the speaker himself (Deleuze, Guattari, and others). As much as deconstructionists shape their theoretical theses each in their own way, it is noticeable that however much they draw on the same sources, they arrive at radically different results. De Man consistently tends towards traditional European metaphysics and is probably the most methodological, Hartman is bent on producing more of an artistic text worthy of the text under scrutiny, Hillis Miller discusses the unreadability of text, and Bloom abandons his origins completely and turns to mysticism.

If the word "theory", which is never a marriage of theoretical aspects with fact, but corroboration, based on reasoning, of the theory itself,[117] is to be saved for literary scholarship, and thus to give credence to the use of the label "science" where we usually speak of literary theory, then we must seek out those tools that make logical reasoning possible. Whereas the structuralists were rooted in inquiry into the smallest linguistic units that were gradually assembled into a structural complex, speech act theory seems to be more useful in this respect as it allows us to examine not only the semantic unit itself, but also its intention. At the same time, it opens up a way for us to escape the closedness of the text and examine what a particular speech entity actually does. Davidson's contemplation of radical interpretation and triangulation, Searle's search for the relationship between individual and collective intention and his thinking on the construction of social reality, and the notion of metaphor as considered by Davidson offer a number of new ways to theorise about literature without abandoning the possibilities of logical reasoning. The concept of the emergence of a literary work and its subsequent life as a living action unfolding through an invariant of performatives at different levels allows us to simultaneously study the movement of the various layers and the shift in intentions, i.e. it allows us to record the processes taking place in this field not as closed episodes and materially fixed objects, but as the movement of energies, where the recording of a trace of movement is more relevant than speculation and authoritative assertions about this or that position of the work or its value. On the one hand, philosophical theories clustered around thinking on speech acts provide literary scholarship with a logical contextual setting, from the acts of creating

[116] See W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Against Theory*.
[117] See Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.

a poem, a short story, or a novel, to the highest intentional levels at which tradition is handled, the canon of literary heritage. The most fundamental change they bring to theorists 'thinking is the need to consider all values as variables, though not just in the sense of the endless and rather mystical movement of Derridean différance and dissemination (precious as these concepts still are), but as something that can be tracked along its trajectories, so that these variables 'traces, collisions, crashes, and the results of these collapses or, conversely, concurrences or divergences can be defined.

Paisley Livingston, in "Writing Action", writes that "It must acknowledged that to suggest, in a Davidsonian vein, that writing action – intentional action – is to fly in the face of some of contemporary critical theory's most cherished dogmas."[118] It is the notion of intentionality, the inherent quality of speech that wants something, already recognised by Austin, that I consider crucial in this respect. Every speech that wants something, whether written or spoken, has a dynamic energy and trajectory along which it moves. If we know that literature and its world are also the products of natural human intentionalities, desires, beliefs, powers, human strategies manifesting themselves in how individuals and communities use speech for their own practical ends and to achieve their goals, however motivated, then literary studies should also proceed from the conviction that these intentionalities, in how they emerge, how they are composed, or how they interfere, are describable in terms of their approximate trajectories and possible energetic impacts at a given time in a given community.

[118] Livingston, "Writing Action", p. 280.

Root Metaphor in and beyond Literary Criticism

MARTIN KAPLICKÝ

Philosophy, art, and art criticism

The fact that philosophical reflections on language are tightly interwoven with literary theory has already been pointed in the first chapter of this book. We have seen that, when analysing literary works, we need to have a certain grasp of the constituent essence of literature, that is, an understanding of language. And one of philosophy's time-worn themes is the exploration of language. Language is, after all, one of those important tools by which we conduct our actions in the world, but it is also a means by which we can articulate and gain a better understanding of our life in the world, and we can even use it as a basis to formulate philosophical concepts. Philosophers are thus drawn into a specific and paradoxical situation in relation to language. They aspire to elucidate and interpret the fundamental features of the world, of which our language, too, is an important part. And the element in which philosophical reflections are expressible is, again, language. Language is thus both an object and an instrument of philosophical inquiry.

Philosophical interpretation of the sweeping fundamental outlines of reality, however, is not one of the usual roles played by language in our everyday lives. Language, in the form of our ordinary use of words, is not prepared for this kind of undertaking. That is why various philosophers build up their own philosophical vocabulary which differs from the everyday use of language and either adopts or reacts critically to the vocabulary of previous philosophers. For example, the eminent English philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, who was reflecting on the complicated relationship between philosophical systems and language long before the "linguistic turn in philosophy", argued that "Every science must devise its own instruments. The tool required for philosophy is language. Thus philosophy redesigns language

in the same way that, in a physical science, pre-existing appliances are re-designed."[119]

On the one hand, philosophy introduces completely new concepts, which it defines in such a way as to reflect the given philosophical intention; on the other hand, it reinterprets already established concepts and often alters their meaning. The meaning of terms already in use is stretched, expanded or transformed so that the philosophical vocabulary is able to express features of reality hidden beneath the surface of our everyday understanding of the real world. It tries to express features of reality that elude us in the everyday direction taken by our lives.

The formulation of aspects of experience that are difficult to express in practical language is also addressed, however, by art. Moreover, literature and philosophy share the same basic tool – language. This might be why we find many statements in the history of philosophy that imply analogy between philosophical texts and works of art. Already mentioned Alfred North Whitehead, for example, pointed out that what philosophy and literature have in common is that they transcend the realm of the obvious and suggest meanings that lie beyond the dictionary meaning of words.[120]

It was this motif of transcending established meanings of words and creating one's own philosophical vocabulary that engaged the American philosopher Stephen Coburn Pepper in the late 1920s and during the 1930s. His primary interest was in philosophical systems that attempted to serve up a basic, general picture of reality, i.e. philosophies referred to as metaphysical systems (or, in Pepper's terminology, world hypotheses). Philosophical systems aiming for the highest possible generality are precisely the sort that need to transform the language they work with. They seek to describe the most general features of the world as a whole, yet this whole is not proffered to philosophers, but is locked to them, so they must construct it by putting together fragments of their own experience. They themselves are part of the world they are trying to describe. They are presented with the world only from a certain incomplete perspective, on the basis of which they try to formulate the features of the whole. In this respect, Whitehead argues that "the besetting sin of philosophers is that, being merely men, they endeavor to survey the universe from the standpoint of gods. There is pretense at adequate clarity of fundamental ideas".[121]

Yet neither Pepper nor Whitehead dismisses the broadest possible philosophical systems as pointless. They do not think that we should simply

[119] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 11.
[120] *Cf.* Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 9, and Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, p. 117.
[121] Whitehead, "Remarks", p. 179.

abandon these attempts and pursue only more specialised research. Indeed, various forms of beliefs about the overall nature of the world often provide a background, whether or not acknowledged, to more specialised considerations, and to ignore such beliefs would be merely to leave them in their raw form. Philosophical inquiries into the overall nature of the world contribute to a critical examination of principles that we take for granted, whether this is the belief that the basic structure of the world is fully explicable through causal connections between objects, or the view that the structure of objects is principally built on the basis of a primary immutable substance and mutable attributes. Metaphysical concepts seek either to corroborate these general assumptions or, conversely, to refute them and offer alternatives. The need for metaphysical systems also becomes apparent when we seek to understand how the various sciences and disciplines are organised and related. If we are to gain a meaningful insight into the relationship they have, we need a concept that transcends all others in scope. And that is precisely what metaphysical systems try to do. The formulation of the broadest possible philosophical systems, or the view of the world from a standpoint approaching that of the gods, as mentioned by Whitehead, are therefore justified. We must not lose sight of the fact, though, that they are not formulations of immutable truths, but man-made hypotheses whose legitimacy lies only in what they are able to explain.

Hence Pepper's use of *world hypotheses* for metaphysical systems. This label is an attempt to emphasise that the most general philosophical systems are, by nature, large-scale hypotheses that are open to falsification; though far from being perfect in every way, they do provide a basic orientation in the world we inhabit. And it is these philosophical hypotheses of the broadest scope that Pepper seeks to explore in detail (examples of world hypotheses that he himself cites are "contained in books such as Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, Descartes's *Meditations*, Spinoza's *Ethics*, Hume's *Treatise*, Kant's three *Critiques*, Dewey's *Experience and Nature* and Whitehead's *Process and Reality*").[122] He explains that he wishes "to study world hypotheses as objects existing in the world, to examine them empirically as a zoologist studies species of animals, a psychologist varieties of perception, a mathematician geometrical systems."[123]

But it was not Pepper's intention to write an alternative history of philosophy. He focused primarily on the structure and conceptual construction of the world hypotheses themselves. He made no attempt to present a historical

[122] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, p. 1.

chain of philosophers in which one philosopher would influence another. In his study he was concentrated not on philosophers, but on their concepts. He was not interested in who was whose disciple, but sought to describe the internal structure of the philosophical systems.

He tried to capture the basic organising principle through which philosophical systems enable reality as a whole to be interpreted. This enabled him to see that, across various epochs in the history of philosophy, we can find philosophical systems that share the same organising principle and differ only in detail; systems that seem to speak different languages and cannot find common ground; and systems seeking to develop a new language not previously used in philosophy. He calls his own theory, on which he tries to base his investigation of metaphysical systems, the "root metaphor theory".

In Pepper's view, the basic organising principle behind any metaphysical theory is metaphorical. The building of a philosophical system, he believes, can proceed only by metaphorically using a certain feature of the part of reality we know as a basic organising principle for interpreting the world as such, and then deriving from it the basic concepts of the metaphysical system in question. "Every philosophical theory is a far-flung metaphor. Form and matter are faded metaphors drawn from the technique of sculptor, the potter, the carpenter, the artisan of any sort. Matter and motion are faded metaphors drawn from watching brass balls rolling down inclined planes, stones falling from towers, motes in a sunbeam."[124]

In the course of his research, Pepper tried to show that not every root metaphor is ripe for the construction of a world hypothesis, since many of them lack the potential to build a philosophical system of the broadest scope. While the root metaphor may prove very useful for a particular specialised theory, it fails as a candidate for the construction of a world hypothesis. Pepper is quite emphatic that we do not yet have (nor will we ever have) an entirely adequate world hypothesis. All we have is a handful of relatively adequate world hypotheses. Each has its weaknesses and strengths; none of them is completely satisfactory. Even so, they can help us in our efforts to understand our world. Philosophical concepts that share the same root metaphor will coincide in their basic layout and diverge only in the details, concepts built on different root metaphors will speak "different languages", and concepts with a new root metaphor will try to reorganise existing philosophical language to express a "new insight".

[123] Ibid., p. 2.
[124] Pepper, "Philosophy and Metaphor", p. 130.

Root metaphor theory as presented in Pepper's *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (1942) is primarily concerned with philosophical concepts of the broadest possible scope and how they relate to more specialised theories. The first time Pepper articulated his concept of the root metaphor, as he himself states, was actually in *The Philosophy of Criticism* (1928–1938).[125] This book interconnected considerations of world hypotheses closely with reflections on the nature of art criticism. In it, Pepper articulated the view that critical analysis of works of art must take into account the diverse contexts within which a work of art is perceived. In his view, a work of art cannot be completely isolated from the manifold relations it has to our reality. Even the most rigid formalist theories of art criticism cannot deny that a work's formal bonds have an effect on the perceiver and therefore they need to overstep a description of the work itself and attempt to explain the nature and meaning of that effect.[126] Art criticism, Pepper argues, encompasses a great scope of facts that go beyond a description of the work itself. It can relate to the facts with which history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and even physics and biology work. But which of these facts are of pivotal importance for the assessment of works of art? What kind of facts should we rely on when interpreting and evaluating works of art? And what facts can be assigned lesser priority? Factoring in all relationships potentially relevant to artworks would be impossible. In this problematic situation, according to Pepper, art criticism is aided by world hypotheses, on the basis of which a critic explicitly or implicitly decides what type of facts need to be focused on. World hypotheses thus act as the broadest possible framework for any responsible art criticism. Whereas world hypotheses provide art criticism with a certain basic stratification layering the relevance of different types of facts, art criticism demonstrates world hypotheses and the way they function by focusing on a specific work of art, and in doing so also explains their relevance to the handling of particular problems and themes. A relationship with anything specific is hardly likely to rise to the surface in general metaphysical statements. This is why, Pepper claims, there is a very close relationship between world hypotheses and art criticism.

However, the aforementioned *The Philosophy of Criticism* never got beyond a manuscript. Pepper's publisher refused to publish the 550-page book

[125] See Pepper, "Autobiography of an Aesthetics", p. 285, note 8.

[126] For example, the influential formalist theorist Clive Bell's famous concept of significant form is defined, in his interpretation, as a set of relationships of colours and shapes that evoke specific aesthetic emotions. Significant form is thus defined by its relationship to the emotions it evokes. *Cf.* Bell, *Art*, pp. 11–12 and 16.

because, in his opinion, it was scattered too widely between metaphysics, aesthetics, and art criticism and would have difficulty finding readers. Though the book was never published, it became the basis for numerous articles on metaphysics (the problem of world hypotheses, as Pepper would have it) or on aesthetics and art criticism. The book provided the groundwork for two monographs, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (1942) and *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (1945). Pepper's parallel analyses of world hypotheses and art criticism were thus bifurcated by external circumstances. Pepper himself, however, never abandoned his belief in the close relationship between metaphysics and art criticism, and in his own autobiography he admits that he probably should have been a little more insistent about the inseparability of the two disciplines, and thus about having the manuscript published as a single book.[127]

In this text, I will respect Pepper's original intention and thematise his interpretation of world hypotheses and critical concepts in close connection with each other. I will attempt to present the basic planes or levels of root metaphor theory as formulated by Pepper with a view to grasping metaphysical concepts, and indicate how, on each of those levels, it is applicable in considerations of the nature and meaning of art criticism.

Outline of the basic features of a knowledge situation

Pepper's reflections on world hypotheses and concepts of art criticism are predicated on a deceptively simple question: what can we actually base our knowledge of the world on if we want it to be as sound as possible? Pepper points out that a common and seemingly obvious answer to this question is that our investigations must be grounded in the clearest and most incontrovertible facts and principles. In this respect, the comparison of scientific and philosophical systems to huge edifices has become entrenched. To be most convincing, a scientific theory must be built on unshakable principles and unfalsifiable facts, just as the stability of a building depends on solid foundations. It thus became an established belief that a philosophical or scientific concept is true only if it is based on indubitable, self-evident, and incontrovertible axioms or guaranteed facts, from which it then unquestionably derives other propositions. This belief would be justified if we could

[127] See Pepper, "Autobiography of an Aesthetics", p. 285, note 8.

step out of our world for a moment, truly take up the standpoint of the gods mentioned by Whitehead, pore over the fundamental principles of reality, return to the world, and then formulate the basic concepts. However, this is not possible for us, so we can but base our decisions solely on data that have been subject to varying degrees of verification. Universally valid principles and incontrovertible facts are simply beyond our reach. Alfred North Whitehead, as a mathematician and philosopher, points out in this context that "the accurate expression of the final generalities is the goal of discussion and not its origin. Philosophy has been misled by the example of mathematics; and even in mathematics the statement of the ultimate logical principles is beset with difficulties, as yet insuperable."[128] The notion that inquiry needs rock-solid foundations seems to reverse the actual process of investigation. We start from a certain number of facts that we have identified from our own perspective, and from some rather hazy intuition of how they are connected. In the course of our research, we seek to verify and corroborate these connections as thoroughly as possible, thereby also enabling us to gain a deeper understanding of the initial facts.

According to Stephen Coburn Pepper, the assumption that philosophical inquiry must proceed from what is certain and unquestionable leads to a cognitive fallacy he calls dogmatism. Those solid foundations on which our knowledge is built are, in truth, the antithesis of the ordinary views we hold on the reality of our everyday experience. Common sense facts are regarded – rightly in Pepper's opinion – as unreliable and as so problematic that they are often not treated – this time unjustifiably as far as Pepper is concerned – as facts at all.

Dogmatism is effectively a reaction to the unreliability of our inexpert beliefs about reality. It therefore bases its expert conclusions on propositions that it postulates as self-evident principles, factual indubitability, or statements of infallible authority. But it is also here, Pepper ventures, that the main cognitive deficiency of dogmatism emerges. If any proposition is self-evident, indubitable, and infallible, this means that we actually refuse to corroborate it in any way. Dogmatically imposed propositions cannot be subjected to critical scrutiny – they are assumed to be self-evident. In this case, then, a theory that was supposed to critically scrutinise our uncritically accepted beliefs refuses to subject its own propositions to critical scrutiny. This results in irresolvable discord. Pepper also points out that there are numerous conflicting basic tenets and facts in the history of philosophy.[129] What

[128] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 8.
[129] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, pp. 21–36.

was supposedly self-evident turns out to be a subject of great controversy. Returning to the metaphor of the "solid foundations" of our knowledge that we mentioned above, we could perhaps say that dogmatism tries too hard – or at any rate, more than it can corroborate – to have solid foundations.

Pepper also shows that the history of philosophical systems is riddled with dogmatic claims, including Descartes' postulation of two fundamental and separable substances, i.e. *res extensa* ("extended thing") and *res cogitans* ("thinking thing"), Locke's primacy of primary qualities, and the positivist certainty of basic scientific facts, to name but a few. Be that as it may, Pepper stresses that such systems containing dogmatic beliefs are not worthless. What is worthless is the air of final truth that they radiate around themselves due to their dogmatic elements. What is valuable, on the other hand, is how these concepts organise their facts so as to corroborate each other. As Pepper himself states, "Dogmatism is, therefore, unnecessary. In fact, dogmatism has always in the history of thought been obstructive to cognitive advance, and the cognitive drive has come from a method of hypothesis. It is this method working beneath the dogmatism of the great thinkers that has produced the advances in philosophy and sciences. […] In the first place it involves the frank acceptance of the situation that the origin of hypotheses is among uncriticized and therefore alterable facts."[130]

So if we side with Pepper and accept that dogmatism lacks cognitive legitimacy, we must also concede that we do not have a fully adequate theory that we can simply apply to reality. All we have is a pile of hypotheses, some corroborated better than others. Yet this, says Pepper, is hardly a reason to give up on, or to succumb to extreme scepticism about, the possibility of knowing our world. It follows from his line of reasoning, above all, that the construction of hypotheses is fundamental to our knowledge of reality. Their value and persuasiveness depends on how well they can corroborate the facts they work with. Our hypotheses, then, are sourced not from some mysterious inspiration of infallible truth, but from our ordinary everyday knowledge, taking the form of Plato's "mere opinion" (*doxa*). Pepper himself calls this realm of facts "uncriticised evidence", "middle-sized facts", or, in tandem with philosophical tradition, "common sense".

Our knowledge, he claims, is therefore made possible not by "rock-solid foundations" that we need to discover and on which we must build our knowledge, but by the nature of the domain of opinion (*doxa*), common sense, a realm that philosophy has been trying to conquer since time immemorial.

[130] Pepper, "Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics", p. 367.

Common sense is actually the set of personal feelings, perceptions, and beliefs forming the basis for our understanding of reality at moments when we are not trying to grasp it critically or expertly. Pepper considers this area, too, to be one of knowledge, even if that knowledge is contradictory and irritating in many respects. It is precisely because of its contradictory, unsystematic, and cognitively unsettling nature that this type of knowledge triggers the need to understand reality better. It thus drives the emergence of various philosophical and scientific hypotheses that are able to describe the world or some of its domains more systematically. Common sense, despite its unreliability, is the type of knowledge to which we return when, for whatever reason, we remove ourselves from the plane of systematic knowledge. "No cognition can sink lower than common sense, for when we completely give up trying to know anything, then is precisely when we know things in the commonsense way."[131] Pepper points out that, consequently, this realm of facts is not really systematically observable, for as soon as we do try to understand it, its facts become arranged, modified, and systematised, and are transformed into the facts of more or less extensive hypotheses. Nevertheless, in his view, this realm is a springboard for our knowledge. We simply have nothing else. The trouble with dogmatism is that it cold-shoulders this primordial domain and is so certain of its hypotheses that, forgetting they are only hypotheses, it embraces them as an ultimate truth. If, on the other hand, we admit that our knowledge originally stems from common-sense facts that have been exposed to critical scrutiny, we realise that our scientific and philosophical concepts are hypotheses whose persuasiveness depends on how fully they are corroborated. Before we move on to methods of corroboration in the construction of a hypothesis, I would like to make a few remarks on this point.

My first note concerns the link we have mentioned between metaphysics and art criticism. Insofar as Pepper shines a light on how dogmatism is of no cognitive benefit in the construction of world hypotheses, the danger of dogmatism can also be seen in the field of art criticism. Here, too, we come up against seemingly hard facts on which the assessment of a work is built, whether we are talking about the artist's intention, the work's causal links to tradition, or the relationship to the society in which the work was created. We might join Pepper in saying that, by ridding ourselves of the belief that these facts are of unconditional relevance to the interpretation of works, we can focus on how critical hypotheses organise the facts about a work and how these facts relate to other facts of our world. We are transitioning

[131] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, p. 43.

from a concept of art criticism that opens up the meaning and value of any work on the basis of unquestioned facts and criteria to criticism that is still searching for that meaning and value. The value of criticism itself, according to Pepper, would then lie not in what facts it relies on, but in what it is able to explain through an analysis of its facts.

My second observation concerns the nature of common-sense knowledge. As I have already noted, Pepper draws attention to its cognitive unreliability, which encourages us to construct hypotheses that will attempt to corroborate each other with facts. Importantly, however, common sense for Pepper is more than a springboard for the construction of hypotheses. To some extent, common sense also absorbs the sediment of scientific knowledge and is therefore in constant flux. And that is why, Pepper says, it is so elusive. Our common sense includes a rudimentary understanding of what a microchip, the internet, or a social network is, facts that were certainly not part of the common sense of Pepper's time. What Pepper is particularly emphatic about in relation to common-sense knowledge is that this is the lowest plane of knowledge to which we always eventually return from the various kinds of hypotheses. He also stresses its mutability, the contradictory nature of its shards of knowledge, and the impossibility of grasping it systematically. He views the recognition of the fundamental role of common sense in our knowledge situation as a defence against the dogmatic supposition of the *a priori* certainty of any expert assumption.

However, if we select, from common sense, only a certain part of those shards as a normative criterion for the investigation of a particular area, that part can itself form the basis of a dogmatic belief that is all the more dangerous because it is not inherently an articulated theory, but a set of unspoken self-evident rules. This type of dogmatism, which Pepper does not address in his reflections, is discussed by Roland Barthes in *Criticism and Truth* (*Critique et verité*, 1966), fittingly in the context of his thoughts on literary criticism; he refers to it as "critical verisimilitude". Here, Barthes defends the right to the existence of a new critical approach to works of art and responds to Raymond Picard's criticism – published under the title *Nouvelle critique ou nouvelle imposture* (1965) – of *Sur Racine* (1963). Barthes is at pains to show that Picard's condemnation of French New Criticism (Nouvelle Critique) issues not from a thorough consideration of its method, but from the simple observation that New Criticism flies in the face of literary criticism's established practice of critical verisimilitude. "This verisimilitude is hardly ever expressed in declarations of principle. As it is that which goes without saying it never raises questions of method, since a method is, in a quite contrary way, the act of doubt by which one asks oneself about chance or nature. You notice it particularly when it adopts astonishment and indignation before the

'extravagances' of new criticism: everything appears to it as 'absurd', 'bizarre', 'aberrant', 'pathological', 'frenzied', 'alarming'."[132] Barthes thus employs an example from the field of literary criticism to draw attention to a form of dogmatism that had not been considered by Pepper, but is no less dangerous.

On a third note, I would like to point out at this juncture that Pepper's reflections on the inadequacy of dogmatism are geared towards the insight that the facts underlying a hypothesis are not served to us directly, but are percolated through that hypothesis. "Facts and hypotheses cooperate to guarantee the factuality and truth of each other."[133] Again, this dance between a given hypothesis and the facts it works with is typical of art criticism. Here, too, the simple description of a work of art is clearly shown to be a notion fraught with problems. Our description of a work of art is weighed down by the interpretive perspective from which we view the work. The American philosopher and aesthetician Richard Shusterman offers this example: "For example, Hamlet's love for his father (which he both declares and expresses in mournful, melancholy behavior) has been taken as a descriptive 'hard fact' of the play. But if we come to adopt the plausible Freudian interpretation of Hamlet's mood, delay, and behavior towards his mother, this apparent firm fact evaporates into Hamlet's self-deluding rationalization."[134] Pepper, then, long before Shusterman, was trying to show that the idea of a fully objective, indisputable description is a symptom of dogmatism in both metaphysics and art criticism.

Hypotheses and world hypotheses

However, if we remove of any signs of dogmatism, will we not then sink into extreme scepticism or unlimited relativism about what we know? Not according to Pepper. The rejection of dogmatism, he believes, means only that we have no access to the ultimate nature of the world. But our knowledge situation, grounded in common sense, guides us to grasp the world better than we have understood it so far. Cognitive progress, in turn, is only possible by criticising, cultivating, and corroborating uncriticised evidence – common sense – and by converting it into the systematised criticised evidence of philosophy and the individual sciences.

But how can we make this shift from uncritical evidence to criticised evidence? Only by beginning to corroborate the facts available to us. And what

[132] Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, p. 4.
[133] Pepper, "Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics", p. 367.
[134] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 87.

means of corroboration are available to us in our world? Pepper distinguishes two basic ways of corroborating facts – multiplicative corroboration and structural corroboration.

We can experimentally repeat the particular situation of an observed fact, and a recurring characteristic of the situation is then corroborated by its very recurrence. This type of corroboration is at the heart of all types of measurement, whether in the humanities or the natural sciences. Repeated measurement enables us, for instance, to determine and verify the temperature of water or the age of a particular archaeological relic. Pepper calls this type of corroboration "multiplicative corroboration". However, we can only measure or experimentally verify certain features of reality. Here, then, we can see vividly how the nature of the facts we are investigating changes as we move from uncriticised to criticised evidence. Multiplicative corroboration draws our attention to emphasise those characteristics of reality that can be repeated.

Yet many facts cannot be repeated (these are facts of all hypotheses presenting the world in its historical dimension – historical, geological, anthropological, aesthetic, and literary-theory hypotheses). Moreover, the measured data alone would not be of much use to us. For them to tell us anything substantial about reality, we must show how they are related to other facts. According to Pepper, this is what we achieve with the second type of corroboration, which he calls "structural corroboration". This is based on the fact that, drawing on knowledge of a particular domain that is under investigation, including the results of the multiplicative corroboration, we form a hypothesis that describes the relationships tied to the domain – this hypothesis thus tries to describe the underlying structural bonds between elements. Specific examples of those bonds may include causal interactions, the way in which particular facts are related to a hypothesised goal or direction, or analogies between various sets of facts. The basic principles organising a given hypothesis and their structure are further honed and refined during the process of forming and testing the hypothesis.[135] It is the various types of hypotheses, together with the results of multiplicative corroboration, that, Pepper ventures, are the central planks of our knowledge of reality. Scientific hypotheses help us to fathom what has happened, what is happening now, and make reasoned predictions about future developments.

[135] Thus, even with structural corroboration, there is a certain transformation or abrasion of common-sense facts. All facts are viewed primarily from the point of view of the main principle organising the given hypothesis.

Our knowledge, Pepper deduces, is predicated on the formation and testing of various types of hypotheses. None of them is self-evident, and the value of each lies in how thoroughly it can justify and verify the facts with which it works. But how can we navigate our way round the multiplicity of different hypotheses? On what basis do we find one hypothesis more corroborated and convincing than another? Pepper identifies two fundamental criteria for the adequacy of our hypotheses – the criterion of *precision* and the criterion of *scope*. The precision of a hypothesis depends on how accurately it can join up and explain the facts of a particular scientific field, be it a hypothesis about the nature of Renaissance art in southern Bohemia, an investigation into the atomic nucleus, or a biological analysis of the life of venomous mammals. The conceptual network of an inquiry should be as precise as possible, so as to be able to capture the finest details of the realm under investigation. However, no one inquiry stands in isolation from other research. An investigation of the atomic nucleus is intimately connected with hypotheses about the nature of the electron shell and the overall structure of the atom; a study of Renaissance art will be considered more convincing if it lays bare the links to ancient, Gothic and Baroque art; research into venomous mammals will be all the deeper if we show how they are similar to and differ from other mammals. The criterion of scope demonstrates that the more different facts a hypothesis can piece together, the more it is corroborated. These cognitive criteria of scientific hypotheses also serve as a conduit for Pepper to call attention to how the most general of philosophical inquiries are relevant to our knowledge. Using the criteria of precision and scope as a basis, he formulates the following remarkable thought: "For since it is dogmatic to assume that any limited description will be unaffected by outlying facts not included in that description, the determination of the reliability of that description can be reached only by obtaining descriptions of these outlying facts and observing whether or not the given description is affected. The greater the range of consistent descriptions the greater the assurance as to the adequacy of any given description. All of these mutually consistent and apparently adequate descriptions become evidence for one another, and render the fit of each particular description more firm. In short, scope increases adequacy. It follows, that the maximum of adequacy will be reached with the maximum of scope, namely, when the scope is all available facts whatever and the theory a world theory or a metaphysics."[136]

[136] Pepper, "Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics", p. 368.

We can see in this quote Pepper's specific defence of the relevance of the world hypotheses. They provide us with a basic outline of reality, from which we can identify connections and links between different sets of facts. For Pepper, a certain notion of reality beyond the field we are studying accompanies any hypothesis. World hypotheses seek to propose and corroborate the essential nature of reality as a whole, thereby providing special disciplines with an underlying framework and preventing assumptions about the overall nature of reality from remaining in the form of unconsidered, uncorroborated, and thus unreliable common-sense facts.

In the last sentence of the above quote, Pepper shows that world hypotheses are hypotheses with the maximum possible scope, and therefore involve "all available facts whatever". That is not to say that philosophers actually have to process all available facts in detail. It just means that Pepper is trying to create as general a conceptual system as possible, from the perspective of which any fact *could be* interpreted.

Here, the analogy between world hypotheses and art criticism plainly comes to the fore again. To be sure, art criticism makes no attempt to create the broadest possible conceptual system for interpreting reality, but it does try to capture the basic features of the artworks under scrutiny. However, their scope is not clearly defined. It extends into assorted areas of our experience. That is why Jan Mukařovský can afford to say that the aesthetic attitude and, especially, a work of art "provide a certain direction to our view of reality in general".[137] In interpreting a work of art, the critic thus finds himself in a situation in which any type of fact may be of relevance to him, a situation analogous to that of the speculative philosopher. And this is why, according to Pepper, the two disciplines are able to interact so closely.

The metaphorical root of world hypotheses

If we accept Pepper's criticism of dogmatism and his argument that there is a need for world hypotheses, we are left to ask ourselves how we can formulate world hypotheses non-dogmatically. Pepper's own answer to this question is that "what I call the root metaphor theory is the theory that a world hypothesis to cover all facts is framed in the first instance on the basis of a rather small set of facts and then expanded in reference so as to cover all facts. The set of facts which inspired the hypothesis is the original

[137] Mukařovský, *Structure Sign, and Function*, pp. 20–21.

root metaphor. It may be a ghost, or water, or air, or mutability, or qualitative composition, or mechanical push and pull, or the life history of youth, maturity and age, or form and matter, or definition and similarity, or the mystic experience, or sensation, or the organic whole, or temporal process. Some of these facts in the course of expansion may prove adequate, others not."[138]

This quote hints at several themes that are crucial for Pepper. It reveals Pepper's conviction that if we strip the veneer of dogmatism from world hypotheses, we must concede that their main organising principles were born of our own and initially crude knowledge of a particular field of experience. We try, by analysing this originally limited field of experience, to identify the core organising principle within it, which we then attempt to apply even outside the original field. It is this fundamental organising principle that Pepper calls the root metaphor. The conceptual system of an entire world hypothesis is then built on the foundation provided by the root metaphor. For example, the mechanical push and pull mentioned by Pepper in the previous quote is manifestly derived from a description of material objects and their position and movement. However, the explanatory principle of cause and effect implicit in the idea of push and pull can also be successfully applied to such diverse disciplines as history, psychology, and pedagogy.

In the quote above, Pepper cites several examples of the use of root metaphor in various philosophical systems. He is showing that, in the history of metaphysical theories, we can recognise several basic organising principles. However, only some of them have the potential to engender a conceptual system able to satisfy the criteria of precision and scope that I touched on in the subchapter "Outline of the basic features of a knowledge situation". Pepper shows that we have no fully adequate world hypothesis at our disposal. Each is particularly well worked out in some areas, but inadequate in others. However, on the strength of a study of the history of philosophical formulations of world hypotheses, Pepper distinguished four root metaphors that he used as a basis to articulate four different "relatively adequate" views of reality, four different "relatively adequate" world hypotheses, namely: mechanism, formism, organicism, and contextualism. It is these world hypotheses that, Pepper says, "stand out above the others"[139] in terms of fulfilling the criteria of precision and scope. Each of them interprets the nature of the world on the basis of a different organising principle – a different root metaphor – and paints a different picture of reality. On the plane of art criticism,

[138] Pepper, "Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics", p. 369.
[139] Pepper, "On the Relation of Philosophy to Art", p. 184.

then, they demarcate the domain of aesthetic value in different ways, and hence localise, in different ways, those facts and relations of a work of art on which the critic should focus.

Although each of these hypotheses portrays a different picture of reality and a different picture of art criticism, it cannot be said that any one of them is more legitimate and adequate than the other. Pepper asserts that "We may hope for new world hypotheses with sets of categories more adequate than the four traditional ones listed above. But until such hypotheses appear, the sensible advice seems to be that of studying the interpretative contributions of the distinct world hypotheses we have and making such practical use of them jointly as a man's best judgement may determine."[140] Pepper thus admits that another relatively adequate hypothesis may emerge that he has failed to distinguish, or that a philosophical system may arise that meets the criteria of precision and scope better than the hypotheses he has identified. This would have to be corroborated according to the ability of the hypothesis in question to organise the evidence. Pepper adopts a position of cognitive pluralism modified by the criteria of scope and precision. It is this factor that acts as a safeguard against a radically relativist position.[141]

Relatively adequate hypotheses

As has been mentioned above, Pepper distinguishes four relatively adequate and mutually irreducible world hypotheses in his work: mechanism, formism, organicism, and contextualism. These are, in fact, four distinct groups of philosophical systems (and those who came up with them may have been

[140] Ibid, pp. 184–185.

[141] Extreme relativism would postulate that any philosophical system or statement of art criticism is as legitimate as any other. On the other hand, this position would not allow for the possibility that we might be wrong in our philosophical claim or critical statement – all claims would be equally valid. Extreme relativism would also be unable to explain that we can understand the world or a work of art better with the passage of time. The idea of an evolving opinion would be nothing more than an illusion within this position – it would change, but not increase, our understanding. Pepper's position retains a pluralistic view of the existence of multiple equally adequate philosophical systems or art criticisms of the same work, but their adequacy, according to Pepper, depends on the criteria of precision and scope. These criteria are also able to explain the possibility of an evolving opinion. This evolution would be characterised as a shift to a position that can explain facts from a broader perspective and with greater precision.

active at quite different times) which, Pepper observes, share a basic root metaphor. In his metaphilosophical texts, Pepper starts by illustrating the basic root metaphor of each group and then, using specific systems as examples, demonstrates the possible deviations, variations, and modifications within a single group. He keeps to this approach both when investigating world hypotheses and when analysing concepts of art criticism. However, these detailed analyses are beyond the scope of what we can discuss here. In the subchapter below, I will attempt to outline the root metaphors of the four relatively adequate world hypotheses and their concept of artworks and the relationships they claim to be essential to art criticism.

Mechanism

Pepper argues that mechanism stands alongside formism as the oldest world hypothesis. He spots it as early as Democritus and Lucretius, later in René Descartes, John Locke, and then in a throng of others. According to Pepper, the basic root metaphor of mechanism is the principle of action and reaction, or cause and effect. Within the framework of common-sense experience, we can take any kind of machine or mechanism, whether a very simple lever, a pulley, a dynamo, or a watch, as an illustration of the basic principle of this hypothesis. The principle for understanding these mechanisms is always the same: we need to find the basic parts of the whole machine, locate them in time and space, and then show how the operation of one part causally affects the operation of another. This principle is then tested by mechanism in various domains of reality and is postulated as a basic explanatory principle in the concepts of the authors mentioned above. Although its home turf is primarily the analysis of the causal action of material objects, the principle of action and reaction, or cause and effect, can also be applied to our understanding of psychological action or to the interpretation of historical facts, and it also has justification in the field of art. The mechanistic metaphysicians grasp this principle as a fundamental instrument through which reality can be understood. The world, as they see it, is like a big machine, and the core task of knowledge is to work out "what moves what", to find the great causal chain of causes and effects. The various mechanistic-minded authors will differ in what exactly they consider to be the basic units of reality (typically these are the "primary qualities" of objects), but the key principle organising their theories is the relationship that the causal action of one element has on another.

Mechanistic art criticism focuses on investigating the effect that an artwork has on the perceiver. This type of critic is primarily fixated on carefully analysing the individual elements of a work and how they are specifically

arranged in order to show that the artwork's particular type of arrangement evokes a certain type of response in a competent recipient. Pepper cites Walter Pater as an example of a mechanistic critic, and singles out George Santayana, in his *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), and David Wight Prall, in *Aesthetic Judgment* (1929), as aestheticians who tried to systematise the mechanistic approach to works of art.[142] The aesthetic value of a work of art, according to mechanistic criticism, lies in its capacity to evoke a particular type of "aesthetic pleasure". The way this specific aesthetic pleasure is defined (Pepper here refers to Santayana's "objectified pleasure") differs depending on the actual form taken by the type of mechanistic art criticism. The consensus, however, is that inquiry centres on the causal relationship between the work and the recipient.

Formism

Pepper contends that the development of formist world hypotheses also has a long and influential tradition. He considers Plato, Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and even the British philosopher and logician William Ernest Johnson from the turn of the 20th century, to be formists. Although these authors' philosophical systems differ considerably, Pepper argues that they are united by the fundamental principle organising their concepts, their root metaphor. For formism, this is similarity. Like mechanism, formism is based on the idea of the world as a certain set of spatially and temporally determined particulars. Whereas mechanism seeks to understand the world more deeply by analysing their causal connections, formism attempts to show the connections and nature of these particulars by classifying them into groups of similar particulars. Formists categorise these similarity-based classes and their relations by drawing on the identity of certain characteristics or forms shared by the members of a given class. These characteristics or forms cannot themselves be particulars, since they are general forms shared by different particulars. The most basic formist categories are: 1. particulars; 2. general forms; 3. the way in which forms participate in particulars. Elaborating on these broad categories, formism then divides the world into groups and classes according to varying generality. This system allows us to understand the nature of particulars and how they relate to other particulars on the basis of the general forms they share. This way of systematising reality, too, has proved very useful in various

[142] Pepper, *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts*, p. 39.

scientific fields; it is behind predicate logic and biological taxonomy, for example. The array of authors espousing the formist world hypothesis may differ in the ontological value they ascribe to general forms, characteristics, or norms, but their default organising principle is to find the general in the particular. From the perspective of this world hypothesis, the world seems like the vast set of all objects, internally structured into a multitude of interpenetrating subsets.

Formist criticism focuses primarily on analysing how a particular work of art expresses general forms. "These forms may be the ideal forms of natural species, or essential forms of societies and cultures, or the ideals of art styles and craftsmanship."[143] Formist criticism, then, homes in on the relationships that artworks have with the more general principles that surround them. Thus, for example, the exploration of artworks as imitation bears a distinct formist trace. This trace can also be seen in all critical strategies that address artistic representation, view an artwork as an image of a particular society or culture, or focus on the ideological factors inherent in a work. Pepper considers formist art critics to include Aristotle and, in the 19th century, Hippolyte Taine, who assumed that an artist's times, race, and environment would have a formative influence on the nature of an artwork.

Organicism

The organicist world hypothesis, Pepper says, is much younger than the previous two hypotheses. He associates it primarily with various versions of objective idealism and specifically mentions Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Schelling, and Francis Herbert Bradley. While both mechanism and formism rest on the assumption that the world is a collection of separate objects or particulars, the organicist world hypothesis views the world as a certain type of whole that is moving towards completion, unification. The basic root metaphor of this set of world hypotheses is the "process of integration". According to organicist world hypotheses, completely isolated objects do not exist, but are always part of a higher whole in which they have a role to play; this again, however, is only part of a higher integrative process. Organicist world hypotheses try to outline the basic nature of the world in its evolution towards absolute integration, towards a completely ordered whole. The objects of the world are thus not presented in isolation from everything else, as they are always part of someone's experience. This partial experience

[143] Pepper, "On the Relation of Philosophy to Art", p. 186.

is an element in the development of a certain personality, which in turn is integral to the development of a certain society, and this society is part of the development of the world. We can completely understand a particular only when it is applied to a fully integrated whole. In Hegel, for example, this integrative process of experience is analysed through the triad of thesis – antithesis – synthesis. For organicist philosophers, then, the basic outline of our understanding of reality is drawn on an axis of development running from knowledge of mere fragments to knowledge of the whole. One of the fundamental tools of organicism is to apply any factor under analysis to this assumed goal – to a fully integrated whole. As Pepper himself summarises, "According to organistic categories, all experience is a movement towards integration. Men enter into this movement from fragmentary centers, all of which aim towards a cosmic totality that is a complete harmonious integration of all experience. Science, political institutions, and art, all in their own ways develop towards this total integration. The value of any judgement or act, or aesthetic expression is in proportion to its inner coherence and its contribution to a coherence beyond itself."[144] From the perspective of organicism, the world appears to be a very complicated and internally fragmented story moving towards its denouement.

For organicism, a work of art is not a material object or the actual recording of the work, but only the interconnection of this "material carrier" with the recipient's experience. A creative act similar to that of the artist is therefore also expected of the art critic. "As an artist creates a work following the demands of his materials toward their fullest satisfaction in mutual harmonious coherence, so a spectator or critic should recreate the work in his act of appreciation."[145] Art criticism, then, is a highly creative field for organicist critics, and its aim is to assess and explicate the degree of a work's coherence and integration. Pepper considers the likes of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Bernard Bosanquet to be organicist critics.

Contextualism

Contextualism, Pepper says, is the youngest world hypothesis. He links it primarily to the concepts of American Pragmatism, and in doing so specifically mentions the philosophical concepts of William James and John Dewey. Contextualism's root metaphor is the "changing present event".[146] The key

[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid, pp. 186–187.
[146] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, p. 233.

idea of contextualism is the insight that human life is based on the unfolding activities of an organism in its environment, even though it seems that "nothing is happening". Even at times when we are not taking any obvious action, a lively exchange is in progress with our environment (inhalation, exhalation, the action of the body's weight on its base, and other processes) at various levels of our organisms. Human life can thus be grasped as an evolving arrangement of a series of unfolding events. Life is made possible only by the organism's constant response to its environment, to its context. Contextualists detect this active principle even below the surface of conscious life. Inorganic nature, too, can be explained by analysing the various events through which it passes and the interactions in which it engages. Unlike mechanism and formism, contextualism does not presuppose that world events can be broken down into basic elements, and unlike organicism, it does not presuppose that there is a fully integrated whole towards which the world is moving. Contextualist writers are suspicious of "the simplest elements" and "final goals". The events of the world are in constant flux, within which it may transpire that there are even more elementary elements of reality than we had assumed. Pragmatism – contextualism in Pepper's vocabulary – would concede that the organicist process of integration is a very important part of an unfolding event, but verifying the assumption of a final goal towards which our experience is directed is beyond the reach of experience. It is this distrust that is referred to as pragmatic scepticism about the finality of our knowledge. As far as contextualism (pragmatism) is concerned, the world has the characteristics of a vast network of different events, a network that is unfinished because we are continually weaving more thread into it. With pragmatism, scientific and philosophical hypotheses constitute tools that show relations of varying importance and variously effective connections within this network of events.

Besides outlining the relationship between different events within a contextualist network, contextualists also draw attention to the quality of the event itself. If, within a given situation, we search for opportunities for the practical use of what belongs to it or analyse it on the basis of its parts and relations to other events, its specific quality in those relations dissolves. To gain an insight into the qualitative aspect of an event, we need to focus on the actual process of experience delivering this specific dynamic quality. It is art, in Pepper's concept of contextualism, that enables us to immerse ourselves fully in the qualitative waters of a situation. "A work of art is an object designed to maintain and enhance such intuited experience of immediate felt quality. The greater the extent, depth, and especially the vividness of the experience, the greater its aesthetic value, and also the greater the aesthetic worth of the object (the work of art) which in embodying the experience

preserves and communicates it."[147] According to this hypothesis, the fundamental meaning of art lies not in the maximum harmony or integration of all its components. The primary goal is to evoke, in the recipient's experience, the vividly felt quality of an event. Art therefore need not aim for ultimate harmony, since its dominant conduit may in fact be conflict. Contextualism defines this evocation of a "vividly felt quality" as a touchstone of the value of artworks.[148]

That, then, is a basic characterisation of Pepper's four groups of relatively adequate world hypotheses and their respective strategies of art criticism. As far as Pepper is concerned, not one of them is more adequate than the other three, and none of them, according to him, is fully reducible to another. These are simply four different perspectives we can use as a starting point for our exploration of reality as a whole and our criticism of works of art. Each of them portrays the world and art in a different light, and each of them accentuates factors that, in the others, fade into the background. Scott R. Stroud fleshes out this motif when he points out that each world hypothesis provides its own distinct sense of direction in the world or an artwork that no other world hypothesis is capable of delivering. His "evidentiary criticism" position therefore both demonstrates the need for pluralism and lays bare the limits of any approach to the world or an artwork, inviting us to go beyond our own point of view and try to see the validity of other concepts pertaining to reality or the same artwork. "The sort of pluralism explicated here gives us a way to be fallibilist in criticism: it enables us to both assert and argue based on our own way of looking for evidence from the world *and* to see why others may reasonably disagree with us (or may talk in radically different ways altogether). For the sort of evidentiary pluralism enunciated here, we must find a way to engage others, and that way seems to be had in pursuing criticism while realizing the limits of one's approach."[149]

Pepper himself stresses that hypotheses must include explanations of the principles organising other world hypotheses in order to be relatively adequate themselves. Thus, even within the framework of organicist hypotheses and art criticisms, we encounter the mechanistic principle of action and reaction, the formist breakdown into types and classes, and the contextualist concept of a dynamic event. However, in organicism these factors are

147 Pepper, "On the Relation of Philosophy to Art", p. 188.
148 Pepper, *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts*, p. 65.
149 Stroud, "Pragmatism, Pluralism, and World Hypotheses", p. 288.

ultimately subordinate to the principle of the integration of the parts into the whole.

It should also be stressed that Pepper in no way considers these four groups to be the last word in the philosophy and theory of art criticism. They are merely the four groups that he himself was able to identify in his research. He points out that other world hypotheses may well emerge that he has not been able to spot in his investigations.[150]

The unreliability of eclecticism

The discussion above, showing that we do not have a fully adequate world hypothesis, might shepherd us to the conclusion that we can create such a hypothesis by simply combining all four world hypotheses into a single hypothesis. We would simply interlock those parts of the world hypotheses in which they individually excel. Pepper calls this strategy "static eclecticism".151 However, he believes that static eclecticism is very cognitively confusing in that it breaks down the individual unifying principles of these world hypotheses into several different centres and is not itself a coherent philosophical system. Moreover, contends Pepper, it fails to offer anything but individual theories in isolation. As Pepper himself says of the eclectic combination of world hypotheses, "A combination of them into a single eclectic hypothesis, which arbitrarily select what somebody believes to be 'the best' out of each, distorts and mangles the structure of the evidence, and the total result is weaker than if we make a frank acceptance of the four alternative theories."[152]

Besides this cognitively unhelpful static eclecticism, Pepper also distinguishes „dynamic eclecticism", which is derived from the fact that any world hypothesis is born against the backdrop of a particular state of language. The formulation of a new philosophical or critical vocabulary, if it is to be intelligible, cannot depart entirely from the state of language from which it has emerged. According to Pepper, then, dynamic eclectics "were working

[150] In his later works, Pepper himself distinguishes and explicates a fifth world hypothesis that he calls selectivism, the root metaphor of which is the purposive act. His extensive *Concept and Quality* (1966) is devoted to this world hypothesis. Its implications for aesthetics and art criticism are also discussed in his article "On the Relation of Philosophy to Art". *Cf.* Pepper, *Concept and Quality*, and Pepper, "On the Relation of Philosophy to Art", pp. 105–107.

[151] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, p. 107.

[152] Pepper, *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts*, pp. 9–10.

their way into new root metaphors and had not yet worked their way out of old ones."[153] This type of eclecticism, Pepper asserts, is also cognitively invalid, but is a consequence typical of the quest for a new means of expression, a new type of insight. Seen in this light, it is only a by-product of the desire for new means of expression. I believe that this dynamic type of eclecticism is abundantly present not only in philosophical systems, but also in art criticisms. It signals a yearning to develop a new type of language for understanding works of art, but conceptually remains rooted in previous vocabularies.

Possibilities for the use of Pepper's root metaphor theory

Pepper intended his root metaphor theory primarily as a tool for understanding metaphysical systems or, in his words, world hypotheses. In 1943, a year after publication, Pepper's *World Hypotheses* was given a laudatory review by the philosopher Edwin Arthur Burtt, who opens with the following statement: "A volume has recently appeared which, should the times prove ready for it, may well inaugurate a new era in the writing of systematic philosophy."[154] With hindsight, we can say that the times were clearly not ready, as Pepper's concept received only sporadic attention. Yet his ideas did not fall completely to the wayside; over time, they were developed in the context of a pluralistic view of the nature of philosophical, scientific, and art-criticism hypotheses.

In his reflections on strategies of historical interpretation, Hayden White, for example, openly subscribed to Pepper's legacy by developing ideas about mechanistic, organicist, idiographic, and contextualist ways of historically concatenating facts.[155] Pepper's motif of the untranslatability and mutual irreducibility of world hypotheses also resonates in Thomas Kuhn's reflections on scientific paradigms.[156] In the field of art-criticism theory, his ideas are currently being developed by the aforementioned Scott R. Stroud.[157]

Stroud builds on Pepper's reflections to cultivate, in particular, a general theoretical discussion on the nature of art criticism. I would venture

[153] Pepper, *World Hypotheses*, pp. 106–107.
[154] Burtt, "The Status of 'World Hypotheses'", p. 590.
[155] *Cf.* White, *Tropics of Discourse*, pp. 63–67.
[156] *Cf.* Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
[157] *Cf.* Stroud, "Pragmatism, Pluralism, and World Hypotheses".

that Pepper's root metaphor theory can also be used on several planes as a backdrop to track the specific methods employed by art critics. Pepper's reflections on dogmatism would be a stimulating plane. In examining the work of individual art critics, it would then be possible to investigate the types of dogmatism they use. This would elicit questions in the vein of: What facts does a particular critic hold to be indubitable and so obvious that, in his opinion, they need not be proved at all? What assumptions or prejudices does this dogmatism conceal? We could also delve into considerations about the source of expert hypotheses in common sense by studying what common-sense facts a particular critic is wont to rely on and how they are modified in his critical vocabulary. It would even be possible to examine the individual criticisms of a given author to look for their underlying organising principle – the root metaphor – and to locate how that principle is transformed. For example, we could trace whether the root metaphor changes in individual critical treatises depending on the work that is being critiqued. In such an analysis of individual criticisms, we would not have to focus solely on the world hypotheses distinguished by Pepper, with their capacity to provide an overall interpretation of the world, but we could identify the different semantic tinges of particular criticisms according to the original field from which the critic, in a given criticism, takes his evaluative judgements and analogously transposes them to the work. Such analogies might take us to taste and cooking (the work is bland, saccharine, bitter-sweet, astringent, raw), to craftsmanship and the rendering of a product (the work is polished, finely chiselled, veneered), stages in life (the work is young, cultured, mature, childishly naive), horticulture (the work is green, ripe, blossomed, withered), and, of course, many other fields. Needless to say, the above statements on works are not purely descriptive and thus carry an evaluative judgement (either explicitly or implicitly). Analysis of these metaphors and analogies can guide us to assumptions about the nature of art and art criticism that are not voiced in the criticism itself. For many of these analogies, however, we might (but may not) find one of the guiding organising principles distinguished by Pepper lurking in the background (the causal mechanism of a work, a reference to embodied forms, the integration of all the elements of the work, the liveliness of the work).

In this text, I have tried to show what possibilities Pepper's root metaphor theory holds for the study of art-criticism texts. On a general plane, as Scott R. Stroud points out, it leads us to adopt a pluralistic perspective on philosophical concepts and art criticisms. Just as there are several relatively adequate world hypotheses, so there are various legitimate criticisms of a single work of art. However, with Pepper this does not result in unlimited relativism because the legitimacy of any interpretation is steered in a new

direction by the criteria of precision and scope. The four basic root metaphors distinguished by Pepper, for their part, invite us to analyse the specific material of art criticism on their basis. Numerous specific historical disputes, such as the dispute between aesthetic Hegelianism and Herbartianism, would transpire to be between different root metaphors (in this particular case, organicism and mechanism). Taken as a whole, Pepper's root metaphor theory encourages us to examine non-dogmatically the evidence on works of art and cultural artefacts in a plurality of possible perspectives. Other chapters of this book will also dwell on these issues.

The Ironist Who Would be a Poet's Helper: Richard Rorty's Neopragmatism and Dilemmas of a Literary Scholar

DAVID SKALICKÝ

Accepting contingency

Pragmatism, said Richard Rorty in one of his lectures,[158] is based on the idea that nothing is more important than human happiness. Yet the belief that there is a possibility of universal knowledge that will lead us to this happiness, or the belief that there is only one way to reach this happiness, is fundamentally alien to him. He rejects the idea of a universal human nature and dismisses theology appealing to the will of God and metaphysics that "believes in an order beyond time and change which both determines the point of human existence and establishes a hierarchy of responsibilities."[159] He does not believe that a universally valid, irrefutable answer can be found to human moral dilemmas, to the question of what the meaning of human existence is and what the right way to live is. The idea of the universally valid, essential, immutable, eternal is not, according to pragmatists, a notion that concerns the human world, the possibilities of our knowledge, or our joys and sorrows. Pragmatism is on the side of anti-essentialism, pluralism, historicism, nominalism.

These days, such an opinion is often viewed as a stance plunging us into the mire of a kind of total (post-modern) relativism, where everything is allowed, because no truth, no value, no norm is certain, irrefutable, valid

158 Rorty, "Pragmatizmus je politický skrz-naskrz", p. 19.
159 Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. xv.

for everyone always and everywhere. The pragmatists contend, however, that there is no reason to spurn or fear such a conclusion. Indeed, in their view, absolute and universal truths, values, and norms are no more than a name for one of their contingent, institutionalised, and naturalised configurations. The alternative to these is not just the absence of any order, but human order, i.e. an order that is our own construct, our own choice, and our own responsibility; an order that changes and that assumes different forms in different cultures; an unambiguous order that can be problematised and altered. To acknowledge that it is contingent in this respect is not to acquiesce to formless chaos, but to recognise that truths, values, and norms are a human matter and show how humans organise their world, and that we do so neither on the basis of divine guidance nor on the basis of some mysterious insight revealing a "natural" world order independent of humans and our place in it. As Rorty would have it, to recognise that it is contingent in this respect is to free oneself from theology and metaphysics.

"The world does not speak. Only we do",[160] Rorty writes in the first chapter of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), aptly titled "The Contingency of Language". To accept the contingency of language is to give up the belief that the world (or God) speaks to us in words that the chosen ones (philosophers, prophets, scientists, possessors of "common sense", etc. – there have been, are, and probably will be many aspirants to this role in human history) can hear and interpret for humanity. It also means letting go of the idea that language can represent the world in its own intrinsic nature, that is, that the world has a kind of inherent naturalness to which language is supposed to correspond, and seeing language instead as a human construct that actively projects reality rather than passively mirrors it, with different languages doing so in different ways.[161] It is impossible to compare language with reality itself in order to decide which of the languages available to us is the right one, or whether a particular language, in the way it has evolved, approaches this ideal. This is not to say that there is no relationship at all between language and the world; on the contrary, language is a vital tool for interaction between people and between humans and the world. A (neo)pragmatic theory of language, which, to be simplistic, can be identified with the concepts of post-analytic philosophers such as Quine, Sellars, Goodman, and Davidson, does not sever the links between language and the world – it merely seeks to abandon the

[160] Ibid., p. 6.

[161] In this respect, Saussurean semiotics and linguistics refer to the arbitrariness of language in a similar way. On analogies in the concept of language as viewed by Saussure and by post-analytic philosophers, see Peregrin, *Meaning and Structure*.

notion of language as a medium of representation or expression and instead understand it instrumentally and behaviourally.[162]

To abandon the correspondence theory of language is also to take leave of the correspondence theory of truth: "truth was made rather than found",[163] Rorty points out. The truth is not out there waiting to be uncovered: "To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations. Truth cannot be out there – cannot exist independently of the human mind – because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own – unaided by the describing activities of human beings – cannot."[164] Does that mean that I can say anything about the world and it will be true? Not at all. The world does not speak, but "may cause us to be justified in believing a sentence true".[165] The world does not say, "Look, if you jump from the twenty-first floor and hit the hard ground, you'll kill yourself!" But the fate of those unfortunates who have voluntarily or involuntarily taken that dive is probably proof enough for anyone to accept that the statement "a person who jumps from the twenty-first floor and hits hard ground will kill themselves" is true.[166]

But, if pragmatists claim that it is impossible to step out of language and compare it with the world, how can they know that a particular description does not correspond to the world? How can they know that there is no absolute, universal, and immutable truth or value, no intrinsic nature of reality,

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[162] See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 10–11.

[163] Ibid., p. 3

[164] Ibid., p. 5.

[165] Ibid.

[166] The "twenty-first floor" is an allusion to the famous Sokal affair, in which Professor Sokal challenged "anyone who believes that the laws of physics are mere social conventions is invited to try transgressing those conventions from the windows of my apartment. I live on the twenty-first floor." (Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries: An Afterword", online.) A pragmatist will not invite anyone to try such an experiment, but would certainly question the sanity of anyone who refused to subscribe to the truth of the statement "a person who jumps from the twenty-first floor and hits hard ground will kill themselves". However, a pragmatist would bridle at drawing conclusions to the effect that the statement "a person who jumps from the twenty-first floor and hits hard ground will kill themselves" corresponds to reality or "the world speaks the language of contemporary physics".

no speaking voice of God and someone who can hear it? And if they assert that such a thing does not exist or is impossible, are they not claiming the right to absolute validity for their statement, i.e. are they not denying their own beliefs by their denial?

Richard Rorty, fully aware of this trap,[167] writes: "To say that there is no such thing as intrinsic nature is not to say that the intrinsic nature of reality has turned out, surprisingly enough, to be extrinsic. It is to say that the term 'intrinsic nature' is one which it would pay us not to use, an expression which has caused more trouble than it has been worth. To say that we should drop the idea of truth as out there waiting to be discovered is not to say that we have discovered that, out there, there is no truth. It is to say that our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter, as a topic of philosophical interest, or 'true' as a term which repays 'analysis.' 'The nature of truth' is an unprofitable topic, resembling in this respect 'the nature of man' and 'the nature of God,' and differing from 'the nature of the positron,' and 'the nature of Oedipal fixation.' But this claim about relative profitability, in turn, is just the recommendation that we in fact say little about these topics, and see how we get on."[168]

In Rorty, of course, we find statements to the effect that something is or is not, exists or does not exist, or is or is not possible. However, the point of these is simply that it would be better to let go of this belief/opinion/thesis. Would it not be better if we stopped taking that question seriously and addressed this question instead? Would our interests not be better served if we completely changed the vocabulary we use to talk about this issue?[169]

Metaphysician, ironist, poet

According to Rorty, a metaphysician is someone who believes that it is possible to discover and describe reality as it really is; an ironist is someone who does not share this belief. A metaphysician is an essentialist, an ironist a nominalist and historicist. A metaphysician believes that a universal

[167] "The difficulty faced by a philosopher who, like myself, is sympathetic to this suggestion – one who thinks of himself as auxiliary to the poet rather than to the physicist – is to avoid hinting that this suggestion gets something right, that my sort of philosophy corresponds to the way things really are" (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 7–8).

[168] Ibid., p. 8.

[169] Ibid., p. 9.

vocabulary can be discovered that will enable us to describe the world in terms of its intrinsic nature; for him, the term "truth" equates to precisely such a description. The ironist thinks we should give up the belief that there is an essence to reality with which a certain method of description may resonate, and the task of the philosopher, scientist, or artist is to discover this essence, to tear away the veil of (deceptive or opaque) phenomena, and to reveal the described object in its intrinsic nature. It would be better, in his view, not to use statements such as "corresponds to reality" or "depicts how things really are", or to regard them merely as "an automatic and empty compliment which we pay to those beliefs which are successful in helping us do what we want to do."[170]

According to the ironist and pragmatist Richard Rorty, the history of philosophy, science, art, and politics consists of the creation of new vocabularies, new descriptions of reality; yet none of them should be considered correct or true in the metaphysical sense. In art, this is well illustrated: a surrealist depiction does not reflect the essence of reality better than a realist or expressionist representation; the vocabulary of modern spiritual poetry or experimental prose is no more faithful to this essence than the vocabulary of ancient drama or Renaissance lyricism. Such a statement is probably universally acceptable in the case of art, or fiction, but Rorty ventures that we should also look in the same way at the factual vocabularies of philosophy, politics, or science and not assume that, while Karl Marx was wrong in his description of the essence of economic laws, Adam Smith got it right, that Jean-Paul Sartre's description of the way the world is corresponds more closely to it than Thomas Aquinas', or that the way liberals want to organise society is more in line with its intrinsic laws than what socialists are advocating. For many contemporary metaphysicians, this is readily acceptable in the arts, politics, or the humanities, but not in science – and on this they gaze most often today in the hope that it possesses (or at least is working towards) a privileged vocabulary that will enable us to describe the world as it actually is. As Rorty sees it, "we must resist the temptation to think that the redescriptions of reality offered by contemporary physical or biological science are somehow closer to 'the things themselves,' less 'mind-dependent,' than the redescriptions of history offered by contemporary culture criticism."[171] Anyone who claims to be describing the world as it really is is merely seeking to naturalise a certain contingent final vocabulary.[172]

[170] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 10.
[171] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 16.
[172] On Rorty's characterisation of "final vocabulary", see ibid., p. 73ff.

If we abandon the hope of discovering a vocabulary capable of describing reality in terms of its intrinsic nature, as Rorty advises us, we are compelled to ask ourselves: what good are all the transformations of existing vocabularies and the creation of new ones? Are they not just meaningless transfigurations of signs bereft of any interaction with reality? Not for an instrumentally and behaviourally based philosophy like pragmatism. For pragmatists, cognition should not be viewed as grasping the nub of things, but (in Darwinian terms) as a search for a means of adapting to the environment in which we live. What we understand as scientific progress ought to be seen (in Kuhnian terms) not in the sense that "science is getting closer and closer to the truth, but [...] that contemporary science is capable of more than what past science has achieved. For example, the science of the present can explain the science of the past, but the science of the past cannot explain the science of the present."[173] New vocabularies act as new tools in our interaction with the world – instruments that find various uses in different settings and historical or cultural contexts become obsolete and are discarded and replaced by new ones, but also need to be recalled and reused.

Language (in the general sense of sign-based communication) is not only a matter of what we name, but also of how we name it. By choosing certain words, we set the angle from which a particular reality is viewed. "But in a Nietzschean view, one which drops the reality-appearance distinction, to change how we talk is to change what, for our own purposes, we are."[174] To change vocabulary is to change how we understand the world we inhabit and ourselves, and therefore to change the way we act in it and organise human practice. Transformations of human history are therefore intrinsically related to how we name the world we live in. The greatest figures in science, philosophy, politics, and art are those who have taught us to speak a different language, that is, to look at the world differently, to understand it differently, to live differently. Revolutions in politics, science, philosophy, or the arts are also always manifested by a radical change in vocabulary: "revolutionary achievements in the arts, in the sciences, and in moral and political thought typically occur when somebody realizes that two or more of our vocabularies are interfering with each other, and proceeds to invent a new vocabulary to replace both."[175] Rorty calls the inventor of the new vocabulary, the person who "makes things new" with that vocabulary, a *poet*:

[173] Rorty, "Pragmatizmus je politický skrz-naskrz", p. 14.
[174] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 20.
[175] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 12.

"The craftsman typically knows what job he needs to do before picking or inventing tools with which to do it. By contrast, someone like Galileo, Yeats, or Hegel (a 'poet' in my wide sense of the term – the sense of 'one who makes things new') is typically unable to make clear exactly what it is that he wants to do before developing the language in which he succeeds in doing it. His new vocabulary makes possible, for the first time, a formulation of its own purpose. It is a tool for doing something which could not have been envisaged prior to the development of a particular set of descriptions, those which it itself helps to provide."[176]

The compulsion not to be satisfied merely with reproducing the way others show the world, the urge not to be just a mouthpiece spouting vocabulary created by someone else, but to show the world according to oneself, is inherent in political and religious revolutionaries and in a whole slew of artists, philosophers, and scientists building a new paradigm of how we see the world. The *strong poet*, that Harold Bloom figure that Rorty takes inspiration from and applies to every architect of a new vocabulary, regardless of discipline or genre, is gnawed by the anxiety that he will merely be the product of others' descriptions ("what strong maker desires the realization that he has failed to create himself?"),[177] that his work will be no more than a reproduction of a borrowed vocabulary. His is the nagging anxiety that "[o]ne will not have impressed one's mark on the language but, rather, will have spent one's life shoving about already coined pieces. […] One's creations, and one's self, will just be better or worse instances of familiar types."[178]

The artist may accept his role as someone just offering another possible perspective, another possible – final and contingent – instrument of description. But he may certainly also aspire to go beyond that: to fashion a vocabulary that will never be surpassed, that will shine brightest among all the vocabularies to come, making him the central figure of the canon, the greatest author of both the past and the future.[179] The philosopher, too, may be tempted to adopt an absolute perspective and model himself as the ultimate philosopher providing humanity with the right vocabulary to describe the order of the world. "The attempt to be in this position is the attempt to write something which will make it impossible for one to be redescribed except in one's own terms – make it impossible to become an element in anybody else's beautiful pattern, one more little

176 Ibid., pp. 12–13.
177 Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 5.
178 Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 24.
179 Harold Bloom famously reserved this role for Shakespeare (see Bloom, *The Western Canon*).

thing."[180] This is a role that even philosophers who fought against metaphysics (metaphysics "in the sense of a search for theories which will get at real essence"),[181] such as Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger,[182] typically found themselves unable to countenance in the end, as they could not shake off the desire for their vocabulary to be the one being spoken at the dusk of history. One successful philosopher in this respect, Rorty claims, was Derrida, especially in his late work, which many would say is more literature than philosophy. Heidegger's late writings, too, are in some respects closer to poetry than to philosophy, though here there is not a simple need for a new description, but a metaphysical desire to hear a kind of absolute Truth of Being and to reconstruct the vocabulary with which it is written. According to Rorty, it was Derrida who found a path that, unlike his predecessors, did not lead him back to metaphysics: "I take it that Derrida does not want to make a single move within the language game which distinguishes between fantasy and argument, philosophy and literature, serious writing and playful writing – the language game of *la grande époque*. He is not going to play by the rules of somebody else's final vocabulary."[183] He thus eludes not only those who would polemicise with him, but also those keen to follow and develop his teachings. Yet, for those who fail to appreciate what Rorty calls irony, he also ceases to be taken seriously: while late Heideggerian is the vocabulary through which many philosophers attempt to speak, late Derridean seems more suited to, well, who, in truth? When all is said and done, isn't this precisely the type of writing that lays bare the contingency of categories such as "philosophy" or "literature"? Doesn't the fact that we are unsure exactly what to make of Derrida's later texts point to the contingency of our reading – its dependence on interpretive patterns that are by no means necessary? Perhaps, in the future, there will be a vocabulary that names Derrida's works such as *Glas* canonical, archetypal, drearily classical.

Metaphor to the head

We should, Rorty writes, "see the history of language, and thus of the arts, the sciences, and the moral sense, as the history of metaphor […]."[184] Hearing the word "metaphor", the first thing that probably springs to mind is poetry. If we

[180] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 106.
[181] Ibid., p. 88.
[182] Rorty prefers to refer to them as theorists rather than philosophers – see ibid., p. 96.
[183] Ibid., p. 133.
[184] Ibid., p. 16.

view the metaphorical use of language solely as an embellishment, a beautification, a "poeticisation" of language, we will reject any paraphrasing, as that would destroy the poem: it would reduce it to disposable meaning and thereby rob it of the unsettling quality or charm that is its everything.[185] If we ascribe hidden cognitive content to metaphor, the goal of literary interpretation will be clear: to expose that content. Certainly, the magic of the metaphor will evaporate, but the interpretive paraphrase is not meant to replace the poem (hermeneutics is not meant to replace the erotics of art, as Susan Sontag feared) – the poem is still there, the interpretation merely provides us with the key to its meaning. It is only when we open the door into the poem that we can glimpse more than simply what was on the surface. Of course, behind some poems' doors there is emptiness and behind others nothing but banality; behind others, though, there is undreamt-of profundity, and then there are those seemingly unprepossessing ones we can only fall in love with after we have delved more deeply.

However, interpreters of poetic texts tend to have a more acute awareness than anyone else of the elusiveness of metaphor, which cannot be reduced to a particular cognitive content, paraphrasable or otherwise. Poems are interpreted over and over again and – it would appear – *ad nauseam*. There is no essence of meaning hidden in them that can be paraphrased, hence the interpreter's task cannot be to uncover it.

For Donald Davidson, whose concept of metaphor Rorty builds on, metaphor consists not of communicating a meaning different from the literal meaning, but of an unusual use of language that defies our language game: "understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavor as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules."[186] If there were some kind of hidden message (propositional content) to be unravelled in only a slightly more elaborate way within the rules of our language game, metaphor would be reduced to a kind of play on words, entirely convertible into a literal paraphrase. By the "creative endeavour" that metaphor requires of the recipient, Davidson means something other than the correct deciphering of the coded meaning: "to suppose it can be effective only by conveying a coded message is like thinking a joke or a dream makes some statement which a clever interpreter can restate in plain prose. Joke or dream or metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact – but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact."[187] Metaphors do not convey a particular meaning;

185 See Sontag, "Against Interpretation".
186 Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 245.
187 Ibid., p. 262.

they only suggest, they form certain associations in us – their value lies in the causal effect they elicit. A *live* metaphor (i.e. one that has not yet "died off into literalness") is an "unfamiliar noise"[188] in our speech practice, an event of discourse that defies the well-worn motions of a particular language game and that can have various effects. It causes us to take notice of new realities.

Sontag writes that interpretation "makes art into an article for use, for arrangement into a mental scheme of categories."[189] The pragmatist does not grasp the term "use" as something undesirable in relation to art: he views reading, tacit captivation, analysis, and interpretation merely as different ways of using texts.[190] He is not opposed to an interpretive paraphrase of meaning if there are readers who – whatever their reasons – are interested in it, and he has no need to point out that such a paraphrase is lower, less noble than the poem itself, a heresy (Brooks).[191] He argues that the aim of interpretation – as noted above – is not and cannot be to uncover some inherent hidden meaning of a work (or of a particular metaphor), but "to reproduce in others some of the effects the original had on him."[192] Interpretation as a mere "arrangement into a mental scheme of categories" (as Sontag refers to it) would seem to him, however, to be a missed opportunity, since an encounter with a live metaphor that does not fit into the usual patterns of my linguistic practice (or with a living work of art that evokes in me a certain resonance that is difficult to name) may become an impulse to revise it, to transform it, to create a new vocabulary.

As Rorty's words at the beginning of this essay on metaphor imply, metaphors do not belong solely to the domain of poetry or art in general; they also play an essential role in philosophy, science, and politics. They may not have specific cognitive content, but they can guide us to knowledge – a knowledge different from a mere extension to or application of an existing theory, that is, different from just a predictable movement made in a certain language game or within a certain paradigm. "The literal uses of noises and marks are the uses we can handle by our old theories about what people will say under various conditions. Their metaphorical use is the sort which makes us get busy developing a new theory,"[193] writes Rorty, hence they are therefore essential for scientific development.[194] Scientific revolutions, he contends,

188 Rorty, "Unfamiliar noises: Hesse and Davidson on metaphor".
189 Sontag, "Against Interpretation", p. 10.
190 See the chapter entitled "In Defence of Use" in this book.
191 On the polemic with Brooks' "The Heresy of Paraphrase", see Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?", pp. 74–86.
192 Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 264.
193 Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 17.

should be perceived "as 'metaphoric redescriptions' of nature rather than insights into the intrinsic nature of nature",[195] and new final vocabularies should be thought of "as poetic achievements rather than as fruits of diligent inquiry according to antecedently formulated criteria."[196] It is literary study that "helps one realize that today's literal and objective truth is just the corpse of yesterday's metaphor."[197]

The power of imagination

What purposes are served by descriptions of the world invented by artists? If we believed in the possibility of a true representation of reality and in the discovery of the essence of things, a natural order, and universal laws, it would not be easy for us to defend imagination. Artists, to us, would seem eccentric beings who choose to fritter away their time composing melodies, depicting non-existent characters and plots, or playing with words or colours, and who even expect us – as viewers, listeners, and readers of the fruits of their imagination – to join them in wasting our time. Why not? After all, we are willing to give them our time (and we are quite happy to do so, because it amuses us, brings us pleasure, gives us enjoyment), but only that time which is called "free", i.e. time intended for fun, rest from duties, and distraction from quotidian convention. We have long ceased to heed Plato's warning that the artist's depiction might confound us, deceive us, lead us into evil; art, if not in the service of propaganda, is innocent because it is frivolous, in no way concerned with the essentials of what we want in life: happiness, health, contentment, prosperity, success.

If, however, we were to accept the anti-representationalist arguments, and with them the conviction that recontextualisation is our destiny, our desire, and the vehicle of what could be described as progress,[198] the imagination becomes legitimate for us. But we will no longer see it as an activity that, instead of striving to represent the real, is concerned with inventing non-existent entities; if signs do not represent but rather, in a sense, constitute the world,

194 See Rorty, "Unfamiliar noises".
195 Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 16.
196 Ibid., p. 77.
197 Rorty, "De Man and the American Cultural Left", p. 134.
198 "[…] in philosophy, as in politics and religion, we are naturally inclined to define 'progress' as a movement toward a contemporary consensus" (Rorty, "Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy", p. 2).

the difference between the "factual" rendering and the artist's rendering will be only one of degree. In this context, Rorty writes about the difference between *inference* and *imagination*: "We speak of inference when logical space remains fixed, when no new candidates for belief are introduced. Paradigms of inference are adding up a column of figures, or running through a sorites, or down a flow-chart. Paradigms of imagination are the new, metaphorical use of old words (e.g., *gravitas*), the invention of neologisms (e.g., 'gene'), and the colligation of hitherto unrelated texts (e.g., Hegel and Genet [Derrida], Donne and Laforgue [Eliot], Aristotle and the Scriptures [the Schoolmen], Emerson and the Gnostics [Bloom], Emerson and the skeptics [Cavell], cockfights and Northrop Frye [Geertz], Nietzsche and Proust [Nehamas])."[199] Imagination is a force that requires transcendence beyond existing sign frames – it is something possessed by the original scholar, philosopher, and artist, but not by the scholar, philosopher, or artist merely adopting and mechanically applying a particular existing vocabulary (mechanical application and creative imagination are, of course, only hypothetical poles; a specific case will be closer to one or the other, or a combination of simple adoption and creativity). Not only the works of Bach, Magritte, or Rushdie, but also the texts of St Paul, Newton, Kant, Freud, and Peirce, manifest extraordinary imagination. Art, whether it takes the form of narrative fiction or lyrical musical dreaming, or a play with words, colours, concrete, or the human body, is a creative way of transcending the prevailing semiotic theories and exploring new ways of describing the world.[200]

If we rid ourselves of the notion that the natural sciences enjoy privileged access to reality, and view them as a tool, the question is rather, what good are they and how do they relate to the happiness we crave, the meaning of our lives? As Darwin demonstrates, there is no doubting the fact that they can radically transform our view of humankind and the world. Even so, this tends to be the exception – if we look at the form taken by normal, everyday science, we can agree with those who believe that "the world as it is described by the physical sciences teaches no moral lesson, offers no

[199] Rorty, "Inquiry as recontextualization", p. 94.

[200] However, becoming what Rorty calls a "poet" requires more than imagination. There are many people who have a fantastic imagination, but who never become a poet. They only become one if their imagination is expressed in a way that resonates in others, or, to put it another way, only if their imagination yields a vocabulary that others also decide to speak. (Of course, various institutional mechanisms, power, tradition, peer pressure, emotions, etc., come into play to a greater or lesser extent, so this is not a "decision" in the sense of an individual's rational and completely free choice.)

spiritual comfort, [who] have concluded that science is no more than the handmaiden of technology."[201] Thanks to the sciences and technology, we live very comfortably, are becoming ever better at fighting disease and healing injuries, enjoy better-appointed housing, move around and communicate more quickly, and have an unprecedented amount of information literally at our fingertips, but they are silent on our reason to live, how to live, or what to live for. Where should we look for answers? Rorty writes: "This is a task not for theory but for genres such as ethnography, the journalist's report, the comic book, the docudrama, and, especially, the novel. Fiction like that of Dickens, Olive Schreiner, or Richard Wright gives us the details about kinds of suffering being endured by people to whom we had previously not attended. Fiction like that of Choderlos de Laclos, Henry James, or Nabokov gives us the details about what sorts of cruelty we ourselves are capable of, and thereby lets us redescribe ourselves."[202] Why should we take heed of suffering and cruelty? Why should we be interested in the possibility of redescribing ourselves?

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, in which he fleshes out his historicising nominalist vision of human culture, Rorty juxtaposes two human desires: the desire for self-creation (personal autonomy) and the desire for a more just and free society. These desires, he argues, cannot be theoretically reconciled, and it is foolish to expect philosophy to succeed in holding "self-creation and justice, private perfection and human solidarity, in a single vision. […] The closest we will come to joining these two quests is to see the aim of a just and free society as letting its citizens be as privatistic, 'irrationalist,' and aestheticist as they please so long as they do it on their own time – causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged."[203] There is no universal answer to what a human life, or a good and meaningful life, should look like. That is why Rorty sides with liberalism.[204] The individual must be given the opportunity for self-realisation, to shape his life according to his *own* ideas. But only to the extent that he does not harm anyone else.

Life cannot be separated from its description and understanding. The way I live depends on how I understand myself and the world; this understanding hinges on a certain description of myself and the world. The description unfolds my understanding, my understanding unfolds my experience of

[201] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 3–4.
[202] Ibid., p. xvi.
[203] Ibid., p. xiv.
[204] "I borrow my definition of 'liberal' from Judith Shklar, who says that liberals are the people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do" (ibid., p. xv).

life, that is, the way I shape my life. This may be more or less bound by the mechanisms of the society in which I live, as well as by the narrative of what I am and what I should be, as told to me by my parents or friends or as I hear at school or church. Our idea of life is rarely shaped by exact sciences or abstract theories, and much more by narratives: about specific people and the different forms their lives take, about how they understand themselves, what they desire, what they sacrifice themselves for, and what lies at the heart of their happiness, their disappointments, their suffering.

There are authors who deepen our desire for autonomy, for personal perfection, and authors who deepen our sensitivity to injustice and cruelty. We should not view them as antithetical and we don't necessarily have to choose between them; Rorty argues that we should "give them equal weight and then use them for different purposes."[205] These authors may be philosophers or publicists, but also poets or prose writers: "Authors like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Proust, Heidegger, and Nabokov are useful as exemplars, as illustrations of what private perfection – a self-created, autonomous, human life – can be like. Authors such as Marx, Mill, Dewey, Habermas, and Rawls are fellow citizens rather than exemplars. They are engaged in a shared, social effort – the effort to make our institutions and practices more just and less cruel."[206] Philosophy, history, and the social sciences can cultivate our notions of self-creation or the suffering of others, but so can art, unbound by the rules of the factual and argumentative discourse of the sciences, opening itself to imagination, to playing with signs, to possibilities that fall outside the realm of our current world. "Those who study and teach the history of literature are in a good position to see how the vocabularies of moral and political deliberation can be changed by the literary imagination, the way in which poets have occasionally functioned as unacknowledged legislators. In the course of their teaching, they can occasionally see deep changes taking place in the students' image of themselves or of their society."[207]

Literature can colour our understanding of ourselves and reality (and thus our lives) with images of humankind and the world that it conveys to us. It can also be a source of the knowledge that description is not an innocent representation of the world as it is in itself, but that it unpacks our understanding of the world, the vantage point from which we see it, our social practice. Such knowledge often arouses anxiety that the vocabulary I have been inculcated

[205] Ibid., p. xiv.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Rorty, "De Man and the American Cultural Left", p. 134.

with is far from the best possible one, and a desire to become acquainted with other vocabularies that will also enable me to see the world differently and to replace inherited contingencies with my own.[208] Metaphysicist readers are then haunted by the desire to see the world correctly, that is, to find (in literature, for example) a privileged vocabulary that describes reality in terms of its intrinsic nature. Ironist readers dismiss such desire as delusion; they devote themselves to books not because they want to discover in them some single correct vocabulary for describing external reality and their own beliefs and desires, but out of the fear "that they will get stuck in the vocabulary in which they were brought up if they only know the people in their own neighborhood, so they try to get acquainted with strange people (Alcibiades, Julien Sorel), strange families (the Karamazovs, the Casaubons), and strange communities (the Teutonic Knights, the Nuer, the mandarins of the Sung)."[209]

Literature – by showing, for instance, a single event from the perspective of multiple narrators of equal verisimilitude – can make us understand "that anything could be made to look good or bad, important or unimportant, useful or useless, by being redescribed",[210] and that having the opportunity to describe is to have power – the power to show the world as we see it.[211] It can arouse in us the desire not just to be someone who reproduces the descriptions of others, but to describe our own version of reality; the desire not just to be a user of other people's vocabularies, but to become a strong poet (in Rorty's sense of the word) and to create a vocabulary of our own,[212] according to which we will be judged.[213]

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208 See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 80.

209 Ibid.

210 Ibid., p. 7.

211 "Ironism […] results from awareness of the power of redescription" (ibid., p. 89).

212 This, Rorty says, was a goal pursued by Proust, who longed "to free himself from the descriptions of himself offered by the people he had met. He wanted not to be merely the person these other people thought they knew him to be, not to be frozen in the frame of a photograph shot from another person's perspective. He dreaded being, in Sartre's phrase, turned into a thing by the eye of the other (by, for example, St. Loup's 'hard look,' Chadus's 'enigmatic stare'). His method of freeing himself from those people – of becoming autonomous – was to redescribe the people who had described him. He drew sketches of them from lots of different perspectives: and in particular from lots of different positions in time – and thus made clear that none of these people occupied a privileged standpoint. Proust became autonomous by explaining to himself why the others were not authorities, but simply fellow contingencies. He redescribed them as being as much a product of others' attitudes toward them as Proust himself was a product of their attitudes toward him" (ibid., p. 102).

The contingency of literary studies

Even today, it is not uncommon to hear reflections revealing the conviction that science – for some, both natural sciences and humanities, for others only the former – has privileged tools and methods that enable us to know the world as it is. For Rorty, the vocabulary of science, like any other vocabulary, is simply a tool that serves well for certain goals we set for ourselves, but poorly for others. The natural and technical sciences, in their applied form, provide us with many useful inventions, but they do not generally give us answers to questions as to how and why we should live, or how human society should be organised; for these answers, we turn more to religion, politics, or art.

In Czech,[214] the humanities are classified under the general category of science: they are referred to as "human sciences", "historical sciences", or "literary science". There are scholars who accentuate the scientificity behind our thinking and writing about literature, insist on it, and view it as universal and incontrovertible; for them, being a scholar is a commitment to strive for the maximum achievable degree of objectivity, truthfulness, exactness, or methodicalness. These scholars can be juxtaposed with those who programmatically reject scientificity and consider the name literary *science* to be unfortunate as it suggests the inadequate notion that writing about literature differs from natural science or physics only in terms of the focus of its interest, or in its method, but not in the objectivity of what it is pursuing. They write that exactness, method, or objectivity, as understood by the exact sciences, are forever beyond the humanities; they would like nothing better than to see, as in the English-speaking world, a preference for the terms literary theory, history, and criticism in writings about literature, free of the hapless and misleading term *science*. Yet there are also scholars who consider the term "science" a casual name for their discipline that does not commit them to anything; as far as they are concerned, the fact that our idea of scientificity is currently determined by the methods of the exact sciences is a circumstance that might change and that we can strive to transform. They point out that truth in literature can only be discussed in the most obvious and boring contexts (as for example "John Fowles wrote a novel in 1969 called *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*"; "There is a character named Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment.*"; "There are five parts to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.*"), and that the really intriguing questions begin only where truth of this type ends.

We could argue that in literary studies, as in philosophy, there are metaphysicians who see their task as discovering the meaning of literary works

[213] Ibid., p. 97.

[214] As in German: see "Geisteswissenschaften"or "Literaturwissenschaft".

and the truth about laws of literary development, and ironists who view such a goal as illusory and believe that their mission is to find new ways of describing literature.[215] The metaphysician hopes to discover a privileged vocabulary – a proper method of description (a vocabulary and approach) on a par with the intrinsic nature of literature that will enable him to formulate universally valid results of inquiry. He believes that he will discover the essence of literature, of a particular literary work, movement, genre, etc., and that his discovery will be universal, valid for everyone and for all times. The ironist harks back to the vocabulary of others to demonstrate their finitude. He is convinced that there is no such thing as the intrinsic nature of literature and that a problem of literary studies (like a philosophical problem) is "a product of the unconscious adoption of assumptions built into the vocabulary in which the problem was stated".[216] His thinking about literature is underpinned by a therapeutic spirit. In his view, not every question that can be asked and that seems to be cardinal in a certain vocabulary must be taken seriously. Questions addressed by literary studies are not universal and eternal or derived from the intrinsic nature of literature; rather, their emergence, disappearance, and transformation is consequent upon new assumptions and vocabularies.[217] The ironist attempts to break free of others' vocabularies he has been taught and appropriated and to create a vocabulary of his own that will offer new descriptions of literature – all in the knowledge that his final vocabulary will also be subject to criticism, that it too will be discarded and replaced. He feels no compulsion to devise a theory acting as a kind of foundation for practice, he has no desire to build new aesthetic systems, and he does not feel obliged to answer others' questions (articulated

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215 "Metaphysicians see libraries as divided according to disciplines, corresponding to different objects of knowledge. Ironists see them as divided according to traditions, each member of which partially adopts and partially modifies the vocabulary of the writers whom he has read. Ironists take the writings of all the people with poetic gifts, all the original minds who had a talent for redescription – Pythagoras, Plato, Milton, Newton, Goethe, Kant, Kierkegaard, Baudelaire, Darwin, Freud – as grist to be put through the same dialectical mill. The metaphysicians, by contrast, want to start by getting straight about which of these people were poets, which philosophers, and which scientists. They think it essential to get the genres right – to order texts by reference to a previously determined grid, a grid which, whatever else it does, will at least make a clear distinction between knowledge claims and other claims upon our attention. The ironist, by contrast, would like to avoid cooking the books she reads by using *any* such grid (although, with ironic resignation, she realizes that she can hardly help doing so)" (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 75–76).

216 Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. xiii.

217 Ibid.

in a vocabulary that is not his own) or bound to offer a new programme of literary scholarship whenever he criticises the programme of others. In their efforts to disentangle themselves from old, outdated, (now) unproductive vocabularies, ironists' criticism is necessary "in itself", though of course the ability to offer a new, more productive vocabulary is – as Thomas Kuhn shows in his reflections on paradigm – a prerequisite for abandoning the old one altogether. Perhaps the most striking example of such an ironist reading in the field of literary theory is de Man's *Blindness and Insight*.[218]

The metaphysician-versus-ironist distinction, however, seems to apply to few contemporary literary scholars because as a rule they do not subscribe to metaphysical convictions about the nature of their work, but unlike ironists they are "normal scholars" who merely apply the vocabulary they have adopted to literature. The Kuhnian distinction between normal and revolutionary science can suitably complement the way in which the nature of literary scholarship is depicted. A metaphysician may be a normal scientist, convinced that he possesses a method guaranteeing him access to a true description, but also a scientific revolutionary who, in the name of true description, demolishes existing (erroneous) methods of investigating and describing the world. Even a scientist convinced that uncovering essences is not a task he should set himself, that his descriptions are only one of potentially infinite ways of describing a particular object, may view his task solely as developing and applying a particular vocabulary he has acquired.

In this context, Rorty generalises Kuhn's notions of normal and revolutionary science and makes a distinction between *normal and abnormal discourse*: "Normal discourse is that which is conducted within an agreed-upon set of conventions about what counts as a relevant contribution, what counts as answering a question, what counts as having a good argument for that answer or a good criticism of it. Abnormal discourse is what happens when someone joins in the discourse who is ignorant of those conventions or who sets them aside.'*Επιστήμη* is the product of normal discourse – the sort of statement which can be agreed to be true by all participants whom the other participants count as 'rational.' The product of abnormal discourse can be anything from nonsense to intellectual revolution […]."[219]

In my view, the "abnormal" way Rorty treats the concepts of literature, poet, and literary criticism in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* would foment

[218] For reflections on Paul de Man's texts from Rorty's pragmatist perspective, see Rorty's "De Man and the American Cultural Left".

[219] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 320.

revolution in contemporary Czech literary studies. He calls a poet the creator of a new vocabulary; this for him is Proust and Darwin, Nabokov and Freud, Nietzsche and Dewey, Baudelaire and Derrida. As for Hegel, he writes about the transformation of philosophy into a literary genre, calling his dialectical method "a literary skill" and dialectics (that is "the attempt to play off vocabularies against one another")[220] literary criticism. For him, the term "literature" has long since come to encompass not just poetry or fiction, but "every sort of book which might conceivably have moral relevance – might conceivably alter one's sense of what is possible and important. The application of this term has nothing to do with the presence of 'literary qualities' in a book."[221] According to Rorty, the job of a literary critic who, in his writings, deals not only with poetry or fictional narratives, but with "every book likely to provide candidates for a person's final vocabulary",[222] is not to interpret their "intrinsic meaning" (there is no such thing) or judge their literary value, but "to facilitate moral reflection by suggesting revisions in the canon of moral exemplars and advisers, and suggesting ways in which the tensions within this canon may be eased – or, where necessary, sharpened."[223]

As such, Rorty completely redefines the conceptual field in which the Czech literary scholar (at least one who deals with literature from the Czech National Revival to the present) feels at home and knows how to move around: poetry, prose, drama, the contemporary context, the reception horizon, and the occasional foray into film or visual art. One could argue that this is not so much the case these days, that today it is interdisciplinarity that is embraced. Rorty, however, is not concerned with interdisciplinarity, as it does not slot into the disciplinary framework as we have come to understand it. It is divorced completely from the driving forces of human culture, which he views as the search for new vocabularies to describe the world and the self. A philosopher, a politician, a scholar, a journalist, and a film-maker can speak with the same vocabulary. And each of them can also become a poet, that is, the creator of a new vocabulary that will transform our understanding of the world we live in, the goals we pursue, and the values we hold. This is not, after all, formed within particular genres, but across them: our view of the world is influenced by the people we meet as much as by the texts we read; by the scientific theories we try to understand as much as by the sermon we

220 Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 78.
221 Ibid., p. 82.
222 Ibid., p. 81.
223 Ibid., p. 82.

hear in church, or the film we watch in the evening. To be sure, this polyphony that we encounter in our lives can be compartmentalised into disciplines such as physics, theology, journalism, visual art, psychotherapy, etc., but it is also undoubtedly possible to compartmentalise it in other ways, and to listen – along with Rorty, and also, say, Barthes or Greenblatt – to the dialogues that they have with each other, regardless of medium or genre, and to try to understand the form of the human being and the world that they are projecting with their vocabulary.

Rorty, in his own distinctive way, joins Dewey in his efforts to point out the continuity between the aesthetic and other areas of human life. He demonstrates the contingency of categories such as art, philosophy, and science, and in his reflections he attempts to entwining literary or philosophical texts into configurations other than genre. He has no interest in redefining categories such as art, philosophy, or science, i.e. in offering an alternative way of defining them. His thinking takes paths other than those built on genre differentiations – paths on which Proust, Heidegger, and Freud can walk side by side. The way in which the notion of art has transformed from antiquity to the present day exposes its nominalistic and historical nature. This relieves us of any sense of obligation to keep to formulas written by reality itself and opens up, as perfectly legitimate, the possibility of weaving certain formulas of our own, hitherto unseen, in our reflections. My formulas may well be met with nothing more than a shrug of the shoulders or a cuckoo sign. The poet (the creator of a new dictionary) never knows what his dictionary will be used for and what its fate will be.

If we view the eminent aestheticians as poets, we stop worrying about whether their reflections are consistent with the subject matter they are considering: whether the function of all art is really to actualise our automated perception of the world, as Shklovsky discusses, or whether every literary work is, in fact, composed of the layers Ingarden wrote about. We will grasp their reflections as tools providing us with certain ways of describing literature – tools for which we may or may not find uses, which we can try to improve, discard in favour of others, or use alongside others. If we view the eminent aestheticians as poets, we see them not as discoverers, but as creators: not as discoverers who inform us about the properties of the art they have managed to uncover, but as creators of vocabularies that enable us to describe art in a certain way. And if we subscribe to the view that '[a]ny strong […] work creatively misreads and therefore misinterprets a precursor text or texts",[224] we will not even begrudge

[224] Bloom, *The Western Canon*, p. 8. I deliberately omit the term *literary* from the quoted sentence. ("Any strong literary work creatively misreads and therefore misinterprets a precursor text or texts").

them the fact that, in their desire to shed the influence of old dictionaries and to create a new and original one, they often intentionally or unintentionally simplify or misinterpret the texts of their predecessors. We can continue to insist that there is a difference between the creator of what we call literature and the creator of what we call literary aesthetics or criticism; but it is worth reminding ourselves from time to time that even the way in which a theorist, historian, or critic describes literature is often imprinted in the way in which literature is understood and created by writers.

Why should a literary scholar create a new dictionary when a perfectly good, well-tested one already exists? The reasons are sure not be the same as those that lead exact scientists to seek a new paradigm, i.e. the ambiguities and problems they encounter. Every literary-studies vocabulary has its possibilities and limits, every literary-studies vocabulary is exhausted over time, the energy generated whenever something new is "discovered" or "created" dissipates, giving way to an ever-increasing preponderance merely of inertia, predictability, and reproduction of one and the same thing. It is obvious why literary scholarship searches for new vocabularies in such circumstances. For a variety of reasons, old vocabularies may start to seem unsatisfactory, seeking answers to questions that no longer hold our interest. There may be efforts to keep the project we know as "literary studies" going, requiring not only the analysis and interpretation of new works, but also the recontextualisation of works that have already been analysed and interpreted. A new generation of literary scholars may be trying to establish themselves, to replace the old guard – Bloom's reflections on the strong poet and the anxiety of influence could certainly be applied here as well. Political or power-based reasons can undoubtedly play a role, and often a decisive one at that, whether we are referring to a political and cultural revolution as witnessed in February 1948 in Czechoslovakia or to power mechanisms within a particular institution or interpretive community (Fish). There may be all number of reasons for this, but one thing is certain – that even the most successful literary-studies vocabulary is impermanent and will be replaced.

Pragmatist literary theory, heeding Richard Rorty, will first and foremost constitute a defence of this contingency – a defence rejecting the idea that the task of literary studies is to uncover the essential meaning of literature, literary works, literary history. It will try to convince those who aspire to such literary-studies metaphysics that this is a misguided and in some respects perverse project that would be better abandoned; it will try to shine a light on the false claims of those who would declare themselves to be discoverers of literary essences. The pragmatist will defend the literary scholar's right to refuse to answer those literary-studies questions – however fundamental, universal, eternal they may seem – that he considers uninteresting; he will

be sympathetic to those who ask new questions, to those who disregard or demolish traditional categories, to those who try to build a new vocabulary for literary scholarship. But he certainly does not claim that everything new is necessarily better than the old, that new questions are necessarily more interesting, new interpretations more valuable, and new vocabularies more productive than the old ones. He will defend the literary scholar's right to think and write about literature in his own way, but he cannot guarantee that such writing will be published and read. Whether it is worthy of being published and read is a matter solely for the social practice which, following in the wake of Arthur Danto, George Dickie, and others, we might call the *artworld*.[225]

[225] See Danto, "The Artworld"; Dickie, "What Is Art?". This institutional dimension of our thinking and writing about art within literary scholarship was developed by Stanley Fish, an author not uncommonly associated with neopragmatism, in his concept of interpretive communities.

The Aesthetic Value of Works of Popular Culture from Richard Shusterman's Pragmatist Perspective

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Introduction

Pragmatist aesthetics, as conceived by John Dewey in his later studies *Experience and Nature* (1925) and, especially, *Art as Experience* (1934), does not focus on the work itself, which is distinguished by its autonomous and unique identity, as is characteristic of the newly emerging and gradually prevailing thought at the time Dewey was devising this concept (Russian formalism, structuralism, New Criticism, but also Gestalt psychology). Instead, it centres on the context surrounding the work, primarily from the position of perception, that is, the perceiver and his aesthetic experience. Experience guarantees the desirable element of permanence, the continuous piecing together and interweaving of the components of perception and relationship to the world, some of which are rational and others emotional, some of which are born through the mind, others through bodily perception, some of which are natural, others socially, artificially created. While pragmatist aesthetics grasps the meanings provided by a work as an end to be achieved, which approximates it to the dominant methodologies mentioned above, it also takes them to be a means that can be used for other useful, primarily educational, ends. The emphasis on the social context in which a work unfolds leads pragmatist aesthetics to reflect on class differences. These are manifested both in the intellectual endowments of the various perceivers and in the availability or unavailability of works of art which are at the disposal of any given perceiver and which therefore shape his or her individual experience.

Such an "instrumentally" viewed work of art, which is not assumed to have any inner substance in the spirit of Jakobsonian literariness, nor any

discernible essentialist features that would define and shape such a work as a work of art, allows, under broadly conceived experience, for the inclusion not only of works of high-brow culture, but also of works of popular or mass culture, which, at the time Dewey was drawing up his concept, already had an unbroken tradition of more than a century in the Western world, and which, in the decades preceding Dewey's late turn to aesthetics, had been able to make very productive use of influential and formidable new media, e.g. film, comics, recorded music or live jazz concerts, radio, and the musical as a genre of popular theatre.

So it is perhaps surprising that Dewey, even in his seminal *Art as Experience*, devotes himself only to art that was seen as high art in his own time (and still today), i.e. Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting, classical music, and classic 19th-century literature. He more or less ignores popular and mass culture and, when he does briefly touch on it, he shares the prevailing judgement of the time that these cultural creations are purely entertaining, recreational, and commercial. The question therefore arises as to why he was unwilling or unable to integrate the already widespread practice of disseminating popular culture among the lower social strata as a vehicle that could also serve the ends towards which his whole spiritual project was directed – the strengthening of the role of education and the gradual improvement of society.

Clear answers to this question are unlikely to be found within Dewey's work; the inclusion of popular culture would "fit in" with his broad-based concept, and its potential positive use as a tool having popular appeal at the lower levels of social stratification would also seem to be consonant with this concept. The reasons why Dewey prescinds from popular and possibly mass culture can therefore – in a suitably pragmatist spirit – be sought more in contextual factors, i.e. in the accentuation of certain elements or features which, by their interconnectedness, can then form a network that will be convincing enough to act as a valid argument. Nakia S. Pope has recently attempted to summarise these speculative reasons,[226] and since that whole discussion remains outside the thematic core of this paper, but, rather, is an interesting question that crosses the mind over and over, we will content ourselves with a condensed paraphrase of Pope's solution. Pope explains the detachment of popular culture as a combination of the influence of Dewey's friend and benefactor Albert C. Barnes, who was a collector of contemporary art and thus gave Dewey the opportunity to see and study originals by the

[226] See Pope, "Hit by the Street: Dewey and Popular Culture".

likes of Degas, Cézanne, and Matisse, and the fact that Dewey was already more than seventy years old when he was preparing the lectures that would form the basis for *Art as Experience* and was thus unwilling or unable to open his spiritual horizons to phenomena that were only just taking shape and gaining ground, and that, at the time, generally stood completely outside institutional or academic reflection. Dewey therefore perceived the field of popular culture as one in which the only gain was economic and where low intellectual and aesthetic standards were applied. Therefore, Dewey sought a path that was rather circuitous, relying on the fact that, if the economic conditions of the lower social classes were improved, the standard of taste and values they possessed would gradually rise.

Thus, in the pragmatism of the classical period, popular culture remained an aside even for John Dewey as a thinker dwelling on the sphere of culture and art more thoroughly and consistently than any other pragmatist thinker. Nevertheless, perhaps this initial outline of the problem makes it sufficiently clear that the neopragmatist elaboration and conjecture of the original premises was fully open to the issue of incorporating popular culture into new cultural aesthetic concepts, and that there is nothing surprising about the fact that it was in the neopragmatist context that a very powerful and influential concept was born which legitimises popular culture in a broad and well-founded way, integrating it into a sphere in which a detailed academic viewpoint is able see phenomena other than through some default prism *a priori* forging a domain of "high" and "low" and, where required, supplementing it with a midcult.[227] At the same time, this neopragmatist concept differs from the original premises of Deweyan pragmatism in that it does not place the purpose, i.e. the perceivers and their aesthetic experience, front and centre, but argues for the actual form of the text, i.e. the character of the work considered in an aesthetic context. Richard Shusterman became the propagator of this concept.

Aesthetics gets funky

Strictly speaking, from a developmental point of view Richard Shusterman is not the first neopragmatist to turn his attention to popular culture. Back in the 1970s, John McDermott had already extended the scope of his pragmatist philosophy to embrace urban aesthetics and objects that perform

[227] See Eco, *Apocalittici e integrati*.

a primarily non-aesthetic function (e.g. the design of kitchen utensils or other household effects); this was linked to his interest in the related aesthetics of everyday life. McDermott was concerned with the shift of artworks from the museum to the urban street and city square, where they cease to function as autonomous objects of art and become part of events and happenings, and thus enter into an endless chain of contextual relations. They embody the starting point, i.e. the experience of the artist or the time of creation, but they continuously mix with the experience of subsequent generations who perceive the object in some way, but this perception is now shaped by a different context that produces other meanings for the perceived objects. Dewey's notion of a continuum of past, present, and future also plays a central role in this concept.

In a way, Richard Rorty's thinking, too, touches on the notion of popular culture, especially in the way he consistently calls into question any grand, metaphysical values alluded to by the traditional concept of works of high culture. The idea of works where there is nothing that lies somewhere beyond the space of events, "beyond the reach of time and chance",[228] undermines the notion of a boundary between high and low. Rorty judges literature, film, and other art forms by the extent to which they are able to contribute to "what we can do so as to get along with each other, how we can arrange things so as to be comfortable with one another, how institutions can be changed so that everyone's right to be understood has a better chance of being gratified."[229] And it is clear that no value-hierarchy of high and low needs to be maintained for such a purpose; on the contrary, the "low", if popular, can serve these purposes more effectively and better than the most demanding and elite works.

Among neopragmatists, Stanley Cavell's *Pursuit of Happiness* can be seen as another step into the field of popular culture.[230] Cavell used the pop culture material of 1930s and 1940s Hollywood comedies, revolving around a storyline where the protagonists would fall happily back into each other's arms after divorce or separation, to explore serious philosophical themes – contemporary notions of freedom, independence, and women's emancipatory aspirations. Cavell's interest in film was lifelong and enduring,[231] but centred – with the exception of the aforementioned book – on films perceived as artistically valuable and thus belonging to the realm of high rather than popular culture.

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228 Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. xv.
229 Rorty, "Heidegger, Kundera, and Dickens", p. 78.
230 See Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*.
231 See *Cavell on Film*, the comprehensive edition of his essays and film reviews.

Interest in the material of popular culture has been creeping into academia since the 1960s,[232] but here popular culture has played the role of a socio-cultural document, illustrating a specific historical concept in which the social aspect is emphasised. Not even the subsequent in-depth inquiry into the structural "anatomy" of some of the established genres that was introduced into academic thinking in the 1970s by John Cawelti, the author of the key concept of *formula*, i.e. an established narrative or other pattern used by him and his followers to study westerns, love stories, and detective stories, nor socially engaged interest in the culture of the suppressed classes and strata, tracing the peculiar capacity of this type of audience to create its own meanings and pleasures (Stuart Hall and John Fiske in the 1980s), aimed to legitimise the aesthetic value of popular culture. Rather, it was conceived ethnologically, sociologically, or historically, and was directed at grasping popular and, where appropriate, mass culture as a domain providing a rich and ordered sphere of meanings, rules, and activities from which a number of relevant observations and conclusions could be drawn that shape our notion of cultural history. However, the traditional aesthetic criterion distinguishing between "high" and "low" art (and, by analogy, the broader realm of culture as a space in which all sorts of genetic and receptive activities and relations emerge alongside the works themselves) has remained tacitly or sometimes declaratively in place as a backdrop to all these approaches.

It was Richard Shusterman who became the programmatic defender of popular culture[233] from the perspective of its aesthetic fullness.[234] He dates

[232] The emblematic start point is usually taken to be 1964, when the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was founded at the University of Birmingham.

[233] Even if his terminology is not entirely consistent, the very fact that he mostly uses the term *popular art* rather than *popular culture* is an important agenda-setting terminological shift. In this way, he sets himself apart from the generation of Stuart Hall or John Fiske in that, rather than accentuating the cultural space or field in which certain processes take place and of which works are a component, he instead emphasises the distinctive status of works of popular culture as works of art, even if he does not grasp the essence of this status and does not seek it only in the uniform internal organisation of the works in question, i.e. as a manifestation of a shared structural identity.

[234] It is worth noting at the outset that this very "eccentricity" also quite quickly accorded him a star status that set him apart and made him visible beyond the narrow sphere of philosophical aestheticians and philosophers with a primary interest in art, culture, and aesthetics. As someone advocating the aesthetic values of rap, rock, country music, and the dance that accompanies these forms of musical expression (i.e. not "merely" their worth in the context of cultural history), he made a name for himself and became influential in the broader field of the humanities in general. In turn, this retroactively added strength to his argument in favour of the aesthetic values of popular culture, which in his conception did not function as a "downtrodden" counterpart to high-brow

his "conversion" to pragmatism to 1988, when he became a newly tenured professor at Temple University: "I think the main reasons for my interest in pragmatism are typical for many philosophers. First, there was the feeling that analytic philosophy was not making the sort of progress it had initially hoped for. It was still good as a critical tool and method, and its best work seemed to be in progressively criticizing its own founding theories, notions, and projects [...] But secondly, there was the excitement I felt about continental theories of poststructuralism (Foucault, Derrida) and the Frankfurt-school (especially Adorno and Walter Benjamin). Continental philosophy seemed to deal with larger, more politically relevant questions and issues that analytic philosophy seemed to almost completely ignore. But the style of much continental theory seemed too unclear, inadequately argued, and undisciplined for my tastes. Pragmatism, as James and Dewey practiced it, seemed to provide the model of how to combine the clear arguments and common sense of analytic philosophy together with the large and socially important issues of continental philosophy."[235]

Richard Shusterman rails against the traditional aesthetic distinction between high-brow culture and popular culture in a series of programmatic articles published in journals and anthologies in the 1990s and then from 2003 to 2007. In them, he avails himself of a variety of material to illustrate the workings of popular culture, and chooses an assortment of concepts that argue in favour of this essentialist aesthetic distinctness. He then revises some passages or entire articles when his writings are published in book form. It is natural, then, for some of his arguments to keep recurring and for him to single out from the ranging domain of popular culture, which does not lend itself readily to boundary drawing, those manifestations that can convincingly support his argument. However, he makes no attempt to fashion systematic and internally coherent aesthetics for either popular culture or culture in general; his aesthetics is thus, if anything, "negative", based on the refutation of previously shared and proclaimed assumptions and conceptualisations. These are always parried in an *ad hoc* manner, and the line of argument is directed towards certain general propositions, but without aiming to come up with a coherent terminology or a cohesive map that would plot the specific horizontal and vertical coordinates of the various

culture. The impact and influence of his argument probably also benefited from his willingness to criticise, boldly and directly, not only classic authors who relegated popular culture to the realm of mere mass entertainment (Adorno), but also contemporary influential and cross-disciplinary academic celebrities such as Pierre Bourdieu.

[235] Shusterman, "Interviewing Richard Shusterman", p. 3.

issues discoursed. Since, therefore, it is not possible to point towards any coherent ideas or concepts targeted or attained by Shusterman's efforts, it will probably be useful to present his conception in its chronological sequence. Following Shusterman's lead, I will not attempt to summarise the individual complicating issues or aspects into a comprehensive, well-structured form, because, as noted, this is not what his series wants or is meant to be.[236]

The first article with which Shusterman armed himself in his fight for the aesthetic legitimation of popular art was "Form and Funk: The Aesthetic Challenge of Popular Art" (1991).[237] His argument is predicated on a polemic

[236] In an interview in which he looks back on this programmatic effort, he says that "My attempt to legitimize the aesthetic value and potential of popular art did not seek to answer all those questions [e.g. the development of a systematic theory of popular art that 'provides a definition of what popular art is, that defines what its special principles and values are, how its different genres and styles should be classified, and how popular art essentially differs from other kinds of art', as Shusterman explained above – PAB]. I had a pragmatic theoretical aim of challenging the philosophical prejudice against popular art by refuting the standard arguments against it and countering with arguments that legitimated its aesthetic value. Developing a definitive systematic theory was not part of my agenda: partly because legitimation seemed a more urgent task and partly because the field of popular art is so diverse and vague that a systematic theory hardly seemed manageable. I think the scholars (in philosophy, aesthetics, and cultural studies) who best understood and applied my work, realized my intentions and did not try to read my arguments as providing a comprehensive systematic theory nor try to conduct a systematic theory from them. I am not in principle against system building, but I am more interested in removing prejudices or blind spots and transforming attitudes that block our insight and blight our enjoyment" (Kovalčík and Ryynänen, *Aesthetics of Popular Culture*, p. 230).

[237] According to a note in the article, Shusterman presented the initial version as a paper at a conference on the work of Pierre Bourdieu hosted by the Free University of Berlin in October 1989. Shusterman concludes the note with the observation that one of the audience members described his paper as a flagrant example of American cultural imperialism and naivety. Shusterman has published more than a dozen original studies on the aesthetics and values of popular art and culture, and has subsequently used some of these articles in his books. Some are devoted primarily to arguments of aesthetic theory, while others focus on specific material, particularly from the field of music (rap, rock, country music), that he analyses to then draw more general conclusions. Since the articles were written for various collective book projects or for various journals, some of the theses and conclusions are inevitably repeated. Besides his articles in English, Shusterman has also published several pieces on the aesthetics of popular culture in other languages; it stands to reason that here, too, he makes use of theses and examples that can be found in the English-language articles. Therefore, the aim of this study is not, and cannot be, to provide an exhaustive digest of all texts in which Shusterman has addressed the issue of popular culture (he even touches on it peripherally when he discusses the concept of somaesthetics, or when his main

with the theses of Pierre Bourdieu, who refuses to acknowledge the distinctiveness and positivity of works of popular art, even though his analysis of the status of artworks in society is headed in this direction. The title of the essay refers to funk as a musical genre, and the motif of funk serves as an illustrative leitmotif for his argument, but otherwise it is an interpretation based on general aesthetic characteristics and categorisations, and specific pop culture material is not used much in the argument.

Shusterman's line of reasoning rests on the refutation of generally accepted and essentialistically conceived theses that separate and single out the peculiar and privileged sphere of high art. He places a stress on his pragmatist position, where any creation of fixed boundaries that presupposes essentialist features characterising entities within individual delimited categories is viewed as suspect and problematic. He also employs a historicising perspective – the same work that is perceived as popular entertainment in one cultural era is often ascribed the status of high and classic art in another (take Shakespeare's dramas, for example).

But the core argument is that popular art[238] demonstrably provides a significant degree of aesthetic satisfaction (even to intellectuals, which Shusterman identifies himself as) – how then can the same works be collectively labelled as

focus is the status of high art). However, the bibliography does provide an overview of all of Shusterman's English-language journal and book contributions in which he primarily addresses the aesthetics of popular art and culture.

238 In the very first footnote, Shusterman specifies the difference between the term "popular", which has positive connotations for him, and the term "mass", which suggests an indistinguishable block in which the uniqueness of the perceiver has no way of manifesting itself. Shusterman's entire defence of popular art, then, is really just a defence of a set of works that facilitate active aesthetic perception while inducing pleasure that is not necessarily intellectual. But the notion of popular art excludes the sphere of mass culture, which is intended merely for passive consumption. The difference between "popular" and "mass" is not formed solely by the structural or "formal" arrangement of the work, i.e. its "anatomy" or "morphology", but emerges only in the interaction between the work and the perceiver. Thus, the extra-textual category of the individual perceiver or generalised audience plays a crucial and integral role in the interpretation of popular art and culture not only in Shusterman's work, but also in that of other theorists. Shusterman illustrates the capability of pop art audiences with an example from social practice: "Popular art audiences are also clearly capable of the disengaged engagement necessary for appreciating essentially ambiguous 'open works'. The confusing exigencies of postmodern life, where even beliefs must often be embraced with a cautionary degree of disbelief and non-commitment, make such complexity of attitude not an aesthetic luxury for the privileged but a necessity for everyday coping" (Shusterman, "Form and Funk", p. 212).

aesthetically illegitimate? What is it that makes us renounce that which gives us pleasure and, by choice, be consumed with guilt for experiencing that pleasure? In seeking to answer these questions, Shusterman broaches ingrained factors favouring the position of those who defend the circumscribed realm of works of high culture as the only sovereign domain of aesthetic value: this battle is fought in a hostile territory where the intellectual critics of popular culture have established vocabulary and criteria that the opponent must use or refute; thus, even the defenders of works of popular culture ultimately seek legitimation in a roundabout way, that is, by explaining that it is the culture of those whom society has not allowed to reach higher, to clutch at works of real artistic quality, while the proponents of high art draw on the most respected, generally canonised works to press home their argument; pedestrian, mediocre works that lack a similarly shared canonical respect are randomly selected as examples of works of popular culture; the established association of the term "aesthetic" with works of high art and sophisticated style, and thus the inability or unwillingness to admit the legitimate existence of anything popularly aesthetic, is also detected by Shusterman in Pierre Bourdieu.

But the fact that the notion of the aesthetic was originally born of the material of high art does not mean, according to Shusterman, that it must always be confined to such narrow territory. He exemplifies its expansion and appropriation by citing "aesthetic institutes", beauty salons, and other commercial areas in which it is already commonplace, with the majority of the population now taking the term "aesthetic" to mean a reference precisely to this sphere of beautifying one's own body. Likewise, traditional aesthetic categories such as "glamour", "elegance", "unity", and "style" can be the domain not only of high art, but also popular art. Terms such as "artistic" or "aesthetic" are – as Bourdieu has shown so well – socio-political tools that classify a sphere of values, but do not necessarily remain in the exclusive clutches of high culture.

Shusterman then refutes the thesis ventured by Adorno[239] and Horkheimer that high art requires an active approach, while the consumption of popular

[239] Csaba Olay's "Rorty and Shusterman on Popular Art" is an example of an article that pays concentrated attention to Shusterman's paraphrasing of Adorno in order to show quite convincingly that Adorno's initial concept, which is reduced to a negative image in Shusterman's work, is in fact much more complex and nuanced. In that article, Olay shows how, even in Adorno, examples can be found where the distinction between high-brow art and popular art, rather than being viewed as an essentialist category arising from the structural difference between the two types of art, can be considered consequent upon the influence wielded by historical context. By analogy, he then illustrates that there is a more complex concept of entertainment in Hannah Arendt than Shusterman presents for the purposes of his argument.

culture leads inevitably to passivity because it offers only shallow pleasures that quickly and inexorably devolve into boredom. Shusterman points out that the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* understand activity to mean only intellectual, rational activity. Popular culture, on the other hand, develops non-intellectual types of activity – primarily activity that is physical, sensory, emotional. For example, rock music tends to be perceived somatically – the listener moves, dances, and sings along with the chorus. And Shusterman, citing Dewey, argues that this type of activity also requires us to overcome a sense of embarrassment, of awkwardness, of rigid self-consciousness. Dancing in response to rock music not only works up a sweat but also, after a while, engenders a sense of exhaustion. "Clearly, on the somatic level, there is much more effortful activity in the appreciation of rock than in that of highbrow music, whose concerts compel us to sit in a motionless silence which often induces not mere torpid passivity but snoring sleep. […] The much more energetic and kinaesthetic aesthetic response evoked by rock thus exposes the fundamental passivity underlying our established appreciation of high art, a passivity expressed in the traditional aesthetic attitude of disinterested, distanced contemplation, which has its roots in the quest for philosophical and theological knowledge rather than pleasure, for individual enlightenment rather than communal interaction or social change."[240]

As rhetorically vivid as this passage is, and no matter how very convincing a contrast Shusterman creates between the somatically active perception of rock music and the often vacuous or only feigned intellectual knowledge afforded by a classical music concert, it should be noted that this issue is so complex that more room needs to be given over to thinking through inferences conceived in this way. I believe it is absolutely right to doubt intellectual activity which, according to proponents of an aesthetics that should remain the preserve of high art, is spontaneously engendered by contact with a work. Even the bulk of academically educated perceivers (students of art history or literature) are only able to reproduce the meanings that others have attributed to a challenging work of high culture; if they were to formulate their own intellectual insights, they would make statements that do not allow for any intellectually driven conversation about possible meanings anyway. On the other hand, I think the reductive contrast between the isolated individual as a typical recipient of high art and the natural collectivity of recipients of popular art is overly exacerbated by Shusterman. The institutional care traditionally invested in the domain of high art by schools, publications, and

[240] Shusterman, "Form and Funk", pp. 205–206.

other institutions over the centuries has resulted in an inevitable collective element here as well – I speak of a painting or symphony as "one" talks about it or as the institution would have me speak about it if I am to be worthy of participating in such a conversation. Conversely, until recently – that is, until the advent of social media – our perception of popular culture was a primarily private affair; communal interconnectedness may be overt in rock or other concert music, but it will be much less evident when we watch a film, in how we perceive a comic book, or as we read a work of popular literature. Not to mention the social impact and change for the better that this type of popular art is supposed to provide.

What is significant, however, is Shusterman's point that even a work offering intellectually shallow stimuli can provide a whole raft of other, productive stimuli that could be perceived as aesthetic. Indeed, the category of the aesthetic does not necessarily coincide with the richness and depth of intellectual stimuli or content; this opens up a productive and very fertile field for Shusterman's line of argument in subsequent articles, whether in the category of pleasure, i.e. in the sphere related to Barthes's concept of *plaisir* and *jouissance*, or in Fiske's related and summarising concept of *pleasure*, and above all in the sphere of bodily, sensory perceptions, to which Shusterman will continue to ascribe a pivotal aesthetic value.

Another aspect of the supposed boundary between high and popular art is that of formal precision and sophistication. Form, as deduced by Shusterman from Bourdieu's conception, not only accentuates internal sophistication and structural order, but also signals an aloofness from functionality, i.e. from the possibility of integrating a work into everyday life – in this concept, works of high art do not link to some realm of reality, but remain in an autonomous artistic sphere and thus allude, if anything, to other works of art. Here, too, Shusterman's line of reasoning denying a boundary between high and popular art dilutes the traditional distinction: artistic tradition as a source of formal complexity "in many works of popular art, which self-consciously allude to and quote from each other to produce a variety of aesthetic effects including a complex formal texture of implied art-historical relations. Nor are these allusions lost on the popular art audience, who are generally more literate in their artistic traditions than are the audiences of high art in theirs."[241] Shusterman contrasts Bourdieu's notion of form as formalisation, separating the work of art from the disordered reality of life, with Dewey's notion of form as an ever-present element in the shaping and rhythm of

[241] Ibid., p. 207.

life: "Form can be discovered in more immediate and enthusiastic bodily investment as well as through intellectual distance; form can be funky[242] as well as austerely formal."[243]

The final aspect dividing high and popular art in traditional aesthetics is high art's fleetingly mentioned autonomy. Shusterman argues that even those who view the autonomy of art as a consequence of socio-historical factors serving to distinguish the different social classes, rather than as a natural condition of the way art functions (Adorno or Bourdieu), believe it is essential for our aesthetic perception and assessment. High art is traditionally conceived as having only an artistic function, while popular art also exists to satisfy other needs, whether of those creating the art or those consuming it. Shusterman attacks the autonomy of high art by challenging the assumption that art and real life stand apart from each other as opposites. This is an integral premise of any thesis on the autonomy of art, going back to Plato's separation of the artistic sphere. Building on Dewey's pragmatism, Shusterman submits that we should we rid ourselves of this ingrained prejudice and try to see art as a natural part of life. He bases this proposition on arguments also used in traditional aesthetics, i.e. that life provides fodder for art or that life can also be aestheticised through the concept of the "art of living": "Both as objects and experiences works of art inhabit the world and function in our lives. Certainly in ancient Athenian culture, from which our concept of art first developed, the arts were intimately integrated into everyday life and its ethos."[244]

As far as Shusterman is concerned, his line of argument in favour of popular art is a component of a broader legitimising discourse. In this respect, he defines the features of popular art more or less only negatively – he

[242] Although most of the references to popular art throughout the essay tend to be directed at rock music, the term funk, as used in the title of Shusterman's quoted essay, is central to Shusterman's argument and is forceful as a metaphor: in the second half of the 1960s, funk evolved from soul music by dimming the melodicism and vocal expression and, instead, enhancing the rhythmic component of the music, which was created primarily by the bass guitar, but also by the use of wind instruments, especially trumpets, as rhythm instruments. The result was music that, when performed live, relied on expressive physicality – the movement of the musicians. This was music designed to make the audience, too, sway, tap to the rhythm, or dance. For Shusterman, this somatic impulse is a metaphor connoting works of popular art in general, although it is clear that in areas other than popular music this appealing corporeal and non-intellectual effect will not be so obvious and visible.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid., p. 209.

paraphrases the traditional assumptions, which he finds mainly in the summary concept created by Pierre Bourdieu (who is no theorising aesthetician, but a socio-culturally-minded historian), and then shows these assumptions to be poorly constructed and untenable; their "correction" then entails – usually rather broad-based – allusions to the tradition of American pragmatism, especially as conceived by John Dewey. At the same time – in line with pragmatism – his argument relies on observations of practice and on the drawing of conclusions from those observations. In pursuit of his aim of legitimising popular art and its aesthetic status, he can be evasive or take questionable steps in his arguments. For example, his attempt to refute the socio-historically constructed boundary within which high art wants to maintain its autonomous, exclusive status is accompanied by distinctly shaky stereotyping arguments and generalisations invoking some sort of national cultural mentalities. He argues against an artificially created boundary (between high and low), but at the same time, quite cavalierly and seemingly unwittingly, he creates other boundaries and categories that come across as deeply essentialist: "Certainly, we Americans take neither philosophy nor the cultural hegemony of intellectuals as seriously as do the French and other Europeans. This insouciantly rebellious attitude embodied in American popular culture is, I believe, a large part of its captivating appeal and genuine value for Europeans, particularly for the young and culturally dominated. For it provides an invaluable tool for their growing liberation from a long entrenched and stifling cultural domination by an oppressive tradition of disembodied, intellectualist philosophy and high courtly art."[245]

At the core of Shusterman's argument in this essay and in other articles in which he attempts to redefine the aesthetic position and social status of popular art is an understanding of all aesthetically assessing categories and concepts as entities that are non-essentialist, highly derivative, and immutable. He is intent on perceiving these categories and concepts programmatically, as impermanent and mutable signifiers that are meant to and can perform different functions in different socio-cultural fields and that must be viewed as the results of the effects of certain historical and social conditions, even if, contrary to Marxist understanding, these conditions do not play a clearly determinative and universal role.

At the same time – and this becomes more and more evident as the sphere of Shusterman's key themes becomes more crystallised – a certain theatricality or performativity creeps into the rhetoric of his argument. This is related

[245] Ibid., p. 210.

to the notion of art, but also of aesthetics and philosophy, as something that is happening right now, that responds to the specific circumstances of the "here and now" context, and is therefore influenced – even fascinated – by its own elusiveness and textual inexpressibility. Art, aesthetics, and philosophy have a distinctly eventful dimension in his understanding – analogous to the broader and vaguer orders of life. In this respect, then, it seems significant that most of his essays from the 1990s started out as conference papers with a heavily contextual factor (reflecting not only the conference theme, but also admired authorities, reliable and espoused notions, etc.). They allow Shusterman to adopt and foster the image of a rebel or eccentric scientist whose behaviour does not conform to accepted norms. And yet these characteristics do not necessarily signal just a kind of self-image-building strategy; they also chime with the traditional pragmatist postulates of trying to change the world through one's actions, contemplating the entrenched ways in which concepts are used, and attributing a certain appellative function to one's behaviour.

Rap as an escape from modernism

In the same year, Shusterman published "The Fine Art of Rap", which, like his previous study on form and funk, he subsequently included in *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (1992). He also included a study on rap in *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (2000). Here, by focusing on corporeality as an aspect of the aesthetic, he creates a natural starting point for a more complete concept of somaesthetics and related themes of the contemporary self and society; at the same time, this threefold authorial imprint reinforces the study's potential canonical status within Shusterman's understanding of his own work.

Rap,[246] as one of the most distinctive genres or manifestations of pop music of the 1980s and 1990s, fits integrally into Shusterman's selection of material deriving from popular art, in which music has consistently played a key role. By academically defending the aesthetics of rap (as opposed

[246] Shusterman makes a distinction between rap as a musical genre and hip hop as a broader cultural complex, which, in addition to the rap songs themselves, includes break dancing, graffiti, and a specific style of dress embracing designer sportswear. Hip hop thus also incorporates features quietly making the transition from the category of art to the category of lifestyle or everyday life, while retaining a certain aesthetic value and cultivating specific symbolic meanings.

to the superficial references he made in his previous study to the positive perception of rock or funk among a certain type of audience), Shusterman has created a much more flamboyant gesture: the negative connotations attached to rap music, especially among the older population, not only permeate academia, but are also shared by a segment of the audience for whom rock music or the genres labelled as rhythm and blues can connote deep and sometimes sophisticated experiential value. Yet, at the same time, Shusterman's choice of material echoes the internal logic of his newly formed aesthetic concepts, in that rap is not merely one in a long line of musical genres, but a genre in which the musical component is integrally tied to a broader performative component that includes the explicitly thematised corporeality of the performer, and is interlinked with the social context in which it is produced and in which it was initially perceived, especially the social status of socially excluded or marginalised classes, and with ethnic, racial, or political themes. Coupled with this, even as Shusterman was devoting himself to rap, the seemingly contradictory, commercial aspect was already in full view: "purified" or "distilled" rap became one of the most successful products emanating from the commercial music, radio, and television industries of the period.

In justifying the material he has chosen as his starting point, Shusterman emphasises the distinctiveness of rap within the established evolution of popular music. The fact that this is music that is recited rather than sung marginalises it within popular music, but at the same time brings it closer to other art forms in which the recitation of text plays an important role (theatre drama, poetry recitals, radio plays, audiobooks, etc.). Rap does not usually depend on live musicians to play music at concerts, and often it does even create original music, but instead relies on sampling, i.e. by using existing recorded music (and other sounds) and modifying it by means of a machine, i.e. a playback device, or otherwise inserting existing music into new contexts, e.g. via a computer. Lyrics in rap use ungrammatical language, vulgarisms, or slang expressions, and appear quite primitive on the surface. The poetic devices they use, whether rhymes or poetic images, are generally of the most banal kind. Despite all these negative characteristics, Shusterman views rap as poetry and as a genre of fine art: "For rap, I believe, is a postmodern popular art which challenges some of our most entrenched aesthetic conventions, conventions which are common not only to modernism as an artistic style and ideology but to the philosophical doctrine of modernity and its differentiation of cultural spheres."[247]

[247] Shusterman, "The Fine Art of Rap", p. 614.

Shusterman emphatically interprets rap in the context of post-modern art. It is this socio-cultural contextualisation that allows him to find features in rap that have the potential to intersect with political-social and everyday reality while enabling him to show that certain features of rap that he analyses elucidate or shed new light on the post-modern context as a whole. He defines post-modern aesthetics by listing the following features: "recycling appropriation rather than unique originative creation, the eclectic mixing of styles, the enthusiastic embracing of the new technology and mass culture, the challenging of modernist notions of aesthetic autonomy and artistic purity, and an emphasis on the localized and temporal rather than the putatively universal and eternal."[248]

There is a strong verbal force to rap: any success that the rapper boasts of (sexual, commercial, riches) must be created verbally and presented in the song explicitly; it must not just be implied by the context. Based on this trait, Shusterman construes that, contextually, rap is an adjunct of erstwhile black culture in its native African setting, which anthropologists argue was characterised precisely by a tradition in which high social status required verbal affirmation. Similarly, Shusterman claims, the funk rhythm dominating the musical component also has African roots; this component had been appropriated by white rock and, later, by disco music, and only through rap does the indigenous community "reclaim" it. In rap, says Shusterman, this historical background is mixed with a later legacy, in that slavery or labour on plantations forced the black community to create its own linguistic figures of speech, tropes, and other semantically shifted meanings so that they could communicate without being understood by the whites around them.

Shusterman combines this historical thumbprint with the technical aspect of the musical component, created by mixing assorted borrowed sources and modifying them according to the various means of "scratching", i.e. stopping records by hand and moving them backwards and forwards during playback. It is from sampling that he derives the designation of rap as a "proud art of appropriation". The appropriation embraced by rap complicates aesthetic assumptions and ideals of originality or uniqueness that have "enslaved" our concept of art since romanticism and that have been newly accentuated in modernism, a movement fascinated by the idea of constant progress. Rap as a typically post-modern art suppresses the dichotomy of original creation on the one hand and derivative borrowing on the other. Rap appropriation

[248] Ibid.

is meant to prove that there is no fixed boundary between original creation and borrowing, thus illustrating the more general thesis that even seemingly completely original works of art are often the result of unacknowledged borrowing and that even unique and innovative texts carry echoes and fragments of older ones. In fact, it is here that, by other means and with a different vocabulary, Shusterman advances the concept of intertextuality, whether in Bakhtin's original notion of polyphony or in the later version that can be traced from Julia Kristeva to Gérard Genette, without actually using the term "intertextuality" itself. This is, I think, again primarily a rhetorical approach that is intended to shine a light on rap as a new type of art that also thematises entirely new practices and thus offers a new type of knowledge to aesthetics. If rap were to be interpreted as a new manifestation of traditional (and theoretically rigidly accepted) intertextuality, however, its developmental novelty and aesthetic stimulus would evidently not have emerged in this way.

In addition to the actual form of rap songs as textual works, Shusterman's interpretation takes into account, in the spirit of the pragmatist tradition, the aspect of perception and the active role played by the audience in shaping the final form of the work. He expresses this role by referring to transfiguration – just as the creator/performer appropriates pre-existing musical materials or sources, the audience's perception is based on appropriation, thus questioning not only the boundary between creation and appropriation, but also the traditional boundary between the actively creating artist and the passively perceiving audience. The transfiguration that occurs in rap reminds us that a work is never a cohesive and integral object, the inviolability of which subsequently results in the fetishisation of that work. The products and practices of rap are purposefully subjected to appropriative transfiguration so that, instead of the integrity of a work as a perfect object, the possibility of constantly reshaping it comes to the fore. Rap, in Shusterman's reading, is thus aligned with Dewey's aesthetics based on the thesis that a work of art is always primarily a process rather than a finished object.

Rap thus exposes and complicates the traditional fetishised notion of the integrity of artworks as completed objects and the related ideas of monumentality, universality, and timelessness. Instead, it accentuates the orientation towards the "here and now" context, both in its emphasis on the specific local environment from which it emerges and to which, in terms of its intended audience, it is directed, and in its ostentatious thematisation of the temporal limitations of its messages. Shusterman generalises this characteristic: "For the view that aesthetic value can only be real if it passes the test of time is simply an entrenched but unjustified presumption,

ultimately deriving from the philosophical bias toward equating reality with the permanent and unchanging."[249]

By analogy, his interpretation of rap aims to reject the aesthetic category of universality, i.e. "the dogma that good art should be able to please all people and all ages by focusing only on universal human themes."[250] Instead of works as eternal monuments that we admire at arm's length, rap presents the concept of the work as a constant reworking of other works, created to make those works work better. Instead of modernist generality and internationality, the emphasis on local elements and features is given space.

In Shusterman's reading, rap is also productive in the way it uses mass media techniques and technologies and exploits the whole vast sphere of mass culture. Rap originated in a community that completely lacked any common ground steeped in an awareness of the tradition of high culture. Therefore, it chooses mass culture (e.g. the animated stories of the Smurfs) as a shared basis that allows for communication to be enriched by referencing other works. These borrowings are also pointedly eclectic appropriations that serve both the textual and musical components of rap. The technique of sampling allows for the use of diverse sources without precise distinctions of time, genre, or style. Rap "cannibalises" and combines diverse sources without respecting the resultant formal integrity or the original historical context in which the sources were created. The outcome is a collage-like blending of all the borrowed sources.

There is a distinct historico-contextual aspect to Shusterman's interpretation. He even sketches the birth of rap and hip hop in the black ghettoes of 1970s New York, set against the backdrop of the then-dominant genre of disco music. At the same time, Shusterman develops a basic interpretive contrast (again, perhaps of a somewhat essentialist nature) between modernist and post-modern art aesthetics. Referencing Max Weber, he emphasises the tendency to separate the different spheres of secular culture (the sphere of science, the sphere of art, and the sphere of ethics, with implications also for the sphere of politics) as a fundamental manifestation of the emergence of a modernity fascinated by rationality, secularisation, and differentiation. It was in this context that the idea of an aesthetic experience rooted in distance, in the unengaged contemplation of the formal features of a work, arose. Rap, on the other hand, revitalises Dewey's tradition of American pragmatism, focusing on social functioning, processuality, and embodied experience, although Shus-

[249] Shusterman, "The Fine Art of Rap", p. 619.
[250] Ibid.

terman leaves the more specific connections between them to the reader's own contemplation, aided only by reference to his summary of the tradition of pragmatist philosophy and aesthetics in the first chapter of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*. As partial evidence of the emphasis on rap's social function, he mentions the rap subgenre referred to as "message rap" or "knowledge rap," in which the aesthetic merges with the cognitive. Besides its aesthetic meaning and value, this subgenre also has a practical, utilitarian function – to educate listeners, to shed light on previously unsuspected dimensions or contexts of reality. Without elaborating further, he also mentions cases where rap is used in schools as a material with which to develop reading and writing skills, or to illuminate certain elements of African-American history and tradition.

Shusterman is well aware of his exclusive position: his academic apologetics enters a context in which the overwhelming majority of academic aestheticians are unable to respond in any way to a material interpretation, because rap and the broader hip hop culture stand outside the sphere of their specialisation and interests and, in their eyes, are not only inaccessible, but also banal and unremarkable. It is therefore difficult for them to judge how well founded and supportable Shusterman's generalising judgements are. He himself concedes, up to a point, the existence of this interpretive utilitarianism. He mentions that, in addition to the examples he uses as evidence of social engagement, media stereotyping, or the problematisation of commercial concepts, there is also rap that extols violence (albeit sometimes with parodic or subversive overtones) and glorifies the cult of the powerful individual who ostentatiously shows off his luxurious lifestyle (gangsta rap). However, in the context of generalising discourse on the function of the genre as a whole, it is difficult to judge which function might have what impact, and to what extent, if any, the meanings that academic readings find in rap as an aesthetic are felt by ordinary perceivers, and to what extent these meanings may actually influence the thinking and actions of these perceivers.

Shusterman presents rap as a characteristically post-modern type of art – it disrupts the autonomy of the artistic sphere built by modernism and contaminates this sphere with the "impurities" of practical life, politics, or vulgarity, the "bad taste" of mass culture. Building on Jameson's general interpretation of post-modernism as a political and social phenomenon, he suggests that rap can be viewed as a new, typically post-modern form of culture, based on a willingness to educate the listener and support political activism. Rap, as a hybrid full of contradiction that is predicated on a whole range of inconsistencies and ambiguities, appears to Shusterman as a realisation of new art, as postulated by Jameson, that can find a position for itself outside the global and totalising space of the contemporary world system. Shusterman interprets Jameson's "inside-outside" dichotomy as another manifestation

of modernist articulation and differentiation based on the notion of pure artistic autonomy. "Indeed, rather than an aesthetic of distanced, disengaged, formalist judgment, rappers urge an aesthetic of deeply embodied, participatory involvement, with content as well as form."[251]

Here, too, Shusterman's apologetics clearly places a stress on one particular feature that can play a positive role in the argument, while at the same time rounding off the overall coherence and rhetorical impact of the opposition mounted by the modernist and the post-modern. Where modernist art is meant to be perceived from a distance, untouched, and without bias, through intellectual contemplation alone, the corporeality of rap (in terms of both artistic performance and perception that incites bodily movement, potentially leading to social engagement and change) appears to be a vivid antithesis. Nevertheless, Shusterman leaves aside the fact that this corporeality – especially with the advent of music TV channels and rap's shift to the television medium, which occurred as early as the 1980s – need not only have an authentic dimension, incorporated into the work as part of its signifying direction, but may equally be seen as a wholly formal, genre-creating requirement. The body of the rap artist may seem – if we maintain a certain aloofness from the genre – like a stylised attribute that is willingly submitting to a genre-based discipline and making the same obscure, albeit genre-specific, moves that members of television ballets had been making not so long before on Saturday night variety shows. Similarly, the emphasis on the perception of rap, where the audience is supposed to "authentically" sweat, lose control of their own bodies, and become a mass wildly "possessed" by the beat alone, may seem like an engaged and "authentic" co-creative experience, but it can equally be seen, from a more sober perspective, as a wholly formal genre-steeped convention, analogous to, say, the way the audiences at folk concerts would hold flickering lighters in the air. This ambivalence is, I think, expressed quite well by the staid, conventional way in which rap music videos are produced: in the background behind the rapper, a *corps de ballet* of carefully curated beautiful young people, dressed to match the style, is moving, not in an "authentic", individually idiosyncratic way, but in an obviously "balletic", "artistic" arrangement; they merely accompany and illustrate the rapper's performance in a deliberate fashion, aware of the camera that is capturing everything, and play out a disciplined choreography that has been prearranged for them by the team producing the music video. I think it would be very difficult to infer from these scenes any kind of link that is meant to break down the boundary between creators and perceivers by triggering

[251] Ibid., p. 628.

specific viewers in front of the television screen to actively move their own body, and in doing so literally participate in the movement being offered to them from the screen, instead of staring passively at the spectacle. And this televisual, mass-media form of rap was inevitably already available to Shusterman at the time he was conceiving his article.

Therefore, it seems rather extreme for Shusterman to interpret general objections to rap as a consequence of vestigial modernist rationalised aesthetics. He counters this with his construct of an entirely irrational aesthetic in which passionate Dionysian excess kills off any cognitive, didactic, or political action. And betwixt these two counterpoints lies the interspace of post-modern aesthetics in which rap has managed to take hold. Although there is an intermediate space at work here, the whole idea is again based on a (this time developmental) dichotomy in which, in Shusterman's reading, one part has a very clear historical form, while the other is distinctly hypothetical and constructed artificially for the purposes of creating the required "ideal" interspace in which the desired post-modern aesthetic – expressed and exemplified quite perfectly by the chosen genre of rap – can emerge.

I think it was not only his zeal as a fan, but also a sense of less-than-satisfactory interpretive performance, that made Shusterman decide to keep revisiting rap as a source material in the ensuing years. Although the subjectivised and thesis-tense line of argument pursued in "The Fine Art of Rap" means there are manifold ways in which the article can be read, its point, I would say, is quite clearly to outline a dichotomy which, contrary to the constricting aesthetics of modernism or modernity, sketches an ideal outline of post-modern aesthetics, which problematises and refutes the seemingly immutable and stable categories of the aesthetics of modernism, and exposes them as time-conditioned and non-universal.

"Challenging Conventions in the Fine Art of Rap" (1993) is a revised version of the paper analysed above. Shusterman omits from it only about four pages where he had offered specific descriptions of how the rap scene works and discussed the sub-features of rap that he derives from it, which he had consistently used to support his ultimate thesis about the contrast between the modernist and post-modern aesthetics of an artwork and its perception. The second part of the article analyses a particular work, Stetsasonic's rap song "Talkin' All That Jazz", and the general conclusions he draws from it.[252]

[252] Shusterman inserted this analysis in the second part of the chapter "The Fine Art of Rap" in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*. This whole remixing of lyrics is sufficiently rap-like, and it also illustratively thematises a problem repeatedly analysed by Shusterman: that of the loss of the boundary between the original and the appropriation of an already existing source (although the question of authorship and the related copyright does not arise here).

Shusterman is keen to show how aesthetically rich or resonant it is, although he limits his analysis to the lyrical component; he comments that the intense aspects of the musical component cannot be conveyed on printed paper, and that the same can be said of the phrasing and intonation that enhance the functioning and semantics of the lyrical component. Going further, he draws attention to the reductive aspect, noting that the perception of such a genre should not be limited to mere listening, but should include a dance-like manifestation of reception or other reflection of the sensation of rhythm, which is an integral component delivering meaning in this genre. This comment seems to imply a general reduction to which works are inevitably subjected, even in academic musings, when their perception appeals to senses other than those that constitute relatively established ways of translating perceptual impulses into verbal form.

Shusterman centres on a semantic analysis of the lyrics based on the premise that if even perception as impoverished and reduced as this can demonstrate aesthetic richness and resonance, then that is an indication *a posteriori* that they have much richer potential than the unreduced perception offered by the rap song taken as a whole. And even if the lyrics themselves appear, on the surface, to be completely lacking in the traits expected of modern poetry (erudite allusions, opaque omissions, and syntactic and semantic construction), which are replaced by straightforward messages, a conspicuous absence of metaphors, and repetitive clichés, they are nonetheless distinguished by their depth and complexity of meaning. In order to demonstrate this, however, subsequent detailed interpretation must abandon exclusively semantic and textual considerations, and make continual digressions into functioning contexts – referencing not only other components of the song, but also its presumed reception, its genre or tradition – and into the socio-cultural history of the black population of the United States.

Nevertheless, semantic analysis remains at the core of the interpretation. Shusterman convincingly demonstrates the semantic ambivalence of the meaning of the term "jazz", referring both to a once shunned but now respected type of music, but also, in the idiom "talking all that jazz", to a hollowed-out language that means nothing or offers only false assertions. Shusterman interpretively carries this ambivalence into the socially ambivalent position of rap, which also mixes respect and rejection. He acknowledges that his interpretation of the underlying ambivalence the song's lyrics work with may appear to be the result of academic, professional interpretation; he views the process of intellectual appropriation, which endows a work of popular art with deeper meaning and consequently shifts it into the realm of high-brow art, as a common but problematic practice in traditional cultural history. To prove that even the intended audience is capable of perceiving

the text's ambivalence of meaning and appreciating its aesthetic richness, he invokes the tradition of African-American English, which he has already used in a previous study of rap when he was pursuing an argument in a different context. In doing so, he presumes that the intended audience has the ability to cope with a semantically very complex, ambiguous text. By following this line of argument, Shusterman is at pains to dispel the deep-seated assumption that works of popular art are superficial, that is, that they are characterised only by the simplest, undemanding semantic structures.

Subsequently, he also wants to disprove the assumption that works of popular art lack not only complexity in their individual elements, but also "substantive" or "philosophical" depth. Here, again, besides pointing to explicit textual elements, he must work with references to context. His interpretation hinges on the assumption that mainstream society's current image of rap and hip hop is based on prejudice – society condemns or fears rap, even though, or perhaps because, it has no direct experience of it. Drawing on this example, he then concludes that even the aesthetic evaluation of rap is not based on a pure, unbiased contemplation of its formal characteristics, as one would expect of traditional aesthetic postulates and ideas. On the contrary, this evaluation is determined largely by socio-political prejudices or interests, or by where a particular perceiver is positioned in the social stratification. Thus, in the rap song "Talkin' All That Jazz", Shusterman finds that the themes of truth, beauty, artistic status, and power relations are explicitly tossed around. In this interpretation, the song sounds highly emancipatory and, at the same time, metatextual – it is not only a rap song, but also a self-reflective meditation of rap's status in contemporary society and a programmatic defence of rap poetics. In the introduction to his interpretation, Shusterman justified the choice of this song by noting both its popularity and its representativeness. Even in the logic underpinning his own interpretations, it is obvious that the second criterion he uses can immediately run into problems. It does not matter that it is relational (something represents something that is being represented, but at the same time this representing something also represents itself, and thus necessarily raises the question of how far it can represent something outside itself); its precariousness lies in the fact that the elusive and inexpressible set of what is or can be represented by the representer is easy to challenge and calling out to be contested.

Shusterman addresses this question by going on a rhetorical detour focusing on the related, but not identical, aspect of self-consciousness. Referencing traditionally cited critics of popular culture (Adorno, Bourdieu), he concludes that one of the reasons that led them to deny popular works artistic status was precisely these works' reluctance to "pretend to be art". As far as Shusterman is concerned, rap is a type of popular art that does not

lack artistic self-consciousness and self-respect. He then infers, from the self-reflective role he has documented, that rap even meets the aesthetic criterion of being considered for its actual form, excels in its attention to its artistic medium and the methods it chooses and employs, and demonstrates a capacity for formal experimentation. At the same time, however, it respects the requirement of its own formal coherence, which makes it easy to distinguish and differentiate it from other types of cultural output.

Thus, whereas, in his previous article, Shusterman had used rap as evidence of the developmental transformation of art (rap may fall conspicuously short of the criteria of modernist aesthetics, but it does meet the criteria of post-modern aesthetics surprisingly well), in this article he chose not to construct a dichotomy between modernism and post-modernism, but instead based his efforts at aesthetically legitimising rap on (albeit not explicitly realised) schematisation, in which, on the one hand, there is a continuously evolving list of particular characteristics that represents general aesthetic criteria, and, on the other hand, there is the track under analysis, representing more or less the entire set of tens of thousands of songs referred to as rap. However detailed and perhaps even pedantically exhaustive Shusterman's interpretation of the selected song is, it is clearly up to the perceiver how much he is willing to universalise it and accept the implied thesis that (all?) rap and (all?) popular art meets the prevailing criteria of art in general.[253]

[253] The question of how far any general conclusions about the nature not only of popular art, but also of high art, can be drawn from specific examples is the neuralgic point of all arguments about the existence or non-existence of a dividing line between the two (or even more – consider, for example, the notion of mass art/culture, which is sometimes used as a counterpoint to both high and popular art/culture). This is how Shusterman's concept is attacked, for example, by Stefán Snævarr in "Pragmatism and Popular Culture: Shusterman, Popular Art, and the Challenge of Visuality". Here, he is criticised for the essentialism he uses to define popular art, while in a polemical response Shusterman's supporter Wojciech Małecki argues that Shusterman certainly does not mean that "all forms of popular art *do* possess those qualities", but that "popular art *can* have certain aesthetic qualities" (Małecki, "Pragmatist Aesthetics", p. 62). Indeed, as soon as the whole debate is placed in a context in which it is expected to offer summary and universal characteristics of what distinguishes all high art or, conversely, all popular art, that debate and line of argument becomes meaningless, as clearly illustrated by the polemical reactions to any such notion. Małecki defends Shusterman's generalisation by pointing to the pragmatic precept that "one of the most important principles of pragmatism is that we must start from where we are and always try to use the resources and tools available to us, here and now, in order to make things better" (ibid., p. 65). As suggestive as such a premise is, it is also too mechanical for an academic concept and reduces the debate to a makeshift framework that anyone can adjust to their own ends whenever they

Rap makes a return as a source material in "Rap Remix: Pragmatism, Postmodernism, and Other Issues in the House" (1995). With the passing of time, not only has there been a swell in the material that Shusterman is able to tap into, but the advancing commercialisation, the evolution and popularity of the gangster rap subgenre, and racially motivated social unrest have exacerbated the controversy of rap as a genre. During the first half of the 1990s, the flowering of cultural studies in academia gradually inspired respect for the interpretive richness of pop culture material. This was accompanied by the development of a largely semiotically based conceptual apparatus, along with the derivative methods of analysing both the actual texts of popular culture and, subsequently, factors specific to their reception. A few years beforehand, Shusterman had seemed like a rebel seeking to legitimise an ignoble genre of popular culture; now, in the mid–1990s, as Shusterman himself mentions in the introduction to his article, academic advocacy of rap may come across as an effort to stultify its socio-political targeting – by labelling it as "mere" art, it can be disarmed in an autonomous sphere and socially absorbed as a genre that plays only an aesthetic role.

Shusterman thus needs to question the established dichotomy of the artistic and the contrasting socio-political. His article is a polemical response to Tim Brennan's essay "Off the Gangsta Tip: A Rap Appreciation, or Forgetting About Los Angeles", in which Shusterman's interpretation of rap is applied but also displaced. What bothers Shusterman most is the snubbing of rap's interpretive connection to the philosophy and aesthetics of pragmatism. In contrast to his previous article, here Shusterman consistently returns to the

want. Any polemical responses appear bizarre and unproductive in the context of the whole debate on the relationship between high and popular art/culture because, in the small space afforded by the polemic, they must leave unheeded very many related topics, issues, and problems (opportunities to consider the true impact on the perceiver, the understanding and role of entertainment, and the real educational or other positive role that popular culture can actually play). This is evident in the final summary accusation levelled by Snævarr in his attack on Shusterman's concept: "[Shusterman] extrapolates in an unjustifiable manner from rock and rap to all forms of popular culture. He objectifies the concept of popular art; he argues that such disparate phenomena as rap music and TV soap operas share a common essence. He does not see that though rap music might liberate our bodies, watching TV soaps all day certainly does not. Actually, this implicit essentialism goes against the grain of his scepticism toward the objectification of concepts" (Snævarr, "Pragmatism and Popular Culture", p. 10). Yet Snævarr's opening acknowledgements in the article, where he thanks Shusterman profoundly, are entirely in the spirit of Shusterman's approach: "Special thanks to Richard Shusterman for his critical comments, his patience, and his unfailing kindness" (ibid.).

category of post-modernism, which he had used as a platform to interpret rap in the first article. Here, he even fleetingly suggests an ideological link between pragmatism and post-modernism as movements aimed at social practice; this connection appears to be a continuum broken by modernism and its emphasis on the autonomy of art. Similarly, all tensions and internal conflicts that he believes Brennan has misrepresented or misunderstood are explained using a pragmatically conceived overlap between artistic and socio-cultural or socio-political practice. The key passages making a more general contribution to the understanding of popular culture can be found at the end, where Shusterman challenges the validity of academic approaches, an issue that did not arise at all in his earlier, legitimising efforts. He warns, first, of the danger of appropriation: the use of sophisticated aesthetic procedures and categories creates a type of reception different from that of an audience perceiving popular art; yet this reception by a casual audience must be respected as the standard modus. Does academic complexity and the ability to capture nuances or less obvious contextual connections not lead to hierarchical distinctions that make the ordinary popular reception seem less valuable or inferior? "And is this not an exploitative theft of the cultural goods of an oppressed people by a dominant elite, a theft that moreover destroys the very quality of rap by imposing on it a foreign, academic mode of appreciation?"[254] Shusterman groups these ranging doubts and potential dangers under the suggestive label of "intellectualist imperialism", which can be avoided as long as we do not consider our interpretations to be outcomes having exclusive cultural validity. At the same time, however, he immediately calls out this dichotomy between "intellectual" and "popular" reception as problematic; such an understanding is only justified if we resist the urge to understand these labels in an essentialist way, and if we therefore acknowledge that even an academic can constantly hover somewhere between the two poles – depending on the context, an individual may choose to adopt a more intellectual or a more popular mode of perception. From a pragmatic position, Shusterman also rejects ethnological approaches accentuating the casual audience as the only true audience in that this group's understanding of a work shapes the one true meaning that can be sought in the work. Shusterman also continues to defend his use of the term "post-modernism", though this time he waters down its central relevance and tries to place rap squarely in the context of the pragmatist tradition rather than in an exclusively post-modern context. He sees post-modernism as a makeshift conceptual

[254] Shusterman, "Rap Remix", p. 157.

tool that productively sheds light on certain features of rap's functioning in contemporary culture. Tellingly, he no longer views rap as a coherent set of specific characteristics that apply universally to all works within the given context. Instead of a term that runs the risk of implying a certain essentialism, he refers – characteristically for pragmatism – to examples of life practice outside the academic sphere: he cites, as one of the reasons for the use of the term "post-modernism", its popularity, as documented in mass media practices of the late 1980s, when, for example, MTV tagged some of the music videos it was broadcasting with the flashing label "post-modern". This line of reasoning, based on a specific occurrence in practice,[255] is much weaker and can hardly be used as a contrast to the semantically rich (though quite nebulous) term "modernism".

Shusterman returns to rap as a material again in "Art in Action, Art Infraction: Goodman, Rap, Pragmatism", the fifth chapter of *Practicing Philosophy* (1997).[256] This chapter's tone and approach to rap is dictated by the overall concept of the book, which focuses heavily on the theme of active practical action and life, leaving behind the former world of aesthetic categories and traditional concepts. Shusterman thus centres on the traditional dichotomy of the practical and the aesthetic, which he wants to interlink and overarch with the ideal of an aesthetic life practice. Here, too, he relies on pragmatist tradition, which would be unaccommodating not only of this dichotomy, but also of the similarly minded opposites of art/reality, art/knowledge, or art/popular culture. As signalled by the subtitle, Nelson Goodman's aesthetic concepts are lined up alongside the pragmatist tradition and rap as a central theme. These concepts are interpreted in relation to the pragmatist tradition of John Dewey in particular: Goodman, too, seeks to replace Kantian aesthetic dichotomies with continuities and an effort to frame aesthetics in natural life, just as he synthesises philosophy and art through his work. He defines art not in terms of its essence (what is art?), but in terms of contextual, practical circumstances (when is it art?): "the real aesthetic question is not what properties an object permanently has but how it temporally (even if

[255] MTV's labelling of certain music videos as "post-modern" in the late 1980s and early 1990s clearly connoted meanings indicating something that was outré, weird, or different from the mainstream, and had little to do with any of the terminology underpinning the term "post-modern".

[256] Shusterman published an early version of this chapter in French in 1992 ("L'Art comme infraction: Goodman, le rap, et le pragmatisme"). It was first printed in journal form in English in 1995 (see Shusterman, "Art Infraction: Goodman, Rap, Pragmatism").

ephemerally) functions in organizing and symbolizing experience".[257] Thus, in place of a fixed art object, the idea of a dynamic process crops up here, too. Drawing on a concoction of pragmatist tradition,[258] Goodman, and rap, Shusterman here outlines and presents his concept of a meliorative project fusing life and art (the "art of living"), which is meant to focus primarily on the vital, productive, and useful aspects of a thing and allow those aspects to develop and dominate the whole of the thing. And it is rap, as an illustrative "thing",[259] that finds itself in Shusterman's exclusive care.

Most of the characteristics he ascribes to the positive effects of rap had been mentioned in previous articles. This time, though, he mixes these features both with the dogma of traditional pragmatism and with Goodman's theses. Here, again, Shusterman suggestively points out that it is rap that deliberately falls into transgression by ignoring the dichotomy between original creation and derivative borrowing; by analogy, he finds in Goodman's concept of art the notion of the creative implementation of pre-existing elements. This forms a basis for his conclusion that "By highlighting changing contexts, rap underscores the pragmatist point that art's meaning and value are defined more by contextual functioning than by the fixed art object."[260] For Shusterman, rap seems to have become a tool for revitalising "old" sources of sound (and the dogma of traditional pragmatism might be viewed as such a half-forgotten source), which he mixes and collages in a new way; at the same time, the mixing also works in reverse, as the analogies found between pragmatist aesthetics or philosophy and rap inevitably legitimise rap's status in academic discourse. And it is this genre that is continually being popularised through Shusterman's efforts; there is a spreading awareness of its principles and a deepening link between the academic philosopher-aesthetician and the "ordinary" fans of this specific genre of popular art, of which Shusterman had become a prominent advocate, at least in terms of its reputation in

[257] Shusterman, "Art Infraction", p. 271. *Cf.* Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, pp. 70–83.

[258] Shusterman quotes William James' definition of pragmatism: "'the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, »categories«, supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, and facts'" ("Art Infraction", p. 272).

[259] This "sloppy" label is evidently intended to function semantically in such a way as to completely exclude any phenomenality (in the sense of the "phenomenon of rap") and thus keep the whole concept away from any essentialist content.

[260] Quoted from "Art in Action, Art Infraction: Goodman, Rap, Pragmatism" in *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 136. This passage is absent from the original journal version of the article.

academia. Rap's former synecdochic status as a select part, referring to an imaginary whole of popular art or to an even broader set of popular culture, has clearly vanished from his argument here. In this thesis, rap is indeed taken to be simply rap.

Shusterman's new interest is structured more around new academic themes of the identity or community of the perceivers: "Rap's rich diversity also allows the individual to exercise personal creative taste while remaining within a distinctive taste-community. That hip-hop's distinctive style requires neither affluence nor an Ivy-league diploma makes it still more appealing, while proving that aesthetic self-stylization is not a project confined to an economic or intellectual elite. For its deepest devotees, rap thus becomes an all absorbing, comprehensive art of life – in the vernacular, *a philosophy*."[261] He then goes on to engage in an affirmative elaboration of this rewritten meaning of philosophy: "Though long stifled by modernity's academic ideal of philosophy as impersonal theory, the notion of philosophy as an embodied, comprehensive art of living retains a popular power by serving an undeniable existential need. Rap philosophers like KRS-One, Guru, and MC Solaar join the likes of Thoreau and Foucault in trying to revive this venerable practice. Here, rap challenges not only modernity's compartmental aesthetics but its very conception of philosophy."[262]

By making the shift towards the art of living and placing an emphasis on the physicality of how a work is perceived and experienced, Shusterman also displaces the interconnection between pragmatist legacy and contemporary rap. "If we are bodily possessed by the beat, how can we process the often subtle and complex messages of rap's texts ?

Goodman's pragmatism provides at least two kinds of answer here. The first is to challenge the whole mind/body opposition on which the apparent inconsistency rests: to insist that bodily movement and impassioned feeling are not the enemies of cognition but often necessary aids to it, that cognition includes more than what is conveyed by propositional content, and that non-propositional forms of cognition can often create the context necessary for properly understanding certain claims of propositional knowledge. Dancing and thinking are not incompatible activities, and Nietzsche, in advocating the notion of a dancing philosopher, was not recommending a philosopher who would not think."[263]

[261] Ibid., p. 148.
[262] Ibid., p. 150.
[263] Shusterman, "Art Infraction", pp. 277–278.

His cocktail of pragmatism, Goodman, and rap leads him to his final thesis about the key role of coherence. Shusterman accentuates Goodman's vision of plurality, but also points out that plurality itself can be both helpful and debilitating (when the different versions cancel each other out), or confusing (when one is unable to decide between versions). Shusterman again proposes a distinctly pragmatist solution, this time expressed in the idea of judicious vacillation. This notion does not evoke "a supercontext where all conflicting contexts are made to cohere through resolution of all their tensions. Nor does the notion of judicious vacillation imply that a general formula for coherent combination can be articulated in advance. Achieving coherence becomes a challenging part of that difficult genre of aesthetic living which aims at pushing the values of pluralistic richness and complexity toward the very limits of unity."[264]

Needless to say, it is in Goodman that Shusterman identifies an object lesson of such a challenging shift towards coherence. Goodman attempts to sketch a portrait of a philosopher of art with two personalities – the analyst and the pragmatist. In the early stages of his career, the analyst predominated, and this orientation provided him with a keen ability to understand meanings. Later, the pragmatist prevailed, with Goodman rejecting false dichotomies and a proclivity for classification and going down a path ending in the transformation – rather than just analysis – of our actions. In the spirit of the pun used in the title of the article, Goodman committed a positive transgression, which gives Shusterman the justification to tag him as belonging both to the art of rap and to the tradition of pragmatism. In doing so, he develops and illustrates his new key concept – the art of living – on material other than his own.

Shusterman will return to the topic of rap several more times,[265] but since these are mostly contributions to synoptic books, he does not develop his concept any further, but more or less just summarises the theses he had formed in the articles discussed above. His interest (aside from stock aesthetic-philosophy themes) shifts to the broader and more general concept of the art of living, in which rap plays a kind of illustrative or background role. At the same time, the gradually shaping theme of physicality, which in his rap analyses is related primarily to non-intellectual, sensory perception correlated with movement or dance, leads him to elaborate further on the concept of somaesthetics, i.e. the aesthetic concept of the somatic art of improving oneself, based on corporeality.

[264] Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 152.
[265] See Shusterman, "Rap as Art and Philosophy", and Shusterman, "Rap Aesthetics".

High art as a temporary historical formation

Throughout the 1990s, Shusterman also wrote a fairly wide range of other articles that address the status of popular art and culture in general or, more occasionally, consider types of pop culture material other than rap. This series begins with the 1993 study "Don't Believe the Hype".[266] Here, the core of the argument is directed at poking holes in the deep-seated dichotomy between high art and popular art. He sums up the basic motivation for defending popular art in his beloved – and, again, distinctly pragmatist – thesis that popular art provides us (even us intellectuals) with so much aesthetic satisfaction that we cannot let go of the commonly shared academic proposition that it is ignoble, that it fails to meet aesthetic criteria, or that it threatens one's humanity. Shusterman reflects on the fact that popular art, as a catch-all label, includes works that are indeed inferior, tacky, or uninteresting, and that, even from the perspective of how it is received, much of this type of art is consumed without any positive effect, i.e. completely passively and crassly. At the same time, however, he also rejects the generalisation that these negative characteristics are a kind of essence that defines the entire field of popular art and that they therefore apply generally to all objects and phenomena labelled as such. The way Shusterman sees it, part of this type of art serves demonstrably useful social goals and is also aesthetically meritorious, and even the part that does not meet these criteria has the potential to work towards these criteria while fulfilling a social function that other products or institutions cannot and do not.

Shusterman rejects general, sweeping evaluations and invokes debate on more concrete, more specific issues or types of material. At the same time, however, his starting point is a general philosophical line of reasoning that collectively pushes popular art outside the sphere of aesthetic interest, specifically from a generalising thesis often repeated in the aesthetics of recent decades – popular art is predicated on the fact that it only pretends to have the status of art, whereas high art is characterised by the fact that it always offers us something original and unique. He believes that such a thesis is untenable in that it implicitly assumes that the cultural elite or aesthetics can decide which particular and empirical experiences are real, truly lived, and which are merely feigned or artificial.

Shusterman singles out rock music as an example to refute this thesis. This type of popular art demonstrates that even here there is an intense

[266] Reprinted as the second chapter in Shusterman's *Performing Live*. Passages from this article are also woven into chapter seven ("Form and Funk") of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*.

perception that clearly engulfs the perceiver; even vehement critics of rock music must admit that this music's listeners, by the very act of perceiving it, create an experience that is passionately real, even intoxicating. It also complicates the traditional aesthetic assumption that aesthetic gratification should be lasting. In rock music in particular, we see that this gratification is temporary, short-lived, but has the after-effect of making us long for more or even greater pleasure of a similar kind. Shusterman spurns the aesthetic criterion of permanence, ironically noting that it points to another world; in our world, which is one of ongoing process and change, there is no place for anything permanent. Shusterman attributes the illusion of permanence and the ability to stand the test of time, which supposedly characterises high art, to socio-cultural and institutional circumstances or reasons: schools and the whole concept of education have been shepherding us to the same works of high art for centuries. Thus, we do not choose these works simply because they provide us with some abundance of enjoyment; rather, we perceive them because we are led to do so and because these works are placed within our reach. The advent of mass media has derailed the traditional school system, mired as it is in the exclusive adoration of the classics, and has unlocked new opportunities to access works of art. Consequently, the monopoly enjoyed by high art and its classics has evaporated. Further, monopolisation is not necessarily permanent when we consider that many now-acclaimed works of high culture (e.g. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*) were originally consigned to the fringes as sensationalist commercial junk. Culture dominated by the majority was and is expropriated by a cultural elite that has the ability to reclassify the status of a work, thus changing the established way in which such a work is appropriated – instead of popular perception, a required perception is instituted within the parameters of high art.

Shusterman contrasts the criterion of permanence with the criterion of transience – even a transient experience can be powerful and intense, and even transience itself can be manifested as an aesthetic value. Shusterman explains that the rejection of the impermanent as ephemeral is a prejudice that may have anthropological roots in the need to fix attention on permanent phenomena and objects in the struggle for survival.

Similarly, he rejects the thesis that popular art is escapist. The same objection could be levelled at the assumption of the autonomy of art and the separation of the sphere of art from everyday life, as fiercely maintained by traditional aesthetics. This autonomy, too, could be viewed as the separation of art into a sphere that stands outside the needs and problems of human life.

Another generalisation that Shusterman wants to refute is the prejudice that popular art is not aesthetically demanding and therefore allows for passive consumption without the need to expend any internal effort or energy.

The whole generalisation is based on the identification of all activity with thinking, with the mental effort of our intellect. Indeed, according to Shusterman, a certain effort and activity to overcome the resistance exhibited by a work is a prerequisite for aesthetic enjoyment. Yet this activity does not necessarily represent only Adornian "independent thought". Once again, he uses the argument of rock music and the intense way in which it is perceived, based on movement, dancing, or singing the words of a song, accompanied by sweating and often ending in physical exhaustion. At the same time, this most common type of popular perception does not mean that rock music cannot also be perceived through intellectual effort.

Another criticism, addressed by Shusterman at length, is the blanket attribution of superficiality to all popular art. This is usually accompanied by an elaboration that relies either on the dichotomy of an escapist world of pseudo-problems and clichéd solutions versus a movement towards deeper levels and real problems, or the dichotomy of the shallow and stereotypical versus the complex, deep, and multidimensional.

According to Shusterman, the first dichotomy is built on the shaky footing that if something is complex and "deep", the automatically accepted assumption is that it cannot be popular at the same time. Shusterman refutes this premise by making a cursory reference to rock and rap music, which deals in depth with, say, the very real problem of drugs, and by exploring the reception of certain television shows that also manifestly address urgent and complex issues in our lives. The advent of "quality television" about ten years after the article was published would certainly be another useful argument. And the assumption that if something is to be relevant and substantial, it must necessarily be new and complex can also be challenged: everyday experiences and traditional forms of behaviour that have accompanied us down the ages (falling in love, kissing children goodnight, bringing the whole family together on festive occasions) play a very important role in our lives, and yet do not meet the parameters of novelty and complexity at all. And the criterion of what is "real" is fraught with difficulty because of both the necessary relational link to the person feeling the realness and the urgency on the one hand, and, on the other, aesthetic practice: ordinary problems addressed by popular culture (heartbreak, family conflicts, drugs, sex, violence) are perceived as unreal by traditional aesthetics, while the very esoteric themes of works of high art are often celebrated as real. The struggle over who should and could provide an accepted definition of reality has been at the heart of political strife for centuries.

Shusterman refutes the second dichotomy, based on the contrast between superficiality or shallowness versus complexity and nuance, by referring to the research into the perception of television programmes, as submitted

by John Fiske in his books. This research shows that popularity is not compromised if a given work is polysemous and multilevelled – different groups of perceivers then select and appropriate different meanings from these various levels. Even popular art can work with nuancing complexity, since the popular audience is not a homogeneous mass, but consists of manifold social groups who, as Fiske demonstrates, want to create for themselves the types of meanings that relate to their social experience. The impression of the superficiality and shallowness of popular art can often be ascribed to the fact that the intellectual critic is not at all willing to pay more concentrated attention to this type of art. Shusterman again supports his argument by referring to rock music, which has long offered complex, multifaceted meanings on both somatic and discursive levels. He then goes on to point out the much more complex relationships between a work and the audience perceiving it. This is a multitudinous rather than a mass audience. One and the same work can be perceived in no end of ways if the audience is broken down into groups not only according to social or ethnic criteria, but also according to taste. If the work offers a distinctive and controversial thesis, part of the audience will reject the work in its entirety on the basis of that thesis, while another part may disagree with the thesis, but this does not diminish their enjoyment of the work. Here, again, Shusterman is able to refer to the conclusions reached in the analyses that John Fiske had conducted primarily on television material, which incorporated and capitalised on Stuart Hall's previous theoretical concepts and the material research carried out by Ien Ang.

Popularity therefore does not mean conformity. Within a popular-culture audience, there are groups that rely on adherence to established narrative patterns, styles, or genres, but also groups that value change, shifts, and innovation. Much of popular art (Shusterman again cites the example of rap) is not necessarily popular with or positively received by the so-called general public (although Shusterman ascribes a rather mythical origin to this label), but finds its fans among a specific segment of that audience. Thus, the assumption of some sort of "mediocre taste" does not work here, and even works whose meanings are only properly understood by a certain subculture or audience subsumed into an alternative culture can function within popular culture. These specific audience groups also form their own traditions, which then resonate with intertextual meanings that are inaccessible to the general public.

Shusterman also discusses the dichotomy between the uniqueness and novelty (innovation) attributed to high art, and the standardisation, staidness, clichédness, and other characteristics connoting the assumption that popular art is churned out on an industrial scale. He grasps the difference

in values between the two poles as a construct that has arisen from the romantic myth that aesthetic creation is the product of a single individual working entirely on his own. This myth was then further perpetuated and reinforced because it accentuated the ideology of individualism that was hailed throughout the era of liberal capitalism. Such a construct, however, suppresses the communal aspect that has characterised art for centuries. And it pushes aside collectively produced culture, be it Greek temples, Gothic cathedrals, or literary works steeped in the oral tradition. However, a certain type of collectivity is also represented by the tradition of a given type or genre of art, and perhaps by the distinct audience of a genre.

Even high art avails itself of certain standardised procedures because they allow for more effective communication, and high art, too, needs established procedures as a backdrop for creative innovation. As Shusterman wittily summarises, the sonnet's length is as rigidly standardised as the television sitcom's.

In his final summary, Shusterman echoes a thesis shared by other proponents of popular culture, according to which the position of high art is not an essential given, but is developmentally conditional. Akin to John Fiske in *Understanding Popular Culture*, Shusterman considers the position of high art to be the product of a particular time, originally created by the European aristocracy to maintain their socially privileged position, which was being increasingly threatened by the rise of a prosperous bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie, in turn, subsequently adopted and maintained this position in order to set themselves apart socially from the new lower strata of society. What we are broadly witnessing, then, is the exploitation of culture and art as a means to establish a sort of social hegemony. This is why Shusterman points out that he advocates popular art not to recalibrate this hegemony and try to elevate popular art to dominance, thereby marginalising high art altogether – if for no other reason than that there is a permeable boundary between the two art forms, which constantly draw on each other for impetus and enrichment. Rather, he is striving to challenge the exclusive link between high art and aesthetic value, while providing a platform for the development of concrete insight into works and genres of popular art that can be approached without problematic generalisations, preconceptions, or hierarchically engineered dichotomies.

The value of entertainment

In outlining his agenda for a more detailed and unbiased study of popular art, Shusterman ventured into another area of material that stands in stark contrast to his beloved rap. In "Moving Truth: Affect and Authenticity in

Country Musicals" (1999),[267] he focuses instead, as the title suggests, on socially quite conservative and developmentally sedate country music. Not only that, he delves deeper by concentrating on the specific and again highly conventional genre of musicals. He admits that he alighted on this choice because country music has the reputation of a completely ossified – and therefore academically ignored – genre. And he embeds this fact within the framework of the pragmatist tradition, specifically the notion of aesthetic blindness used by William James to describe the phenomenon whereby socially constructed tastes prevent us from seeing or paying deeper attention to certain phenomena.

Shusterman emphasises the notion of socio-cultural space, which influences both the creation and use of the products that find themselves in it. In doing so, he again pursues the pragmatist strategy of tying any work to its context, reflected in this study by his fairly detailed demographic interpretation of the ageing of the contemporary American population and the transformation of 1960s cultural radicals into conservative advocates of mainstream America and family values. His reading also encompasses the rise of interest in ethnic identity and the theme of multiculturalism, which dominate the contemporary public sphere. Consequently, traditional identities based on class or community lose their interpretative power in such a sphere, leading some of the population who identified themselves through these identities to construct their own identity with the help of cultural affiliation. In this context, American country music is a reservoir of opportunity for identification among the white ethnicity, which, for a whole host of reasons, finds it difficult or impossible to identify with otherwise ethnically (rap, reggae, salsa) or generationally (techno, heavy metal) based music. Country music offers them a complete cultural style that proceeds from a certain way of dancing and dressing, and that is predicated on a specific form of food or ethos of behaviour. This style sets its adherents apart not only from other ethnic identities, but also from another stream of whiteness – the successful corporate establishment. Country music creates an image connoting traits of tradition, whiteness, a true home in the American heartland, and a typically American tradition and lifestyle; it can also be enriched with the rebellious individualism of bygone western cowboys or with southern rebelliousness in the context of the Civil War, lending it shades of non-conformity or heroism. In this context, 1990s country music rose to supreme dominance because, unlike other genres, it does not polarise, it does not offer anything radical,

[267] Reprinted in Shusterman's *Performing Live*.

but nor is it difficult to apprehend: country song lyrics are easily understood, their messages can be easily perceived as true, and the feelings they thematise can be easily shared and understood as real. In this way, country music has been able to take on an aura of authenticity, accompanied by an image that is appealing and easy to identify with.

Shusterman shows, in his rather detailed analysis, how all these purposely pure and "authentic" images are problematic from a historical, cultural, or sociological point of view. For example, if we cast an eye over the musical instruments that are typical of country music, that seem to be planted solely within the boundaries of this field, and whose purity is assiduously contended, the steel guitar hails from Hawaii and did not make its way into country music until the 1940s, while the banjo originated within black American culture as an imitation of instruments used in indigenous African music.

Shusterman explains this effect by referencing William James' interpretation of how the concept of reality works, where "*reality means simply relation to our emotional and active life. […] In this sense, whatever excites and stimulates our interest is real*; whenever an object so appeals to us that we turn to it, accept it, fill our mind with it, or practically take account of it, so far it is real for us and we believe it."[268] Shusterman applies this interpretation to his own material by summarising that credence comes through emotion, and that a sense of reality (and, by extension, authenticity and purity) can also be conceived in comparative terms, that is, through a comparison of whether there is more or less of something somewhere. This relativity is a conduit for country music to appear authentic and original to America; when compared to other genres of popular music, it can come across as completely pure and uncommercial.

Shusterman borrows Benjamin's category of narrator (storyteller; Der Erzähler) and searches for its imprint or analogy in country music: buck-naked emotions and an emphasis on the fact that this music comes entirely "from the heart" allow – by analogy to the historical teller of stories in the oral tradition – a certain "aura" to be evoked that is not spoiled by any mediation; this aura offers nothing other than a profound and liberating truth. In country music, this is manifested by consigning other components of song and musical accompaniment to the background, so that only the story and the lessons that can be learned from it remain in the fore. This story must be simple in order to amplify the impression of a purity which remains entirely intact and to which nothing extra is added. At the same time, it is able to

[268] William James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890) – quoted in Shusterman, "Moving Truth", p. 226.

provoke emotions in the audience, and specifically to unshackle emotional memories that evoke a bygone era when everything was even purer and more authentic, while at the same time offering emotional stimuli to bring those times back. It is the emotional content that gives these songs their persuasiveness – the performer's willingness to bare his "soul" completely and be sentimental or impassioned stands out from other areas of culture or life where such manifestations are perceived as undesirable. This is why country music also uses totemic and utterly formulaic stereotypes – because we are familiar with them, they trigger classic emotional responses in us.

Shusterman then goes on to analyse in depth selected musicals in the country music genre, which he sums up by noting that, "In short, while country's purest music and authentic love confessions still involve artificial light, smoke-polluted air, and a commercial audience, they convince by their contrast to worse impurities and by their emotional appeal to our need to believe, an unavoidable need that pragmatism recognizes in defining belief as an essential (though not necessarily explicit) guide for action."[269] Inspired by William James, then, Shusterman links country music to the human need to believe and to base that belief on principles other than scientific evidence. He thus views country as a reminder of an irrepressible world of feelings and emotions, a world of "our hearts (and other muscles) before our minds […]. Pragmatism's hopeful fallibilism extends to romance as well as to science."[270]

During the 2000s, Shusterman occasionally revisited the general aesthetic issue of the status of popular art and academic approaches to it. There are, I would say, two significant essays in this regard. The first is "Entertainment: A Question for Aesthetics" (2003). In previous essays he had repeatedly devoted himself to the complications posed by the established dichotomy of high art and popular art, albeit from different angles and by availing himself of a range of different materials, but in this article he moves to a differently conceived dichotomy: art versus entertainment. In keeping with the pragmatist tradition of reflecting on the historical development of the use and functioning of a given concept, which in turn makes it possible to correct, set, or suggest the course it would take in the future, he gives a brief outline of how the conceptual content of the term "entertainment" has been conceived in the past. He presents a hierarchical concept viewing entertainment as a derivative, decadent, or ignoble sphere of high culture, which nevertheless remains completely dependent on this culture and its results,

[269] Ibid., p. 230.
[270] Ibid., p. 231.

and juxtaposes that with a less frequent parallel concept that segregates entertainment, placing it in a secondary, separate sphere subject to its own rules, values, and aesthetic criteria that are different from those used in the sphere of high culture. While the first concept is virtually omnipresent, the second concept can be found, for example, in Mikhail Bakhtin's interpretation of carnival culture.

As in previous articles, Shusterman emphasises that the forces that define the functioning of cultural space, and thus determine how popular art or entertainment is understood, are historically shaped and therefore fluid. In his excursion through history and etymology, which also visits French and German, he finds a fundamental contradiction that is also inherent in the two not entirely synonymous English terms "entertainment" and "amusement". The former accentuates aspects of association, the idea of being held together, and concentrated recreational activity that is pleasurable to the perceiver; the latter emphasises empty "enchantment" or loss (of time or something else) and distraction or diversion. He goes on to describe in some detail how approaches to entertainment evolved from Plato to T. S. Eliot and Gadamer. From this, he arrives at the generalising thesis that the secularisation engendered by the era of modernity, and further enhanced by the Protestant ethic, brought with it a shift in what constitutes sacred texts – literary classics have taken over from Scripture as sacred texts, just as museums have replaced the former churches as destinations for Sunday travel. At the same time, however, the sacralisation of high art and literature required the rigorous separation of the realm of entertainment, which is fraught with earthly and carnal pleasures and thus threatens high art's transcendentalism. This tendency was reinforced, he says, by the fact that "intellectual asceticism that constitutes the typical *habitus* of theorists prompts them to resist full recognition of pleasure's rich values."[271] Shusterman underlines this developmental interpretation with a reference to pragmatist aesthetics, which detects the core values of art in life and pleasure, and thus focuses on those values that aesthetic development has identified as the deadly sins for which the entire domain of pleasure is condemned.

Because this point is rather pretentiously rhetorical, Shusterman brings up both areas in the final section of the article. Again, he mounts his defence of the category of pleasure linguistically, showing how many different terms – and the activities these terms refer to – are concealed within it. He also takes issue here with the labelling of his own continuously evolving aesthetics as

[271] Shusterman, "Entertainment", p. 301.

hedonistic; for him, pleasure is a positive – but not dominant – value category towards which the perception of an artwork must be guided. He opposes the definition of pleasure as a passive sensation existing only in the private world of the individual experiencing it, and places a stress on the active aspect of pleasure based on progress towards an end, climax, or completion. "Pleasure is thus inseparable from the activity in which it is experienced."[272]

As vivid and positive as the rhetoric of such a definition may sound, several problems arise when it is viewed through a less sanguine prism. For one thing, as he shapes his definition in his polemic with empiricism, Shusterman works with the dichotomy of the active and the passive, and yet the creation of dichotomies is an approach he constantly criticises elsewhere. For another thing, even setting aside the methodology, it is particularly obvious in this case that if pleasure is to remain primarily an internal matter, a matter of the mind or other bodily locations, then drawing a boundary between active and passive sensation is going to be highly difficult unless we demand that pleasure must also be somehow manifested actively externally, which would again present us with the intractable problem of demonstrating or otherwise transposing pleasure. However much pleasure is a key enabler illuminating the perception of popular art, it is manifested overtly – as exemplified by John Fiske's highly intuitive treatment of such a fundamental term.[273] In problematising this, one could of course also return to the origins, in this case Barthes's distinction between pleasure and delight, in which the boundary between the two entities also necessarily remains highly sensory and intuitive.

Shusterman is also at pains to pin down the difference between the pleasurable sensations that a good espresso, for example, can provide, and pleasure as an aesthetic category, which he further specifies as "to take pleasure in perceiving and understanding the particular work's qualities and meanings, where such pleasure tends to intensify our attention to the work in a way that aids our perception and understanding of it."[274] This definition is very close to the intellectual perception that he has repeatedly criticised and dismissed in previous essays as too narrow a norm suiting high but not popular art.

Drawing on the nuances of activity that is supposed to bring pleasure, Shusterman then infers the effect that this has on our lives and the impetus to improve them. "More than making life sweet, pleasure makes continued

[272] Ibid., p. 303.
[273] See Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*.
[274] Shusterman, "Entertainment", p. 303.

life also more possible by offering the promise that it is worth living."[275] To further his cause, Shusterman makes references to the notion of pleasure and enjoyment in Indian or Japanese traditional culture, but his whole interpretation is somewhat vague, oscillating between the accentuation of sensations and the elation of acquiring meanings, an activity that is necessarily highly rational. He seeks to emphasise the social dimension deriving from the sharing of pleasures and their "contagiousness". He stresses the standard collective perception of much of popular art, where intensification amplifies each individual's aesthetic experience. However, he immediately concludes from this that we can share our pleasures and individual aesthetic experiences, but takes this no further than a general entreaty and fails to specify the communicative essence of such sharing. In terms of how art (including the pleasures it provides) and life are interconnected, he invokes only sketchy pragmatic theses about the value and possibilities of improving this life. This is why, ultimately, his whole interpretation of entertainment and entertainability actually ends somewhere in the middle, somewhere along the way, at a point of interpretation where he concludes that it is entertaining works that provide intense pleasures, making them useful and essential to our lives. While this is a polemic with Hannah Arendt's understanding of entertainment, Shusterman shifts the pragmatist concept to a heavily mystical, all-embracing form: "pragmatism's affirmation of the life values of art, beauty, and entertainment need not be construed as confined exclusively to the human realm. Beauty of color, shape, movement, and song are part of the dance of life of the wider natural world that humans belong to and through which they are constituted. The energies and material that constitute aesthetic experience for the human subject belong to the wider environing world; aesthetic experience, properly speaking, is never located only in the head of the human subject but always exists in a wider context that frames the subject's interaction with the object of art or natural beauty. And, for pragmatism, the human subject itself is but a shifting, temporary construction from the materials and energies of the larger world of nature and history."[276]

The subsequent general "Popular Art and Entertainment Value" (2008) is, genetically speaking and up to a point, another remix of his previous paper. The introductory section is newly conceived; here, he presents the problem of the conflict between intrinsic and instrumental values, again framed around debates on popular art. Traditional aesthetics views aesthetic value as intrin-

[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid., p. 306.

sic. The pragmatist tradition, on the other hand, plays up instrumentality, relational connections, and contextuality, although, Shusterman claims, it cannot be accused of completely denying the existence of intrinsic values: "If there were only instrumental values, so that everything was valued only as a means to something else, there would seem to be nothing valuable for itself that could ultimately justify or ground the value of these instrumentalities. Our whole structure of values would seem to be an empty circle of mere means with nothing valuable to make them worth using as means."[277]

Having conceived his starting point in this way, Shusterman finds the dichotomy of knowledge and pleasure problematic. Again, he refutes the labelling of pleasure as a trivial or narrowly personal matter. In his new interpretation, he views pleasure as a space in which intrinsic value is combined with the instrumental value of service to life. The subsequent interpretation dips into a previous article to borrow etymological and historical-aesthetic passages on how entertainment is understood and classified; an original new text emerges when Shusterman returns to his favourite rap material. He uses rap to explain the confluence of the two values – the intrinsic value is provided by rhythm encouraging the audience to dance, while the instrumental value is the promotion of black consciousness and, in this specific case, Public Enemy's call to "teach the bourgeoisie" about social injustice.

In the previous version, Shusterman had called the final section "Pleasure and Life"; in the new version he rewrites the title to "Pleasure and Functionality". He also adds summary criticisms levelled primarily against the claims to the permanence and stability of aesthetic values that he finds in Hannah Arendt, but that he also sees threaded throughout the tradition going all the way back to antiquity and Plato. The insistence on the independent status of art, devoid of all utilitarian and prescriptive references, dominated by intrinsic value alone, is viewed by Shusterman as a prejudice that must be discarded, and the way to do this is by revisiting and problematising it. It is worth noting here that while elsewhere, in keeping with the pragmatist tradition, Shusterman likes to stress the historical contingency of a given concept and its contextualisation, in Arendt's case he does not allow for any reading against the background of her experience of totalitarian regimes exploiting art for, say, utilitarian propaganda and other extra-artistic needs.

The newly written final part covers the problem of intrinsic value and criticism of the idea of the objectivity of values that Shusterman finds in the analytic philosopher G. E. Moore. First, he criticises the assumption that value

[277] Shusterman, "Popular Art and Entertainment Value", p. 133.

could exist in and of itself – according to Shusterman, any judgement implies a relationship between an object and a thinking person. Then, he challenges the idea of the possibility of isolating intrinsic value without taking into account a number of other things that help to define the meaning and value of a work. However, the example he gives as an argument, that it is impossible to evaluate Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* "in absolute isolation from all previous and consequent painting, because part of the meaning of any art work is determined by its perceived relations to the other works in its genre or its tradition",[278] is itself somewhat problematic. Admittedly, this is true if we take into account the genesis of any criteria and the development of interpretative means and other methods with which we approach a work based on general and our own experience. On the other hand, it is not clear in the slightest what "all previous and consequent painting" we should take into account if we want to follow Shusterman's recommendation. All of Picasso's painting? All the paintings of the European avant-garde? All painting that is already in existence? Obviously, context is important, but it cannot be absolute, and there must always be a working – albeit arbitrary and problematic – consensus that other contextual strands need not be approached because their relevance or contribution, if we were to consider them comparatively, is perceived to be minimisable. Which is in stark contrast to Shusterman's vision of the world, paraphrased above, in which all energies and materials are entangled in a cosmogonic concatenation.

Shusterman rather limits his polemical sweep by offering his own definition of intrinsic value: "Intrinsic value, as I prefer to construe this notion, does not, strictly speaking, belong permanently to isolated things in their internal autonomy but instead belongs to the particular situations or specific fields of transaction in which those things of alleged intrinsic value play a central role. The intrinsic value of a painting, for example, depends not only on the physically colored canvas itself but also on the fact that there are people who have the sense organs and understanding to appreciate its colors and the forms and meanings to which these colors contribute. We can still speak here of intrinsic value in the sense that the pictorial properties of the canvas itself constitute the crucial focus for the appreciated value in question. But there is no pretension that all the appreciated properties of the painting (including its expressive and meaning properties) can be conceived as purely internal to the canvas and independent of any relation to things beyond it."[279]

[278] Ibid., p. 149.
[279] Ibid., pp. 152–153.

After this clarifying generally aesthetic exposé, Shusterman returns to the issue of entertainment and its value. Entertainment has a wide range of instrumental uses intended for the relaxation, refreshment, or cognitive recreation of the individual, and these uses in turn are beneficial to the society in which the entertained individual finds himself. In addition, Shusterman ascribes to entertainment an important intrinsic value that lies "in its immediately enjoyed satisfactions. The expression 'entertainment value' as distinguished from the value of entertainment can more specifically connote this sort of directly experienced enjoyment that is grasped as valuable for itself rather than simply being appreciated for its instrumental value in achieving other ends. But such intrinsic value cannot be confused with a permanently fixed value. The fact that values are transient does not mean they are not real."[280]

According to Shusterman, popular art clearly shows how temporal and ephemeral values are. The same works soon enter into completely differently configured transactional fields. His rap examples, to which he returns here for the last time, show that it is not long before what was initially perceived as distinctly contemporary takes on the status of a genre classic. "Temporality thus not only can erode entertainment value, but it can also enhance it."[281]

Conclusion

If we were to simplify matters rather, Richard Shusterman's developmentally conceived essays on popular art can be condensed down into a narrative structure whose plot winds along a path that takes us past a youthfully rebellious dismantling of established and conventional boundaries, before we move on to his hedonistic joy at the fact that, unlike previous generations of popular culture advocates, he is finally able to overturn traditional prejudices against popular art "from within" the discipline itself by challenging the argumentative logic of traditional postulates, and, ultimately, we arrive at his broadly developed concept of ameliorative activity directed towards an "art of living" in which popular art is, of course, included but no longer needs specific attention. In the beginning, there are manifest emancipatory efforts to expand the legitimate field of aesthetics, offering a conception of art "in more liberal terms, freeing it from its exalted cloister, where it is isolated

[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid., p. 154.

from life and contrasted to more popular forms of cultural expression. Art, life, and popular culture all suffer from these entrenched divisions and from the consequently narrow identification of art with elite fine art. My defense of the aesthetic legitimacy of popular art and my account of ethics as an art of living both aim at a more expansive and democratic reconception of art."[282] In hindsight, this early phase seems more productive, more "powerful", and more persuasive, because Shusterman is in the territory of a stable and established discipline that has certain assumptions he intends to refute argumentatively. It is therefore clear what he is problematising, why he is doing it, and what solutions he is proposing. Later, when he is building his own autonomous – albeit aesthetic – project, he is in a position to compose individual premises quite freely, using them over and over by choice, remixing them into individual papers and setting his own argumentative rules. This phase then raises the author's profile as a performer (at the expense of his thinker side) and offers little that is new and stimulating in terms of changing our aesthetic understanding of the relationship between high and popular art. Perhaps one reason for this is that Shusterman fails to take into account the productive relationship between text and perceiver, which is central to popular culture, but continues to stick to an understanding of the text-work itself; another possible factor is that, during the 1990s and 2000s, research into how popular culture is received became a very productive field, but one occupied by other authorities (Henry Jenkins, Matt Hills, Jonathan Gray). Therefore, his "intervention" in the field will remain – probably forever – limited to theses that, though weighty and often manifestly productive, require further refinement, more nuanced modification, and verification of the extent to which they can be accepted and upheld in their universality as tools of thought, and the extent to which they are merely rhetorical devices to help change a situation that he himself feels is dismal and worth transforming. Which probably does not deviate in any way from the spirit of pragmatism.

[282] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. xv.

The Point of Literary Theory: The Meaning and Function of Literary Theory through a Neopragmatist Prism

VLADIMÍR PAPOUŠEK

In the summer of 1982, *Critical Inquiry* ran "Against Theory", an article by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels in which the two of them discussed the main currents of thought in literary theory at the time. The first current they broach is defined as a current sharing the belief that fundamental true knowledge can be attained through a literary text, that the text is a code concealing a decipherable message. E. D. Hirsch, the objective-interpretation fundamentalist, is cited as an example, though essentially the whole metaphysical tradition of European textual reading, from biblical exegesis and hermeneutics to phenomenology and structuralism, could be included here. The second current they touch on conversely denies the existence of decipherable truth in the text and is represented by Paul de Man, the proponent of deconstruction. Then there is a third current, or perhaps more precisely an ironic alternative to the two previous ones, that is represented here by the ideas of Stanley Fish. Naturally, the two authors, as neopragmatists, are most sympathetic towards this last current, particularly as Fish's thinking is basically a kind of declaration on the practical treatment of texts and, to a large degree, a denial of the utility of theory. That also happens to be the conclusion eventually reached by Knapp and Michaels:" theory is nothing else but the attempt to escape practice".[283] The authors contend that literary theory has never been of any practical benefit.

What followed was a string of responses by assorted authorities, including Richard Rorty, Fish, and E. D. Hirsch, which were summarised in *Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism*, edited by W. J. T. Mitchell and

[283] Knapp – Michaels, "Against Theory", p. 30.

published in Chicago in 1985. The debate threw up numerous arguments in defence of literary theory, some of which I will turn to here. The final response drawn up by Knapp and Michaels plainly shows that they considered none of the arguments raised in the debate to be so weighty as to sway them in their convictions. They remain unconvinced both by the pragmatist Rorty and by the argument – difficult to refute in my view – that what Knapp and Michaels claim is, in itself, nothing more than theory.[284]

The institution of literary theory has barely budged in the decades since the debate. Its authority has neither diminished nor increased. It is taught at universities from west to east. In many places students, and even many teachers-practitioners, treat it as an annoying abstract concoction to which they must make a ritual burnt offering in their theses or studies, without the slightest inkling of what purpose it could possibly serve. A different, but no less ritualistic, status is ascribed to it by those who believe that with the authority of a deity behind them, the act of reading, interpretation, or reasoning steeped in literary history will be more manageable. Theorists are often labelled as weirdos who don't like literature, and therefore poke and prod it, only to eventually destroy it and replace it with their own unintelligible and essentially futile discourse, a universe of strange, incomprehensible words and terms that have no real relationship to actual "Literature".

It is therefore reasonable to ask the question again: does literary theory serve any practical purpose nowadays apart from cultivating its own existence? Does it have any scientific overlap with or relationship to literature, or is it a parasite that has sprouted on the body of literature, a creature born out of the frustration of those who would like to write great poetry and prose, but, lacking the wherewithal to do so, have instead invented an insidious weapon, disguised it as scientific inquiry, and called it theory? Isn't that which perhaps had its pathos in the exegesis of sacred texts during the golden age of Kabbalah and gnosis, when there was a widely shared belief that texts encoded great mysteries, and which has lost that authority as traditional belief has disintegrated, just a redundant tool that can be discarded or exposed by theorists as a cult-like fraternity that, with its shamanistic shenanigans, tries to convince the audience of its importance?

First, however, we need to clarify the actual scope of the concept of literary theory. It would appear that the authors of "Against Theory", and subsequently many of the discussants, overlook the fundamental elements of what constitutes the concept of literary theory, and are only interested in

[284] See Rosmarin, "On the Theory of 'Against Theory'".

that particular part linked to the discussion of the meaning of a literary text and the possibilities of its interpretation.

It is questionable whether, in the absence of the practical results of literary theory, Knapp and Michaels would have had anything to discuss at all. They routinely toy with words such as literature, literary text, work, writer, motif, genre, poetry, novel, short story, and so on. It is difficult to imagine that these words represent any universal essence that is inherent in the world and ready for use. Let's suppose that somewhere in the past someone constructed words to rhyme, and used words in such a way as to convey the meanings of words in unexpected contexts. That is, in the beginning there was some intentional act to do precisely that with words. Someone else used the same method in a different way. These intentional acts were inconsistent with ordinary communication, and anyone who heard or read these constructs had to devise a theory about them so that these texts would fit into their image of the world. Once a variety of texts competing, for example, for a more successful "otherness of text" is found to follow a similar approach, this eventually paves the way for the emergence of the theoretical organising concepts of ode, elegy, genre, poetry, and finally, perhaps, literature. A theoretical vocabulary thus arises that enables us to actually discuss these types of identities of varying commonalities. Theory therefore enables vocabularies to be created that facilitate negotiation about certain types of intentional speech acts which, as a historical consequence of negotiation, we call literature, a novel, poetry, or a poem. Another type of vocabulary related to the one described above is vocabularies of evaluation, which, because of the nature of the objects – literary texts – being evaluated, are never precisely scalable, but instead are derived, as it were, from the object of negotiation itself. The use of metaphors, metonymy, hyperbole, and irony essentially amounts to an invitation to engage in never-ending debate.

It should therefore be pointed out that the polemical article "Against Theory" and the subsequent discussion are utterly ahistorical and highly reductive. Right at the outset, the authors themselves acknowledge this reduction, aided by a very problematic argument: "The term is sometimes applied to literary subjects with no direct bearing on the interpretation of individual works, such as narratology, stylistics, and prosody. Despite their generality, however, these subjects seem to us essentially empirical, and our argument against theory will not apply to them."[285] I see two fundamental problems in this quote. The first is, again, spectacular inattention to the historicity of the

[285] Knapp – Michaels, "Against Theory", p. 11.

discipline under discussion. This would imply that Aristotle's thinking about metaphor and figurative language either has no place in literary theory at all, or it does belong there, and then – and this is the second problem – Aristotle, in his empirically essentialist way, recognised what metaphor is and what it means, and thus all further discussion on the subject would be nothing other than futile debate.

In my view, it would be impossible for me to further my cause by performing the simple trick of declaring whole areas of historical debate in literary theory to be essentially empirical and therefore easy to categorise and define. The contradiction is obvious. If Michaels and Knapp are right, then it is indeed possible to deny the history of the debate about what genre is or what the problems of narrative or prosody are, and declare it to be pointless, since most of the essential empirical elements have long since been recognised and defined. This then invites the question, of course, as to why there has been such a long historical debate about figurative language, genre, narratology or prosody, and style. And if there has been such a debate, does it not mean that most of the subjects under discussion fundamentally defy such proclaimed empirical essentialism? It seems that, in order to lay the ground for a general assault on literary theory, the authors of "Against Theory" needed to clear the path of a boulder that was fundamentally irremovable, so instead chose to simply skirt this unyielding obstacle.

It is, incidentally, rather astonishing that neopragmatist-minded thinkers cannot avoid the word "essentialist", and even use it as a base on which to build a fundamental operation performed across the whole discipline. At the same time, they themselves claim that theorists are essentially creating pseudo-problems, or more specifically, theorists believe that their problems are real, when they simply are not.[286] In other words, those who have been ejected from the arena of literary theory are the capable ones, while those who are supposedly affected in particular by the arguments put forward by Knapp and Michaels, i.e. those who are concerned with the interpretation of specific literary texts, are in thrall to their own misconceptions about the reality of the problems they discuss, perhaps precisely because they are reluctant to use empirical tools. There is a twofold problem here: these two domains cannot be easily separated from each other, and the discussion takes place in both the "excluded" and "non-excluded" setting of literary scholarship. The two authors 'arguments, however unshakable they may seem on the surface, are fundamentally naive. It is as if one were to accuse philosophy of

[286] Ibid., p. 12.

failing to opt for a Platonic or Aristotelian model of the world, and of failing to separate, by simple empirical means, the actual problems of reality from only apparently actual ones in the history of western culture. Indeed, I will turn again to the relationship between literary theory and philosophy in my subsequent arguments.

However, we will try to accept their reasoning and proposed reduction. Let's return to the way Knapp and Michaels raise their question through three fundamental representations of 20th-century literary theory: metaphysical essentialism, deconstructionism negating the idea of a findable, fundamental consensus in the interpretation of a literary work, and neopragmatism as conceived by Fish, negating metaphysically conceived essentialism and deconstructionism in the name of an *ad hoc* interpretive construct within what is known as the "interpretive community". The arguments put forward by Michaels and Knapp rest on three representative cases: the theories of E. D. Hirsch, Paul de Man, and Stanley Fish. Here, however, there is a further significant reduction, as Hirsch's theory is Hirsch's theory, not some universally representative model; de Man's method is de Man's method, not comparable to, say, Hartman or Miller, who are also acknowledged deconstructionists; Fish, with his theory of interpretive communities, sometimes contradicts himself by referring to terms that he somehow considers universally intelligible even outside the interpretive community. For one thing, he experiments with the identity of poetry in "How To Recognize a Poem When You See One",[287] but elsewhere he works with Shakespeare's plays, for instance, as something that does not need to be examined or questioned in any way. As close as Fish comes to the practical application of theoretical knowledge, he is, firstly, a prisoner of his own theory, as can also be said of those mentioned above, and, secondly, he too is dependent on the use of a conceptual apparatus derived from other theories.

The problem that there is very little compatibility between the theories of the individual proponents of the same movement may work in favour of what Knapp and Michaels are arguing. However, we can also consider the fact that each of these theories represents an original act of thought within a particular discourse, and that these incompatible theories could pave the way for further interpretive and theoretical achievements in the field. This proliferation of theories may not lead to a disconnect with reality and the actual objects of analysis, in the form of literary texts, but it does expand the ways in which we can think about things – including by introducing new

[287] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, pp. 322–337. See also the chapter entitled "What Makes Interpretation Acceptable?" (ibid., pp. 338–355).

concepts and using new metaphors. Much the same could be said of philosophy and even other purely theoretical disciplines, such as cosmogony and theoretical physics. What is valued is an original idea suggesting a new possibility, not the convergence of theories into sets of practically applicable tools. These applicable tools do exist, but more as a by-product of the theories – they are not the fundamental intention of their creators.

Tools of literary theory

Before we attempt to enter the reduced field of literary studies discussed by Knapp and Michaels, we need to clarify the nature of the objects with which literary theory works, and especially the nature of the conceptual apparatuses and other tools of which the literary scholar avails himself. We have already made certain intimations above, but let's take a more root-and-branch look.

The objects that literary theory deals with are literary texts, that is, texts from a specific category of writings among the set of all writing. This category has historically been negotiated for certain specific elements and eventually, at least in some cultural human communities, discussed as literature, but it has never been possible to establish a fixed essentialist boundary between literary and non-literary texts. On this basis, there is a loosely permeable membrane that allows an originally non-literary text to become literature, while many originally literary texts die and solidify into what resembles a kind of congealed lava made up of collections of many different writings whose pertinence to literature is either forgotten or becomes just a reference number in encyclopaedias and lexicons. There, the name of an extinguished literary work is just a proper name, completely unrelated to any actual reading experience and often lacking any memory trace in the life of the community that uses the term "literature".

Since literary texts are made up of invariants of speech acts that usually have no common identity – that is, they can be infinitely varied in principle, and in different languages – it is not possible to identify them with any precision as a strictly delimited object that belongs to literature and whose metaphysics can be studied. It follows that even the whole category-set called literature has no fixed object boundaries enabling its clear discernibility to be demarcated. An experienced observer of nature, for example, can identify with ease the species of trees, birds, or mammals he sees. And he can often recognise even just traces of the presence of an animal or plant. In a literary text, we might spot a species or its presence, but perhaps, as in nature, not its behaviour. And also, as in nature, its influence on its surroundings, its function in a given "ecosystem", is not immediately obvious.

With a literary text or literature, a significant role is also played by experience, though of a completely different nature. The object of a literary text is accessible only through reading, which opens the text to the individual's perception, interpretation, imagination, but also, perhaps, to disgust, outrage, or irony or absurdity. Or even to nothingness – where the text defies the recipient's experience and the possibility of any kind of understanding through the words or sentences used. Sentences may be constructed grammatically correctly, but from unfamiliar words, or familiar words may be distributed in unintelligible clusters.

While it is unusual for an experienced observer of nature to be in a situation where what he is identifying has not already been classified as a dog, fox, or oak tree, when reading a text this process of classification may be just beginning. Something that has not yet been called a literary text may become one. Take, for instance, various memoirs or diaries; here it is very difficult to decide whether the author's intention from the outset was to be a literary success, or whether the texts became literature somewhere along the way. A well-known example cited by Hayden White is that of an originally historical work becoming a literary work, as evidenced by Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.[288] Another example in this vein might be William Hickling Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Peru* and *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, the latter inspiring the Czech writer Ivan Olbracht to pen his novel *Dobyvatel* ("The Conqueror"), which is nothing more than a loose transcription of Prescott's text. Žižka's Military Code (*Žižkův vojenský řád*), originally an entirely practical means of keeping the Hussite field armies in order, would go on to become part of the archive of older Czech literature.

It follows that the boundaries of both the object "literary text" and the object "literature" are always unclear and always in flux, depending on how they are used and on the state of negotiation between the individual, the community, and the institution, or the intentional object being negotiated. There is no fixed boundary for either the subject or the invariants of communities, whose intentions, ideas, and needs can often diverge significantly. The notions of literature entertained by a young person of the 1920s avant-garde are sure to be radically different from those of a man or woman who has been brought up in 19th-century Parnassian bourgeois culture.

The space of what we call literature (or a text belonging to literature) is a realm of permanent social negotiation among users. For us to be able to

[288] See White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 58.

call something literature, there is an assumption that a certain theory has been created that establishes ground rules for the object under study. At the same time, this theory necessarily includes a set of designators that allow for a more nuanced differentiation of the parts of the object. This set forms the basic conceptual vocabulary for the object, thereby distinguishing lyric and prose, epic and novel, sonnet, alexandrine, motif, and so on. The distinguishing features of these concepts tend to be expressible rather vaguely in the results of traditional negotiation, of historical negotiation in the community of users (with the exception of certain verse systems). It is impossible to define a novel firmly except by resorting to the array of examples setting out what is traditionally considered a novel. We cannot say, "this image, this metaphor, communicates such and such". For that, there are two links placing the literary scholar, interpreter, or critic – that is, those who work with literary texts within the vaguely defined set we call "literature" – at the mercy of illocutionary acts of the type "I assert that this is a novel, that this concept conveys this and that in my understanding", where the illocutionary act in question relates both to the object of the work and to the community of literary scholars or critics. Novels, short stories, and poems are also collections of illocutionary acts, with the author asserting that he has written a poem or a novel. If a poet writes in a verse that, for example, "the sky glowed turquoise", this is nothing more than a certain type of assertion. Its "truthfulness" and functionality certainly cannot be verified by looking at the sky or searching for a place where the sky glows turquoise. Instead, this will be judged only within the framework of the statement in its entirety, i.e. the poem, as a successful or unsuccessful assertion supporting or demeaning the resulting expression.

The second link has to do with the rhetoric of the literary scholar. Although he will have a traditionally defined vocabulary of terms at his disposal, his speech will also essentially be an illocutionary act in which he asserts that this is a poem or that this is a metaphor supporting the overall message of the poem in this way and not in another. Exact methods in literary studiesfail even when it comes to entities as seemingly straightforward as verse systems. That is, the literary scholar almost invariably has to depend on assertions, convictions, or beliefs that he can certainly share with others, but not in such a way that his assertions constitute finite definitions.

What literary theorists do, in particular, is theorise about collections of literary texts, individual texts, and the whole set called "literature". The problem with these theories is that, unlike physics, in the attempt to establish belief in the theory, as is par for the course in contemporary scientism, they fail to provide a fail-safe answer to all the questions posed in the given paradigm.

This results in what Feyerabend discusses,[289] namely, a certain clash of theories, that is, a clash of those more or less consistent sets of assertions constituting the theory of fictional worlds, problems of narrative, author, style, and so on.

Theoretical assertions never gain majority agreement, but are often limited territorially, for example to the Anglo-Saxon world, and this naturally implies a certain embeddedness in national languages, so much so that cases proving individual theoretical assertions are associated with literary examples from the given area. This insularity is not absolute, but it is certainly more pronounced than in, say, biology or physics. In *New Starts: Performative Topographies in Literature and Criticism* (1993), J. Hillis Miller demonstrates quite convincingly how individual literary theories are entrenched in local and time-limited debates. Transported to a different cultural and linguistic landscape, they take on a new life of their own that has little in common with the original parent theory.[290]

Naturally, at this point arguments may be advanced that challenge both the meaning and utility of literary theory, as well as its scientific relevance. After all, aren't those who practice it frauds if they cannot precisely define the object of their research, if they cannot agree on exact verifiable methodological procedures, on an analysis that will enable the original observation to be independently corroborated or refuted?

The problem of misunderstanding lies in the nature of the objects under study, which are grounded in language and speech acts. Unlike mathematical scaling, measurement, or modelling, in language there is no tool to define the scope of extensions and intensions of words used in speech, as attempted by logicians such as Carnap and other members of the Vienna Circle. If language and speech were to have anything in common with mathematics or physics, then non-Euclidean geometry, chaos theory, or quantum theory would come closest. Variable states in literature can be characterised using physics terminology such as "unstable states". Unstable, that is, in terms of both the nature of the material (speech acts, metaphors) and the unstable field of interpreters, users, readers.

Consequently, even theories constructed by literary theorists tend to be descriptions of possible states, the verifiability of which depends on the type of literature, language, location, and time, as well as the state of negotiation in a given community of users, and it would be very difficult to postulate any stable theoretical concepts that would survive the temporal, spatial,

[289] See Feyerabend, *Against Method*.
[290] See Miller, *New Starts*.

and linguistic transports and transformations unscathed. It could even be argued that such stabilisation would severely harm the discursive field of literature and spell its gradual decline. Roman Jakobson writes about periods in literature tending towards greater stability, such as classicism, and periods of radical transformation,[291] but here we are dealing with a tendency towards something, not a definitive state. It is impossible not to notice how attempts at the total stabilisation of literature during the Nazi and Communist periods turned out. Efforts to define, for instance, socialist realism and then to control it resulted only in the decline of literary output as such, followed by a decline in theoretical thinking about literature.

The tools of literary theory thus exhibit considerable instability. Traditionally discussed and accepted terms may form a certain starting point, but every current situation of interpretation, of direct work with a literary text, is a situation in which the literary scholar works with an unstable object using tools that, for the most part, are themselves unstable.

Donald Davidson, Richard Rorty, John Searle, and the possibilities of literary theory

It is evident in the work of the post-analytic philosopher Donald Davidson how, in his investigation of language, he forgoes an exact definition of intensions within natural language. On the other hand, he is all the more interested in the social aspect of speech, coming up with highly productive terms for literary theory such as triangulation, radical interpretation, prior and passing theory, and the non-cognitive concept of metaphor. Rather than embarking on an extensive explanation of these terms, I will only briefly mention that the notion of triangulation presupposes a relationship between two beings observing each other and a subject of joint observation. Radical interpretation is a reaction to Quine's theory of radical translation; in simple terms, it assumes that, in any situation of linguistic communication, the individual is in a scenario where interpretation is necessary; he forms a "prior theory" about the matter that captures the presumed intention in speech, and this is modified on the basis of communication by a "passing theory" that responds to the actual situation in speech. Davidson's example of malapropisms is widely cited in this regard. Davidson's Mrs Malaprop alludes not only to the

[291] Jakobson, "On Realism in Art".
[292] See Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", p. 103.

character of the same name in R. B. Sheridan's *The Rivals*, but also to Thomas Mann's Mrs Stöhr in *The Magic Mountain*. Mrs Malaprop confuses the meanings of words: instead of saying "a nice arrangement of epithets", she says "a nice derangement of epitaphs", and yet it is possible to understand her if the communicator knows Mrs Malaprop and the nature of her speech.[292] Davidson takes a very radical approach to metaphor, which he frees from all cognitive constraints without denying its relation to reality. This relation, however, is not due to the metaphor itself, but to its "success" in human communication – in the way it suggests a new invariant of opportunities to see the real.[293]

Davidson's contribution to literary theory is assessed in the 1993 collection of essays *Literary Theory After Davidson*, which, among other things, is heavily laden with references to the post-analytic philosophers 'narrative turn.[294] Although the discussions encapsulated by that collection are more than twenty years old, I would argue that the recognition of Davidson's contribution to literary theory remains relevant and that in many respects it expands the ways in which we can theorise about literature without doing what Knapp and Michaels fear, that is, denying reality and practice for the sake of theory itself.

If we identify the literary text as one of the vertices of the triangle in the proposed concept of triangulation, then the two remaining vertices form living elements – human subjects – in the triangulation process. This process must be defined as a free negotiation, in which the intentions of the two negotiators seeking the intention of the object before them are at stake. There can only be a fundamental agreement that the object of observation and interpretation is, for example, *War and Peace*. It is completely impossible to predict all other acts of the process because there are an extraordinary number of variables in the whole process. The living elements may be two critics or a professor and a student, but may even be a censor, a judge, and so on. At the same time, the collection of speech acts making up *War and Peace* does not form coherence of a type that, in the negotiation, allows for more than partial agreement on particulars.

On the other hand, the two living subjects 'relationship to one and the same literary text excludes the absolute arbitrariness of the individual interpreters. Faced with an identical text – albeit one containing invariants of, for example, contradictory speech acts that cannot be unified into a single

293 See Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean".
294 See Martin, "Analytic Philosophy Narrative Turn".

statement such as "The meaning of *War and Peace* is this and that…" – we can rightly expect different interpretations from individual to individual, as well as differences stemming from the historical period of interpretation and the cultural and linguistic experience of the individual interpreters. But they will always relate to the same object. This object, apart from the invariant of illocutionary speech acts, i.e. what Karenina, Karenin, Vronsky, and others say, is identifiable by time, place, and the social conventions of the time. This means that none of the participants in the discussion can transpose *War and Peace* into the space occupied by *Star Wars*, or simply analogise the object to the current political or cultural situation. The rigid designators here remain primarily the period of the Napoleonic Wars and Russian society of the time; while this does not exclude assorted opportunities for language games, the fundamental identifiers can hardly be replaced by anything else. The object itself does not stay immutable, e.g. in the translation process and when removed to a different cultural set of users, but the fundamental traces identifying the work are difficult to erase.[295]

Davidson's triangulation, on the one hand, preserves speech on the subject of the object; on the other hand, it does not prevent negotiation, which can be adversarial – it does not have to end in agreement. In other words, we can be talking about the same thing, but have different opinions and arguments. That is, if I am having a debate with someone about *War and Peace*, I cannot start talking on the subject of Hašek's *Švejk* unless there is an impetus to do so. A debate has a framework that does not necessarily encompass any agreement beyond the topic itself.

In the course of communication between, say, one critic and another on the subject of *War and Peace*, there may be an incalculably large set of coinciding and conflicting aesthetic, ethical, or sociocultural views. This means that we are faced with an infinite number of illocutionary acts, convictions, assertions that may be congruent or incongruent in the context of a debate between two subjects. A situation may arise where one of the living elements of the triangulation holds a view shared by a larger group and the other is programmatically subversive to that view. Clearly, neither the majority opinion nor an idiosyncratic view, no matter how original, can be declared true and therefore unquestionably dominant in a given discussion. For one thing, it is difficult to determine whether a particular opinion is aimed more at the

[295] Although some hypermodernist and also stupid adaptations almost manage to do that. The latest adaptation of *Anna Karenina*, starring Keira Knightley, is a case in point. The perfect example, however, is the adaptation of the classic novel *Pride and Prejudice* in which our hero Darcy is a fearless zombie slayer!

work or at those holding opposing views in the debate, with the object of the work used merely as a vehicle of argumentation. Very different intentionalities may be at play.

Let us imagine an entirely hypothetical situation where something may or may never have happened, for example, a conversation between Gadamer, the exponent of European hermeneutics, and Derrida, the coryphaeus of deconstructionism and philosophy radically denying the possibility of a direct correlation between sign and object. According to Davidson, each of the participants in this debate must develop a prior theory. Gadamer bases his on a radical disagreement with Derrida and on an intention to convince his interlocutor of the necessity of understanding, that is, of the metaphysical essence on which both need to agree if they are to speak intelligibly to each other. His opponent, Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, bases his prior theory on his indifference to the concept of understanding and relies on his theory of *dissémination* and the necessary difference or deferral of signification (*différance*).[296] The aforementioned triangulation results in a lack of consensus. While Gadamer's imaginary theory was that "even Derrida wants to be understood", Derrida's passing theory seems to be more that "it's no use, we don't understand each other anyway". However, this is no way implies that the debate has no result simply because neither of the debaters was able to agree in the slightest with the other on the subject under discussion. First, the subject of the discussion – say, the possibilities of interpretation and understanding – is not a private topic for Derrida and Gadamer, but resonates in a much wider community. In other words, the debate is eyed or initiated by a particular community that has an interest in the topic under discussion. The performance of the misunderstanding between the two debaters does not have zero result, but engenders further theories on the topic, and these theories can take – or, rather, usually do take – the form of original products that do not coincide with either Gadamer's or Derrida's views. In this situation, there is usually no ideological adherence to one side or the other. This is more typical of politics and is bound to arouse fear and distrust in scientific discourse.

Triangulation therefore results in a multiplication of theories, a proliferation of speech on a given topic, but not in a convergence of theories. It is clear that talk on the subject cannot be brought to an end, that the

[296] This is not an invented debate; it actually took place in Paris in April 1981. See Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 135ff. What is imaginary is my speculative re-enactment of the theories.

discussion – which contains agreement, but mainly difference – needs to be continued. It is these differences that initiate movement and change within the debate on a given theme.

It could be argued that the inability to reach a principled consensus, the impossibility of ending the debate in certain areas of the given field, is an argument in favour of the view that literary theory is a dead branch of knowledge, feeding on its own pride and on solutions to pseudo-problems. This could be countered by the argument that the debate on a literary work or its interpretation, or the understanding of a literary text, can never be ended when we consider the nature of language itself, the nature of the means by which we attempt to grasp the work. Then there is the line of reasoning that the absence of disagreement does not imply an unproductive impasse ending in darkness, but rather an initiatory tool that can be used to grasp new possibilities of the topic in question.

Let us imagine – using Davidson's terminology – two critics interpreting the same literary text. There may be an element of common ground in their prior theories, e.g. they may agree that the object of their interpretation is a surrealist poem or a French naturalist novel, such as Breton's *Nadja* or Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Even at the stage that they are constructing this prior theory, where both can only count on a truly basic agreement, a role will be played by their knowledge of extensions of the terms surrealism, naturalism, poem (or poetic text), novel, literature, French literary history of the respective periods, i.e. what John Searle calls "background".[297] But this "background" is further shaped by theoretical terminology, as discussed above. Without it, essentially, the two critics would have nothing to discuss, and it is even questionable whether the institution of literary criticism would exist.

In terms of the interpretation itself, the two of them will create a passing theory inspired by their perception of the texts, one being a sworn enemy of surrealism basing his value concept on classical realism, the other an ardent supporter of anything avant-garde. Obviously, the former will seek to argue for the negation of the surrealist text and even exclude it from poetry altogether. At the same time, he will be sceptical of *Madame Bovary*, considering it a text too modernist for his conception of classical realism. He may even call it a decadent novel. The other might take *Madame Bovary* to be a work of classical realism with the invariant known as naturalism, though not progressive enough compared to Breton's text. He, too, may avoid deploying the term "poem" in his line of argument on Breton, and instead will look for some

[297] See Searle, *Speech Acts*.

innovative term-metaphor for the work under consideration. This means that even here, by the very nature of the matter, one cannot look for a distinct clarification of terms that will lead to a consensus or at least to clearly defined results of the two critical readings that can be mutually compared as judgements without the presence of the two critics themselves. On the other hand, however, in both cases theories will be formed, these theories will be compared, and terminological apparatuses will figure in both theories. And yet their exactness or precision will be irrelevant if they are not related to the specific speech act of either critic. If there is talk of precision, truthfulness, or clarity at any point, it is likely to revolve around metaphors, or someone else's illocutions, rather than a property of the term or speech act *per se*.

The terminology of the individual theories can then be considered from two perspectives. First, the extent to which it allows two debaters to identify that they are discussing the same object, for example, the naturalistic novel, but this also means that the possibility of identification will depend on the extent to which both have experience of the disciplinary terminology under discussion. Second, how useful each term is as an instrument in their own speech performance, that is, in their beliefs and convictions that things are such and such. Here, the interpretation of terminology, strategies for use, or the strategic innovation of vocabulary through new term-metaphors will come to the fore.

It follows that a theory on the subject is necessary for the matter to be discussed at all. In order for Davidsonian prior and passing theories to be formed, some theoretical armamentarium must be present that allows the theme to be debated in the first place. If every individual, or rather community of individuals, were to create an *ad hoc* theory of the object over and over again, then one would have no choice but to quote again the old German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, who wrote in his *Treatise on the Origin of Language* that "If language were as innate to the human being as producing honey is to bees, then this greatest and most splendid of buildings would immediately fall apart in ruins! Each person would bring *his little bit of* language into the world for himself, or rather, since 'bringing into the world' for a [faculty of] reason means nothing but inventing language for itself immediately – what a sad isolated thing each human being becomes! Each one invents his own rudiments, dies at work on them, and takes them into his grave, like the bee its skilled producing; the successor comes, tortures himself working on *the same* beginnings, gets exactly as far, or exactly as little distance, dies – and so it goes on ad infinitum."[298] This picture of the

[298] Herder, *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, pp. 155–156.

universe of human speech is, I believe, equally applicable to the universe of the vocabulary and rhetoric of literary studies. Although the problems posed by literary scholarship are not over, new words, new terms, and new theories continue to emerge in order that speech about the subject may continue to be conducted as the subject itself and those who speak about and use it change.

I have also mentioned the usefulness of Davidson's concept of metaphor, which he freed from all cognitive frameworks and considered a purely speech operand, while not denying the relationship that metaphor has to reality. This relationship lies, of course, not in the metaphor itself, but in what it can do in speech: "Joke or dream or metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact – but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact."[299] It is this very liberated concept of metaphor that can be seen to be plausible in the discourse of literary theory, where simply many, or rather most, of the terms used in literary studies are metaphorical in one way or another. Kristeva's term *jouissance*, Derrida's *dissémination*, Genette's *metalepsis*, *metalanguage*, Greenblatt's *circulation of social energy* and *textual trace*, Wimsatt's *verbal icon*, and the use of terms such as *discourse*, *paradigm*, and *literary field* are all metaphors by nature. None of these terms has any precise empirical characteristics, and many of them overlap with the vocabulary of philosophy. All these theoretical terms emerge as useful instruments in the context of a particular discourse or rhetorical performance in the theorising on a specific subject. The metaphorical nature of terms in the context of Davidson's loose conception, in which metaphor is understood as initiation, also allows for the development of theoretical reasoning by stimulating the production of further speech performance on the topic at hand. This initiation stems from the speaker's attempt to frame, define, and explain a term; up to a point, he can rely on his own line of reasoning, but without in any way being able to fully grasp the metaphor-term and fatally adopt it solely for his own theory. His attempt to frame and refine it will always be unsuccessful in its original aim, but that is not to say that it is unproductive. Kristeva's terms *jouissance* and *abject*[300] allow us to appreciate certain new facts within her discourse, without being able to fully grasp the term, accept it, and fashion it into a categorised instrument.

Also of a metaphorical nature are terms in literary studies that at first sight appear to be empirically provable, akin to biological or physical phenomena

[299] Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 262.
[300] See Kristeva, *Powers of Horror.*

whose action can be proven as a law. In literary scholarship, however, these terms only tend to simulate such proximity. And this simulation is created by the rhetorical strategies of critics and literary scholars seeking vocabularies that would be appropriate to discuss a matter. I am thinking of such much-discussed terms as time and space in literature or the notion of a fictional world. The fact that time and space are physical quantities may convey the impression that they necessarily occur in literature in much the same way as they do in reality. A literary work, however, is a set of speech acts where the narrator or a character talks about "back then", "long ago", "tomorrow", or "in the future", and "there", "far away", or "beyond the horizon". But the fact of the matter is that, in a literary work, these are speech performants; they do not constitute the presence of real time or space. The narrator, let's say Faulkner in *Absalom, Absalom!*, narrates in a syncretic manner, on several temporal planes at once. This may be a deft narrative technique that simulates certain spatiotemporal contexts, but it is never a realistic way of constructing the novel's spatiotemporal relations except as a kind of metaphor for those correlations. All metalepses, prolepses, and analepses can only be revealed metaphorically. An analysis of spatiotemporal relations in *Absalom, Absalom!* will result in nothing more than a rhetorical act by the analyst, rendered as a metaphorical statement appreciating Faulkner's method of narration.

This phenomenon is even more blatant in poetry, as spatiotemporal deixis need not be expressed at all in the poet's rhetoric, or may merely serve as a poetic device without any relation to the reality of time and space. Consider Poe's "Ulalume", in which we learn that "The skies they were ashen and sober", that "It was night in the lonesome October", and that the poetic subject is "down by the dank tarn of Auber", which is all very well, but none of these determinations of time and place can help readers to find their bearings in any way, nor is that their purpose. They are simply a poetic device in the construction of the poem. They are, in themselves, metaphors designed not to provide spatiotemporal orientation, but to engender appreciation of certain aspects in the accomplishment of the author's poetry, his play with words. October and the "tarn of Auber" imply sadness, mystery, and indeterminacy, not relations of space and time.

In his study of Hölderlin's verse, Martin Heidegger finds a "speaking being"[301] and thus responds to the obscure challenge of Hölderlin's poems with his own metaphor. It is irrelevant whether or not a being actually speaks from the obscure deixes of Hölderlin's verses; what is important is that the

[301] See de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 253.

metaphorics of the poetic text has led to the creation of a philosophical metaphor, a term that undoubtedly seemed useful to the interpreter in his gesturing. The second fact to emerge from the above example is that literary texts, no matter how much they are brought to life by temporal and spatial determinations, are not examinable except as metaphors because they serve the text itself and the rhetorical performance of the author; they are not there for the reader's immediate spatiotemporal orientation. Finally, a third fact is that metaphorical illocutions in literary works are generally not accessible to scholars except through newly created metaphors.

Similarly, at first glance it would seem obvious that the notion of a fictional world is empirically graspable as an object containing a specific set of fictional elements, including people, animals, buildings, natural scenery, and the interactions between them. Let's return again to Poe's "Ulalume": there are waterfalls, a swampy stream, Mount Yaanek, someone roaming the night with Psyche, and the tomb of the lost Ulalume. These are accompanied by overt metaphors and similes such as "my heart was volcanic / As the scoriac rivers that roll" and "Astarte's bediamonded crescent". Obviously, we cannot simply put together a volcanic heart, Mount Yaanek, Psyche, and all the rest to make some fictional world. What we get is a set of metaphors. There is no Mount Yaanek or Lake Auber except in the rhetoric of Poe the poet, who uses them to model not a fictional world, but his poem. I think the notion of a fictional world is simply empirically untenable, and if it is used, then only as an argument in a certain type of speech on literary works, and, like most such arguments, it is merely metaphorical. It is a useful device in a certain type of speech, a concept that enriches the vocabulary of literary scholarship, but not an exact element that defines or concludes anything. The fictional world exists because someone said "fictional world" and pointed out certain characteristics of a work. That does not mean that there is any real "fictional world" beyond the rhetoric of the person doing the speaking and pointing.

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* Richard Rorty makes the following reference to Donald Davidson: "Davidson lets us think of the history of language and thus of culture, as Darwin taught us to think of the history of a coral reef. Old metaphors are constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors."[302] Rorty's reference to Davidson hints at Davidson's view that metaphor emerges when speech encounters a barrier or cannot be pursued further by conventional means.[303] Then there

[302] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 16.
[303] Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 245.

is the fact, also stated by Davidson and further elaborated by Rorty in the aforementioned study, that metaphor is not the property of literature alone, but is also used in science, philosophy, and law.[304] An argument in favour of this notion of the universality of metaphor is T. S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), a key work from the point of view of neo-pragmatism, in which the author clearly presents the fact that behind many paradigm shifts, when the way of thinking about a certain phenomenon is radically transformed, there is a metaphor, for example, of the "X-ray" type. Rorty uses these inspirations for his own construction of the idea of a breakthrough metaphor that transforms the complete vocabulary of the time. The example he gives at the beginning of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* is the motto of the French Revolution, "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*", which, along with the event itself, radically transforms the vocabulary of the time.[305]

Metaphor, Rorty says, can become the initiator of a new vocabulary. Let us add, with Davidson, that only a successful metaphor – a metaphor that captures the attention, a metaphor that is successful as a good joke, as something that provokes our attention precisely by its cognitive elusiveness – can be such a metaphor. The moment a metaphor has coded meaning, it dies.[306] As noted above, these dead metaphors do not disappear from speech, but serve as a foundation, a "coral reef", for new metaphors.

In my view, this linking of Davidson's and Rorty's ideas on metaphor and vocabulary yields several fundamental and highly productive findings for literary studies. A new vocabulary born of metaphor that allows for the development of speech on a particular topic – in our case, the topic of literary works and literature. First, if we relate this theory to literary scholarship – an entirely legitimate suggestion when we consider that Rorty relates his reflections to philosophy – then literary theory (like philosophy) is based not on a set of exact findings that categorise, catalogue, and thereby end any discussion of a given topic, but on the development of speech, the continuation of speech, and the modelling and discussion of possibilities. This continuation is assured by the presence of successful metaphors and, consequently, the vocabularies they produce. Literary theory (like philosophy) is highly social in the sense that it is always linked to speech and its development and societal negotiation. This does not mean that the product of this negotiation can never be anything exact, but it will always be a by-product rather than the

[304] Ibid., p. 246.
[305] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 3.
[306] Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 261.

point of the negotiation *per se*. Just as philosophy produces, for example, certain mathematical findings, so literary theory produces certain constants, for instance, in narratology.

Second, Davidson's thinking about metaphor, and subsequently Rorty's thinking about metaphor and vocabularies, implies a temporal sequence, or, in other words, a *historicity*, which Knapp and Michaels, in their philippic against literary theory, completely overlook because they view the various theoretical schools as cloistered, essentially metaphysical blocks, which, in their argument, they then catch failing – like something that existed and died in some historical timelessness. By excluding continuity and treating theory as a corpse on an autopsy table, they make their line of reasoning easier for themselves, but in doing so they amplify their error all the more. Unfortunately, Rorty did not avail himself of this argument in "Philosophy without Principles", his response to Michaels and Knapp. Yet the very method used by both authors may appear, from many angles, to be quite distant from neopragmatist reasoning, or from the ideas of pragmatism in general, because here the authors work with individual theories as though they were metaphysical entities and essentially exclude them from social debate, something which Rorty, by contrast, proposes and supports in his argument. They read the theories under discussion as some sort of wandering cosmic objects floating around forlornly in the human universe. Broadly speaking, this places literary theories on a par with weird ideas about hollow Earth, UFOs, or the existence of Shangri-La.

Richard Rorty defends literary theory as a tool for reading not only literature, but also other types of texts, such as philosophical texts. However, the two authors – as they make clear in the response to Rorty they printed at the end of *Against Theory* – do not consider his arguments strong enough to make them change their minds. It is perhaps for this reason that the two authors of the reply are concerned, to some extent, that if they were to restore their theory of literary theory to the concept of social discourse – and no doubt historicity would have to be restored with it – then cracks would start to show in their seemingly masterful argument.

The plausibility of the concepts developed on the basis of Davidson's and Rorty's thinking can also be supported by an argument from the other side. John Searle, in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969), his relatively early work which develops Austin's speech act theory and is built on the strict laws of logic, shows that speech radically exceeds the possibilities of formal logic and that something as elusive in its exactness as social background cannot be ignored when interpreting speech: "speaking a language […] consists of performing speech acts according to rules, and there is no separating those speech acts from the commitments which form

essential parts of them."[307] These rules governing the speaking of a language do not consist of grammar alone, but also of what emerges from the social context in which speech acts are performed. In his work, Searle gradually develops and analyses this context, which he calls "social reality". In *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995) and *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization* (2010) in particular, he is concerned with the construction of rules that determine social reality in a largely universal way. He draws on the fundamental distinction between "brute facts", i.e. facts whose existence is not influenced by one's social activity in speech (facts like Mount Everest or the River Nile), and "institutional facts", which are based on the beliefs shared within a community (facts like money, credit cards, but also banks, schools, courts of law, parliament, and government). The status of these facts does not derive from their mere natural existence, but from a given community's shared belief expressing a certain collective intentionality, which in any community inevitably clashes with individual intentionality. Institutional facts are based on constituted laws which are not arbitrary for the individual, but function as a given – taxation, military service, compulsory education, the requirement to make payments in a particular currency. In other words, in a specific historical community constituted rules form a relatively stable structure, which, in principle – if an individual shares the same space with that community – cannot be avoided, and which gives rise to shared obligations in which performative acts of speech such as "I promise", "I swear", "I'll pay", and so on carry meaning and weight.[308]

What does the above imply when we consider the meaning of literary scholarship? –First and foremost, the fact that literature can be perceived primarily as institutional fact. As such, it is based on shared belief and constitutes certain rules that cannot be ignored by the individual. Although rules within the framework of institutional fact may be looser than they are in, say, the realm of tax or criminal law, it is by no means the case that whatever an individual declares to be literature necessarily becomes literature. Certainly, there may be games in the vein of Fish's "how to recognise a poem", but the effect of the entire experiment staged by Fish was to point out that there were potential fallacies in the treatment of literature, not that the names he had written on the blackboard and presented to the students for interpretation were actual

[307] Searle, *Speech Acts*, p. 198.

[308] I am condensing and paraphrasing the aforementioned interpretation of Searle's ideas as much as I can. For further information, I refer the reader to the books I have mentioned, i.e. *The Construction of Social Reality* and *Making the Social World*.

poems. Likewise, a graphomaniac can cover stacks of paper in writing and claim himself to be a brilliant poet, and may even convince those closest to him that he is, but this in no way means that he is actually creating literature.

The institutional fact of literature must be based on a collective intention, a belief shared by a certain community where the rules dictating how the fact is to be used are also constituted. Thus, in ancient Greece, particular rules were adopted for ancient tragedy and for genres such as the ode or the elegy. The 19th century, as Bakhtin shows, established rules for the novel that were based on the older models of the "ancient novel" or "picaresque novel". These rules have their own vocabularies of what are essentially theoretical concepts, vocabularies that are largely metaphorical but at the same time not entirely non-binding. The concept of the detective novel produces a system of rules and laws that enable it to be identified as a detective novel. For this genre niche to be transformed, it will be necessary to establish new rules, which, however, do not completely replace the old ones, but form a kind of genre derivative. For example, the rules of the detective novel established by the English tradition of the logic puzzle (Van Dine, Christie) are enriched by a derivative known as the hard-boiled school (Hammett, Chandler); this change of rules allows for identification within the same genre, but also points to a different experience and to different users. Those who love classic detective novels may not be overly enamoured of Philip Marlowe, but they can still accept this new enrichment of the genre alongside the classic model. Different schools of thought may arise, weaving together disparate strands such as "those barbarian Americans have ruined the detective novel", "Chandler – this is no detective story, we'll call it a crime novel", "Chandler – finally a detective novel that doesn't bore me to tears", and "Christie and Chandler are both worth their salt".

Therefore, in order for literature – as institutional fact – to be used, it has its own vocabularies. These vocabularies establish rules; new metaphors develop a new platform of discourse without completely excluding the existing one so that it is possible to perceive speech within the institutional fact of literature as an evolving and developing negotiation in which more stable notions are created, or are even devised purposely for the current line of argument at a point where individual intention clashes with collective intention – when, for example, a certain critic renders his opinion in an attempt to change the generally accepted set of rules within the scope of the given subject matter. Usually, he can achieve this by finding a successful metaphor that initiates the novel production of speech acts and a new vocabulary on the theme.

Thus, literary theory creates vocabularies and "conceptual apparatuses" often built not on exact definition, but on metaphor, facilitating debate itself on literature and a literary work, without the purpose of the theorists'

efforts being the search for some grand consensus, a "unified field theory" that would put an end to all the questions posed. In fact, these questions proliferate in the debate, creating ever new configurations. This observation, however, cannot be taken as an admission that literary theory is essentially a non-binding game for those who have invented it, institutionalised it, and enjoy playing it for various reasons – that is, that literary theory is a mere game that has little to do with scientific knowledge.

The features of the game must be acknowledged, because they are an essential component of all scientific inquiry from biology to cosmogony. And just as theoretical physics, the science studying the origins of the universe, or research into evolution cannot do without metaphors, so it is in literary theory. The universe of configurations of human speech changing over time is in permanent flux and can hardly be stemmed by a set of definitions. And the theoretical debate on literature has meaning simply because literature exists, that it endures and transforms like a universe of nebulae, stars, and galaxies.

Paths followed by blind theorists

Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, in their line of reasoning, represent two dead-end theories in particular. The first shares a belief that it is possible to find a set of inner truths within the interpretation of a literary text, an unquestionable objective essence that will always be found again and again by each successive reader-interpreter. Although their essay dwells primarily on the work of E. D. Hirsch, made famous by *Validity in Interpretation* (1967), they are clearly taking aim here at the much broader field of 20th-century literary theory, from New Criticism to structuralism, and at Wimsatt, Wellek, Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and other eminent scholars dominating the field from the 1930s to the 1960s, authorities who shared a belief in the exact possibilities of the humanities, in the possibility of bringing research in literature closer to the methods applied by the sciences. The second dead end, according to Knapp and Michaels, is one that polemicises with the first by essentially denying that objective findings and truth values can be found within literary interpretation, and although the argument is mainly based on the work of Paul de Man, it embraces all of deconstruction – Miller, Hartman, Bloom, and even the texts of Derrida and other poststructuralist coryphaei, whose work has been in circulation since the 1960s and has dominated the Euro-American space for almost thirty years (e.g. the work of Foucault and Baudrillard). For the time being we will leave aside a third intimated approach, which is based on the work of Fish, as the authors are not essentially at odds with his denial of theory *per se*, and in fact are rather sympathetic to it.

First of all, as indicated above, Knapp and Michaels clearly take no account of the fact that certain sets of theories and theoretical arguments exist in certain historical periods, with some of them rising to dominance in their time and concentrating around them the majority of those who share the belief in the theory. We can conclude from this fact that – say – New Criticism and structuralism establish a discursive dominance in a given field for a given period of time, only to be replaced after a while by a different set of theories – say, by Kuhn's paradigm shifts – in which the issues that have been raised remain, but the methods proposed to solve the conglomerate of puzzles are reshaped. Let's say that a certain belief that has been shared by what is more or less a majority breaks down and is replaced by a new belief, to which more and more gradually subscribe in order to find the shrewdest and most successful solution to the questions posed. Along with the new shared belief, new metaphors and a new vocabulary are created, and a new conceptual apparatus is formed that promises a radically different, fresh perspective on the traditional objects of literature. The issue is how the whole process of transition to the new paradigm is to take place. Does this mean that there will be a bonfire of all the books of the old belief, with their authors and propagators being cursed in the name of the new belief? Or do we witness the coral-reef effect discussed by Rorty, where the products of the old belief are kept as the foundation upon which the universe of new metaphors and new vocabulary is built? If we lean towards the latter, because the first is ripe for a world of crazed fanatics, then again we have to ask whether the foundation material is just dead matter or whether it is an active substrate leaking towards the structure. In other words, is the old theory inanimate matter, playing only the role of a historically outdated set of words and metaphors, or are there any relics left in the form of living instruments that can also be applied within the newly emerging paradigm?

Let's say that the original ethos of the theory is lost, that is, there is no one left who shares the belief that objective results can be achieved in literary theory and that literary studies can be approximated, for example, to biology. But does that mean the loss of the whole arsenal of concepts and arguments created when the previous discursive circuit held sway? It seems not. For example, concepts such as the structural composition of a work, structure, or structural analysis still carry practical validity, as do concepts like aesthetic function and value. It is not the case that such findings introduced by structuralism cannot be put to use successfully when dealing with a literary work. Equally, questions remain, for example, about meaning and significance, as structuralism had started to exhibit its biggest anomalies and had hit its limits, prompting the creation of a new paradigm. But when structuralism took its leave, the structuralist conceptual apparatus was not dumped as something unusable in scientific inquiry, something more cabal than science. Similarly,

Wimsatt's thinking about intentionality is not dead. And there is no reason to think that the "close reading" method cannot be useful in certain instances of interpretive strategy. Since the vocabulary of the classic theoretical schools does not vanish from critical interpretive practice even after the advent of new schools, and since it appears to be a useful instrument, it could be said that although a theory dies when general belief in it wanes, it leaves behind a whole set of instruments that are just asking to be picked up and used.

The line of argument pursued by the authors of "Against Theory", apart from lacking a sense of history and historical context, appears to betray another weakness: the fact that it focuses solely on the ideological dominants of a given theory. True, in a way such a dominant is a vehicle for the fundamental sharing of belief, but it does not interfere with the "operational processes" involved in dealing with individual theoretical questions, where broad generalisations break down into a network of specific analytical testing and the formation of vocabulary and concepts on the basis of those material analyses. Many of these turn out to be instruments practical for working with literary text. Thus, while the fundamental idea of an originally shared belief disintegrates and is replaced by a new paradigm, the practical tools remain, and the newcomers readily incorporate them into the vocabularies of the new paradigm as a free and proven acquisition, not constrained by the corset of the original belief, but something that, although it emerged from that belief, is now a tool free of all ties to the old theory and of any ideological ressentiment.

Insofar as deconstruction in Knapp and Michaels is presented as the negation of a prior theoretical belief in objective truths concealed within literary texts, then it must be added that this negation again refers only to that generalised idea condensed into transparent simplicity – where "yes" is said on one side and "no" on the other. A closer look at the deconstruction paradigm shows that matters are much more complicated. The new belief was built on the teaching of Jacques Derrida, who challenged the classic relationship between signifier and signified as generally accepted by Saussure and as built upon by structuralists, among others. (As an aside, it is clear from what we have discussed that one shared theoretical belief is built on the foundations of another.) Derrida's terms "différance" and "dissémination" expressed his conviction that it is impossible for there to be a fixed relation between signifier and signified. In "The Rhetoric of Blindness", Paul de Man – as quoted by Knapp and Michaels – essentially all but proved that Derrida's conviction applies to himself, to his own interpretation of Rousseau.[309]

[309] See de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 102–141.

At the same time, new concepts are circulating, albeit of a metaphorical nature: "insight" and "blindness", born of de Man's argument intended to capture the fact that Derrida, at the point in his interpretation where he is most immersed in Rousseau's work, is also as blind as can be to all other possibilities. A new vocabulary is born that will gradually be further developed by other followers of the school. Harold Bloom creates "anxiety of influence" or "misreading", and uses that as a basis to construct a "map of misreading". Cloaked within his theories, he introduces terms such as clinamen, tessera, and apophrades. Geoffrey Hartman, unlike the formalist de Man, emphasises the openness of the text, encourages the deferral of final opinion, and views interpretation as something like a new artistic act above an artwork – the critic's metalanguage should, for the most part, be worthy of the aesthetic qualities of the original that is being interpreted. J. Hillis Miller arrives at the conclusion that a text is unreadable in any original authorial intention.[310] He discusses the non-transferability of theories and their local and temporal limitations. Over time, he turns his attention to an examination of the ethical aspects of interpretation or speech acts in literature. Each of the deconstructionists approaches the original belief differently and develops his own theories and own vocabularies. They agree only that the text should be conceived as a set of aporias and contradictions rather than as a hidden and always re-discoverable oneness.

Just as deconstructionist vocabularies do not disturb the vocabulary of New Criticism or structuralism, deconstructionist terminology is not useless ballast either when other theoretical concepts – such as new historicism or Fish's theory of interpretive communities – enter the picture. Again, a set of instruments is left behind that is practical for the further development of theoretical constructs and for interpretive work with a text. He wants to join Paul de Man in saying that blindness can be productive, just as Bloom's "misreading" can be productive. Any new user of a term will, of course, have to reinterpret what this metaphor ("dissémination", "blindness", "misreading", "unreadability", etc.) means within the framework of his own thinking, not so as to entrap and imprison this metaphor, but so that it remains essentially inaccessible, while at the same time initiating a shift in the interpreter's thinking, dynamising, and revitalising the vocabulary at his disposal in his discursive circuit.

Thus the original shared belief may be abandoned, but the armamentarium remains. At the same time, each fledgling shared belief bears in some way the characteristics of previous beliefs, and each is predicated on other beliefs. The

[310] *Cf.* Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*; Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness*; idem, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*; Miller, *Ariadne's Thread*.

abandonment of the Saussurean signifier/signified relationship birthed a new paradigm and a new type of shared belief, but itself remained as a foundation. It is hard to imagine a scholar of literature or linguistics beginning his scholarly life with Derrida but never learning anything about Saussure. This is impossible, if only because Derrida has to define himself against the concept of his predecessor, so that if one reads Derrida, one cannot escape Saussure. When Harold Bloom is constructing his system of concepts in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973), he refers in them to ancient culture – he finds the concept-metaphor clinamen in Lucretius and kenosis in Saint Paul, while apophrades refers to the mythical event in Athens where, after a period of plague, the dead return to the houses they used to inhabit.[311] The speech of the theorists is speech in history and is built on historicity. It is not born over and over again with each paradigm, as in the German philosopher Herder's language simile discussed above.

In "Consequences", an essay forming part of the discussions published in *Against Theory*, Stanley Fish, while rejecting the notion that the concept of literary theory should be left to fall by the wayside, points to the gradual weakening of the concept itself through the proliferation of journals, symposia, and more and more texts on a particular theme.[312] This is indeed a grave danger consequent upon the institutionalisation of literary theory. The more people there are in university positions and in journals who need to say something on the subject of literary theory, not to add anything new to the debate but to reinforce their institutional status, the more that real debate on the subject is lost. When, in the early years of the 21st century, I studied books on deconstruction at New York University, I couldn't help but notice that ninety per cent of them essentially had nothing new to say, but just parroted what the handful of original founding fathers had said before. The obligatory institutional repetition of what has been said eventually becomes banal and ridiculous. Vocabularies and concept-metaphors, once procured, are recycled, often without their re-producers even reflecting on what they are regurgitating. What emerges is something akin to a sacred, ritualistic, theoretical metalanguage that some are wont to repeat like incantations or prayers. Yet theory is neither magic nor religion. To be authentic, however, it requires that those who enter the debate know the historical sources and their contexts, and also that they be able to ask questions with authentic commitment, with the same pathos as those who unearth new vocabularies or even co-create new paradigms. In the absence of authentic

311 Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, pp. 14–15.
312 Fish, "Consequences", p. 128.

intellectual participation in historical and current vocabularies in the field, there is nothing that can be done but make those ritual sacrifices. The question is to what extent, in the future, literary theory will remain in the hands of those who share a belief in its intellectual productivity and necessity, or in the hands of those who mutter concepts in an unfamiliar language like medicine men or sorcerers.

Elsewhere in his study, Stanley Fish comments on the relationship between philosophy and literary theory, defending the view that despite all the similarities, or, rather, seemingly similar intentions, they are essentially two completely different games.[313] As acceptable as this argument is, since philosophers have developed their own specific way of arguing, we cannot overlook the fact that this formalised argumentation is particularly in evidence among philosophical logicians and the philosophical movements close to them. We can also find numerous philosophers whose interest is directed towards writers and literary works. For example, the whole Russian school of philosophers (Berdyaev, Shestov, and others) points to the works of Dostoevsky. And then there are philosophers who, in their style, turn to literature – Sartre, Bachelard, and even Ladislav Klíma. This is why it strikes me as useful to adopt the view espoused by Rorty in the above-mentioned debate with Knapp and Michaels that literary theory is a component of philosophy: "In particular, I take 'literary theory', as the term is currently used in America, to be a species of philosophy, an attempt to weave together some texts traditionally labeled 'philosophical' with other texts not so labeled."[314] Rorty is clearly demarcating his opinion by place and time, by locally and temporally using the term "literary theory"; this is consistent with his other views that any negotiation is defined by the time and community of users. This unabating and temporally and locally changing negotiation means that its participants have freed themselves from the search for "great eternal truths". But it does not mean – and Rorty did not give much thought to this – that, despite its local determinacy, a community of users cannot divest itself entirely of the historicity of speech on a given subject *per se*. That is, anyone wishing to discuss metaphor seriously in the US or in the Czech Republic in 2017 cannot be ignorant of what Aristotle, Richards, Ricoeur, Black, Davidson, and others have said. Or they can, but will be what literary theorist Miroslav Červenka aptly called "Columbus in a washing-up bowl".

In my view, literary theory does form part of philosophy; it is a "philosophy of composition" – not just in the sense of the "inventor" of the phrase, Edgar Allan

313 Fish, "Consequences", p. 123.
314 Rorty, "Philosophy without Principles", p. 136.

Poe, although something of his concept nevertheless applies to our current conception of the term. In "The Philosophy of Composition", Poe rationalises the procedures he chose to achieve the artistic effect of the poem. The literary theorist attempts to capture rationally – using abstraction and a specific set of terms-metaphors or a specific vocabulary – the practical possibilities of using literary texts, novels, short stories, or poems in the context of a given historical and cultural community. This search for arguments in support of the opinion that this is the way things are in its authentic form gives literary theory a pathos similar to philosophy, and also a similar practical application. It is a conversation and negotiation conducted in the language of a certain culture for the identification of culture itself, for the exploration of the possible historical world of human community. Unless you articulate a theory, you cannot explore the physical world, just as you cannot explore a literary work. Theories are necessarily articulated as "prior" and then modified, against the background of situations, as "passing". The point of these theories is not to form a definitive opinion on things, to draw a line and end further debate. The purpose of these theories is to develop ways of thinking about things. Rorty approvingly quotes Goodman, who says "there is no one way the world is",[315] and adds that therefore there cannot be one single way of representing it either.[316] According to Rorty, then, "the only point in contrasting the true with the merely justified is to contrast a possible future with the actual present."[317] Hence his proposal for a pragmatist interpretation, which crops up in a number of his works and can be condensed into the paraphrase: "try to look at things this way". This is a call for negotiation and openness, and a proposal to abandon any search for eternal truths. In the philosophy of the artwork, this call sounds like the instrument most useful for theoretical practice. The theorist does not seek truths but invariants of the possibilities of how the world can be represented through literature.

In literary theory, vocabularies, metaphors, and paradigms emerge in place of old ones without losing their connection to the historicity of the entire conversation. Words and concepts here are instruments for speech to be conducted, and speech is conducted because the phenomenon of literature exists. And this speech will be conducted as long as it is useful to the users. This usefulness should be rooted in the furtherance and practical exercise of human culture rather than in institutional careers.

315 Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 33.
316 Ibid.
317 Ibid., p. 39.

A (Neo)pragmatist View of Literary Interpretation and What Lies (or Not) Beneath

MARTIN KAPLICKÝ

Context of the discussion on the pragmatist literary interpretation

Richard Shusterman, when contemplating pragmatist concepts of literary interpretation in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, singled out the three that he considered most influential: the theory articulated by Richard Rorty, that by Stanley Fish, and that by the duo of Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels. Shusterman is quick to reassure us that, rather than judging which of these is the most purely pragmatist, his intention was to point out important features of interpretation and thereby understand it better. All of which, of course, he did from the perspective of neopragmatist aesthetics, which he himself refines in his book. However, inasmuch as it is always necessary, from a pragmatist point of view, to consider the backdrop to any debate, Shusterman, too, contextualises all three pragmatist theories of interpretation by factoring in how interpretation would have been regarded at the time.

The central issues of the theoretical context framing pragmatist theories of interpretation are the identity of a literary work, the relationship between description and literary interpretation, and the dialectical relationship between interpretation as the process of discovering truth and interpretation as an exercise in the personal creative development of the work being interpreted.[318] These issues, Shusterman claims, were largely raised by those who came up with the idea of New Criticism, especially W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley through their now iconic "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946).[319]

[318] *Cf.* Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 95.
[319] *Cf.* Beardsley – Wimsatt, "The Intentional Fallacy", pp. 4–18.

By challenging authorial intention as the main guide to the interpretation of literary works (in their case, poetry in particular), they gave fresh impetus to the question of what meanings are inherent in a poem and what meanings are arbitrary additions by the interpreter. While they still believe that a basic core of meaning is present in the text, its nature, in their view, can no longer be ascertained by reference to the intention preceding the poem, that is, by reference to something that stands outside the work of art, but must be ascertained by examining its semantic structure, which requires a close reading of the text itself. This shift then allows the architects of New Criticism to say that "the history of words *after* a poem is written may contribute meanings which if relevant to the original pattern should not be ruled out by a scruple about intention."[320] New Criticism thus prevented literary interpretation from referencing the external authority of authorial intention and opened it up instead to meanings that the author could not have intended, because the expressions that had been used only acquired those meanings after the poem was written.[321] This is not to say that Beardsley, Wimsatt, and the whole of New Criticism denied that there was a solid nucleus to the act of interpretation or admitted the plurality of meaning in a literary work. Rather, they found fixed meaning in the structure of the text itself. This is borne out by "The Affective Fallacy" (1949), another joint text by Beardsley and Wimsatt, in which the two authors attempt to show that the meaning of a text cannot be coalesced with the effect that the work has on the reader.[322] As Shusterman observes, Beardsley and Wimsatt believe that "the general and essential task of interpretation is thus discovery of the text's own meaning, a meaning determined by public linguistic rules and determinate enough not to permit contradictory interpretive statements to be correct."[323]

The New Critics' reflections on literary interpretation garnered essentially two basic types of reactions. The first was an attempt to reconstruct, in a certain way, the notion of authorial intention as a key concept of literary interpretation and thus to reformulate a work's core of meaning (E. D. Hirsch,

320 Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, p. 281, note 7.

321 One famous example of this is when René Wellek and Austin Warren point out that, while it is important to know that in Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress" the meaning of "vegetable love" at the time refers to vegetative (i.e. born of the vegetative soul) rather than vegetable love, the modern associations, in their view, do not contradict the poem's structure, but actually enrich its meaning. See Wellek – Warren, *Theory of Literature*, p. 181.

322 *Cf.* Beardsley – Wimsatt, "The Affective Fallacy", p. 21–39.

323 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 85.

or Kendall Walton in his article "Categories of Art") or, conversely, an attempt to show that a text's core of meaning cannot be guaranteed by the text itself and that the notion of the interpretation of a given literary work should be opened up to the possibility that various interpretations are legitimate (e.g. Roland Barthes, Paul de Man, and many other poststructuralist or deconstructionist writers).

Neopragmatist concepts of interpretation typically tend to embrace the latter, though Knapp and Michaels, as we shall see, dismiss both as barren. Shusterman, from his neopragmatist vantage point, draws attention to the fact that concepts accentuating, as the first step in any interpretation of a literary work, the true description of its core of meaning and then, as the second step, the embedding of that core in the context from which it is viewed by the interpreter, make a strict distinction between the "descriptive truth of a text" and its "interpretive elaboration". He opines, however, that this distinction cannot be consistently maintained. A classic example is Hirsch's distinction between the interpretation and criticism of a text. Interpretation, he suggests, is the act of defining a text's meaning by reconstructing the possibilities that the meanings of the words used may have had in the author's time and in the milieu in which he lived, while criticism is the process of glimpsing the core of meaning from the position in which the interpreter finds himself. Hirsch believes that the first step, a true interpretation of the textual meaning, is a prerequisite for any responsible criticism (he calls it "adequate criticism"); then, on the basis of that step, we can distinguish those interpretations that are wrong from those that are right. This also guarantees that a work's identity will be preserved as it migrates through its various historical and semantic contexts. Only by reconstructing textual meaning, Hirsch argues, can we responsibly claim that, in our assessment, we are dealing with the same work of art as our interpretive predecessors of two hundred years ago. Shusterman counters that this requirement is problematic because it presupposes that an acontextual assessment of the work is possible. As Stanley Fish later demonstrates in his criticism, Hirsch's acontextual meaning is not, in fact, acontextual as it is based on the contemporary context in which the author of the work lived. This context, however, is illegitimately assumed to be the only correct one and is accorded the status of truthfulness.[324]

According to Shusterman, interpretive strategies that presuppose a fixed and unchanging core of meaning include the assumption of a "correspondence

[324] *Cf.* Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, pp. 309–311.

theory of truth", i.e. the possibility that the truth of a statement is determined by how it relates to the reality, in this case, of the literary work as it is, regardless of our own point of view. Closer scrutiny of these theories, however, reveals that this acontextual meaning of a work is actually unattainable. We cannot shake off our own context.

Exploration of the plurality of ways in which the meaning of a work can be produced is central to poststructuralist, post-analytic, and deconstructionist reflections on literary interpretation. Shusterman, in his analyses of pluralist theories of interpretation, focuses on deconstruction, singling out one particular notion from this wide-ranging body of opinion as characteristic of their considerations. That notion is misreading, as expounded in particular by Harold Bloom and Jonathan Culler. Shusterman asserts that "Deconstruction exploits this perceived lack of permanent descriptive essence to argue that interpretation must always involve distortive change, that 'all readings are misreadings'."[325]

According to Shusterman, misreading is a notion that rightly emphasises, on the one hand, the fundamental incompleteness of the interpretation of any literary work and the impossibility for the interpreter to extricate himself from the context in which he finds himself. As language is constantly changing and evolving, it is pointless to search for a text's single constant and immutable core. On the other hand, however, this notion ultimately absolutises error as an agent of literary development (Bloom's "strong author" and "strong reader"). But why necessarily label their creative interpretive activity as "misreading"? Does this notion not ultimately also imply the possibility of "right reading" and thus merely flip the value of what is being appraised? In this respect, Shusterman is pointing out that an unacknowledged assumption of these concepts is the assumption that the meaning of a work is constant, an assumption they themselves seek to abolish. "Meaning is hypostatized as a separate and autonomous object rather than recognized as something whose existence is essentially relational and inextricable from human socio-linguistic practices, a point that deconstruction, in its better moments, does well to emphasize."[326]

Shusterman hence ventures that there is no need to radicalise misreading as the starting point of any reinterpretation in order to reject the fixed meaning of a work. Rather, changes in interpretations can be traced against the backdrop of the socio-linguistic practice which underpins them, and at the level of which contextually informed continuity can be glimpsed beneath the visible

[325] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 87.
[326] Ibid., p. 90.

changes. Shusterman believes the pragmatist or neopragmatist perspective he himself advocates is well suited to tracing this continuity underpinning changes, and he juxtaposes it with the three concepts of literary interpretation I mentioned at the beginning (Knapp and Michaels, Rorty, Fish).

Three neopragmatist concepts of literary interpretation and their criticism

The concept put forward by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels in "Against Theory" and then in their responses to the criticisms levelled at this study offers no such examination. Rather, the authors provocatively question the meaningfulness of literary theory of interpretation, viewed as "the attempt to govern interpretations of particular texts by appealing to an account of interpretation in general",[327] and its relation to interpretive practice.

They are convinced that theoretical issues such as "the function of authorial intention, the status of literary language, the role of interpretive assumptions, and so on"[328] cease to be serious and interesting once we begin to interpret any actual literary work. What they are driving at is a pragmatist's distrust of theories that have no bearing on practice. In fact, to support their concept of pragmatism in their reply to Richard Rorty, they refer to Peirce's "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", an article thought to be one of the first texts to articulate the principles underlying philosophical pragmatism.[329]

However, while the form of their arguments is compatible with the ideas of pragmatism, their actual way of arguing is hardly pragmatist. The core of the argument advanced by the two authors is that the meaning of a text is aligned with authorial intention. In support of this claim, they invoke an intensified interpretation of speech act theory and stress that there can never be meaning without intention. "Intention cannot be added to or subtracted from meaning because meanings are always intentional; intention cannot be added to or subtracted from language because language consists of speech acts, which are also always intentional. Since language has intention already built into it, no recommendation about what to do with intention has any bearing on the question of how to interpret any utterance or text."[330] And if theoretical conclusions have no bearing on practice, the maxim of pragmatism means we

[327] Knapp – Michaels, "Against Theory", p. 11.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Knapp – Michaels, "A Reply to Richard Rorty", pp. 143–144.
[330] Knapp – Michaels, "Against Theory", p. 24.

can safely abandon them. It seems to me, however, that the whole argument rests essentially on very hazy treatment of the notion of intention, as the two authors switch as they please from authorial intention to the intention that the reader imposes on the text, only to relate that back to authorial intention. This is something that Richard Shusterman points out: "We must be careful not to confuse the view that all textual meaning is in some sense intentional with the very challenging assertion that the meaning of a text is identical with the *historical author's* intention or intended meaning."[331]

Therefore, at the heart of Knapp and Michaels' argument against literary interpretation theory is the dogmatic assertion that authorial intent and any interpretation are inseparable, a claim that, in and of itself, has no fundamental support in the realm of interpretive practice. Shusterman, rightly in my view, underlines how this concept "runs counter to the pragmatist tradition, which challenges the putative necessities of thought and the fixities of static universe and instead aims to emphasise and enlarge the realm of choice in cognition and action."[332] This goal, conversely, is inherent in the theories of Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish, which, Shusterman says, really do kick about important pragmatist themes.

Rorty's theory of interpretation views literary interpretation not as the discovery of a text's hidden meaning, but as a process of constantly giving the text meaning, a process that is fundamentally unfinishable. Thus, although he denies that it is possible to arrive at a text's final meaning, he emphasises that we need not thereby lose the identity of the text. This identity is viewed by Rorty not as the way a work is tied to one immutable meaning, but as intersubjective agreement on what we are talking about. Thus, we can talk meaningfully about the same work even when our interpretations differ from previous ones; this is because they never differ in all respects. We can always find commonalities between conflicting interpretations of a given work, and we can use them as a basis for interpretive continuity. Just as a personality changes as it develops without losing its identity, different interpretations change without necessarily sacrificing continuity with previous interpretations. It is this "strategy of common individuation through discursive agreement" that Shusterman appreciates about Rorty and fully identifies with.[333] Likewise, he admires the notion of interpretation as the creation, rather than discovery, of meanings.

On the other hand, Shusterman has a problem with the stress that Rorty places on the innovativeness and new insight of every creative interpretation. Shusterman identifies, behind this emphasis, Harold Bloom's aforementioned

[331] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 96.
[332] Ibid., p. 99.
[333] Ibid., p. 102.

distinction between the strong and weak reader or author. Whereas Bloom's weak reader or author merely reproduces an already established framework of reading or writing, the strong author or strong reader builds a new framework. Needless to say, both Bloom and Rorty prefer the strong reader and author, whose creative output they believe offers greater pleasure, and relegate the weak reader to the realm of routine. Shusterman believes that they are underestimating the amateur reader, who reads not to offer up a new interpretation of a work, but because he enjoys it: "my (professional and non-professional) experience suggests that trying to crank out academic papers with novel interpretations is not always more satisfying than simply reading a literary work as an amateur focused on its more common understanding. Certainly, this should be the case for non-professional readers, whose claims, if not existence, seem neglected here. More important, even if the pleasures of 'strong misreading-writing' are indeed superior, we must not let the best become the enemy of the good by rejecting the value of ordinary readings because of the greater thrill of extraordinary ones. Here as elsewhere, what marks Rorty's interpretative theory is not the advocacy of innovative individualist reading, but its one-sided, virtually exclusive valorization which neglects and demeans the common. Pragmatists should be pluralists."[334] Thus, while Shusterman appreciates Rorty's dynamic concept of interpretation, he finds hints that the process of reading is subordinate to the demands of academic interpretation and that ordinary reading is belittled.

What are really only traces in Rorty become a full-blown tendency in Stanley Fish's interpretive theory. Fish, too, rejects interpretation as the discovery of meaning, and he, too, places an emphasis on the productiveness of the interpretive act. In other words, the meaning of a text is not something waiting to be revealed, but something that is produced only in the course of interpretation. All too often, Fish takes exception, in particular, to Hirsch's assumption of an acontextual meaning, which any responsible interpretation must first reconstruct on the basis of the text, as this forms the basis for a contextual reading of the text. In line with pragmatist premises, he stresses that the first stage of interpretation described by Hirsch is a type of theoretical fiction presupposing that we will step out of the world we live in and be able to view the text from an unbiased perspective. This step, however, is beyond the bounds of pragmatist possibility. We can never shake off the context in which we find ourselves because then we would also leave behind the world in which we live. "The argument of the preceding pages can be

[334] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, pp. 105–106.

reduced to the assertion that there is no such first stage, that one hears an utterance within, and not as preliminary to determining, a knowledge of its purposes and concerns, and that to so hear it is already to have assigned it a shape and given it a meaning. In other words, the problem of how meaning is determined is only a problem if there is a point at which its determination has not yet been made, and I am saying that there is no such point."[335]

However, the fact that any interpretation reflects the specific context of the interpreter does not mean that it is completely arbitrary. This is because the specific context of a particular reader does not exist in isolation, but is part of the broader context of other readers with whom he actively interacts and shares his interpretations, which in turn is part of other wider and ever more expansive contexts. It is these broader contexts that determine what is actually possible for interpretation and what remains comprehensible. "Once one realizes that the conceptions that fill consciousness, including any conception of its own status, are culturally derived, the very notion of an unconstrained self, of consciousness wholly and dangerously free, becomes incomprehensible."[336] That, Fish asserts, is the case with literary interpretation. All interpretations are always based on the possibilities of the interpretive community, which allocates and stabilises the spectrum of meanings that can be attributed to a given literary work.

Fish, then, is convinced that literary works exist only through their interpretations. A work does not exist outside of interpretation. However, the flux of interpretations is not random, but is determined quite heavily by the interpretive strategies of the interpretive community. For Fish, it is crucial that the limitations imposed on us by our ingrained interpretive communities beget the need to transcend those boundaries and to modify, at least to some extent, these interpretive strategies. According to Fish, this feature constitutes the development of interpretations: "the idea of progress is inevitable, not, however, because there *is* a progress in the sense of clearer and clearer sight of an independent object but because the feeling of having progressed is an inevitable consequence of the firmness with which we hold our beliefs, or, to be more precise, of the firmness with which our beliefs hold us."[337] The interpreter's goal, therefore, is not to reveal the meaning of the text, but to reconstitute that meaning and convince others that the new way of interpreting it is meaningful and useful. "The responsibilities of the critic under

[335] Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, p. 310.
[336] Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, p. 335.
[337] Ibid., pp. 361–362.

this model are very great indeed, for rather than being merely a player in the game, he is a maker and unmaker of its rules."[338] A successful interpretation, then, is one that modifies previous interpretive strategies to some degree and hence results in a work being viewed differently.

Shusterman, while expressing his admiration for this malleable and highly contextual aspect of interpretation, points out that Fish quite clearly ignores the aspect of an ordinary reading of a literary work that does not aim to present a new interpretation. Basing his model of literary interpretation on the experience of professional criticism, he is impervious to other modes of interpretation or reading. "He implicitly but pervasively identifies the global interpretative community of literary understanding with the institutional profession of academic literary criticism, thus effectively excluding non-professionals from membership and denying them their inalienable right to read and interpret. The way he assimilates one to the other is extremely subtle and persuasive, largely because it works less by explicit argument than by rhetorical suggestion (where the terms 'community', 'institution' and 'profession' are freely associated and interchanged."[339]

Shusterman finds Fish's theory of interpretation (like Rorty's) stimulating and in many ways revelatory. In his view, however, its weakness is, again, the assimilation of ordinary reading into strategies of academic interpretation. It is this feature that, Shusterman claims, that distances it from the pragmatist thinking of John Dewey, because in its field of inquiry it refrains from showing a link between the realm of "high art" and life. This is why, at the end of his reflections on pragmatist theories of interpretation, he claims that "All these three leading pragmatist theories, in contrast to Dewey's, impoverish the domain of aesthetic experience by failing to recognize the value of non-professional response which seeks neither interpretative truth nor publishable novelty but simply enriched experience […]."[340]

Wolfgang Iser and his (pragmatist?) analysis of the reading process

Shusterman draws on Dewey's philosophy to show that we should not conflate the process of understanding a literary work with literary interpretation, which "[…] in its standard ordinary usage, certainly implies conscious thought and

[338] Ibid., p. 367.
[339] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 111.
[340] Ibid., p. 114.

deliberate reflection; but not all intelligent and purposive selection is conscious and deliberate."[341] In his efforts to maintain a distinction between the process of understanding and conscious interpretive activity, he pits himself against what he calls "hermeneutic universalism", the belief that any understanding is already an interpretation. He presents three underlying reasons why the distinction between understanding and interpretation must be maintained. The first is essentially conceptual: if all our understanding in terms of action and experience were interpretation, then interpretation would have no counterpart against which it could be defined. It would be an all-encompassing and therefore empty concept. Uninterpreted understanding thus constitutes a necessary counterpart to any interpretation and maintains its sense of purpose. The second reason is that understanding gives interpretation a background of meaning on which to base itself. It is only on the basis of our understanding, however vague and indeterminate, that we can formulate more refined intellectual interpretations. In relation to the interpretation of a literary work, he therefore argues that "[…] it is our initial understanding or experience of the text as something meaningful and perhaps worth understanding more fully that generates our desire to interpret it. We do not interpret every text we encounter. But our attempt to interpret the given text is not only motivated but also guided by this prior understanding, though it be inchoate, vague, and corrigible."[342] Thus, Shusterman maintains, the intellectual analysis of any experience is based on an experience that is not initially fully intellectual, but by its interestingness invites deeper understanding. Some elements of the results thereby obtained, however, subsequently sediment into the realm of already accepted and hence non-interpretive understanding.[343] A third reason for maintaining the aforementioned distinction mentioned above, Shusterman says, is to defend the everyday non-reflective experience that hermeneutic universalism tends to undermine. The denial of pre-interpretive experience, he ventures, reflects "an intellectual blindness to the unreflective, non-discursive dimension of ordinary experience, a bias at once haughtily elitist and

341 Ibid., p. 124.

342 Ibid., p. 130.

343 This motif, which Shusterman calls the "cycle of understanding and interpretation", is quite intriguingly aligned with the knowledge situation described by the second-generation pragmatist philosopher Stephen Coburn Pepper in his *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (1942). Shusterman's close relationship between understanding and interpretation would correspond to the relationship between uncriticised (common sense) and criticised evidence (hypothesis) described by Pepper. Pepper's thoughts and their implication for art criticism were described in chapter "Root Metaphor in and beyond Literary Criticism".

parochially uncritical. To defend this ordinary, unassuming, and typically silent dimension, we need to preserve something distinct from interpretative activity, even if it cannot and should not be immune from interpretation and may indeed rest on what was once interpretation."[344]

It is this third factor in defence of everyday experience that Shusterman seems to develop most deeply in his texts. A key component is the thematisation of the relationship between popular culture and "high art", which is explored in detail in the final chapter of this book. Here, though, we will turn our attention to the second motif, which in literary theory can be thematised as the relationship between the process of reading and interpretation. In the following passages, I will try to show that a very interesting description of the reading process can be found in the reflections of Wolfgang Iser, a figure to whom, to my best knowledge, Shusterman does not refer, but whose analyses, in my opinion, encompass ideas closely related to pragmatist philosophy and literary theory.[345]

In the preface to his *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung; 1976), Iser presents the main aims of his theory of aesthetic response. In this context, he is at pains to show that his theory does not attempt to serve up fundamental principles of aesthetic and, above all, literary interpretation, but tries to formulate the acts of reading that underlie any interpretation: "One task of a theory of aesthetic response is to facilitate intersubjective discussion of individual interpretations. Clearly, such an intention is a reaction to the spreading dissatisfaction arising out of the fact that text interpretation has increasingly become an end in itself. Whenever such activities become self-sufficient, it is necessary to focus on the assumptions that underlie them."[346] It is precisely because of literary theory's one-sided focus on interpretation that Iser seeks to turn attention to the process of reading that underlies any possibility of interpretation. In this respect, he would agree with fully with Shusterman's second reason for the distinction between understanding and interpretation – the dependence of interpretation on a prior understanding/reading of the text.

Iser therefore locks horns with literary theories that view literary works primarily in terms of the meaning of the text. As though the meaning of

[344] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 133.

[345] As far as I know, the links between Iser's reflections and Dewey's pragmatism have so far been addressed only by Winfried Fluck in his "Pragmatism and Literary Studies". Iser's thoughts can be seen more often through the prism of the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition.

[346] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. x.

a work were something constant and unchanging, and the reader's task was to discover and reconstruct this invariable meaning of the work. Such theories, he argues, would greatly reduce the reader's activity and derive the reading process entirely from the meaning, which would be considered an inseparable part of the text. What's more, they would find it very difficult to cope with the fact that interpretations of the same work change and differ over time (Hirsch, Knapp and Michaels). Similarly, Iser's position differs from theories that distinguish between weak and strong readings in terms of the outcome of interpretation (Bloom) or that derive the outcome of interpretation from dependence on the interpretive community inhabited by the reader (Fish). While such theories do factor in the dynamics between the reader and his cultural environment, if they were left to elaborate on this alone they would overlook the dynamic relationship between text and reader or, in Shusterman's words, the process of understanding that underlies interpretation. And it is this process that is a focus of inquiry for Wolfgang Iser.

Roman Ingarden's distinction between a literary work of art, which is schematic in nature, and an aesthetic object, which can only be created on the basis of an aesthetic experience that results in concretisation (i.e. that fills in places of indeterminacy), serves as starting point for Iser's exploration of this relationship. Iser takes this polarity and runs with it, asserting that "In view of this polarity, it is clear that the work of art itself cannot be identical with the text or with the concretization, but must be situated somewhere between the two. It must inevitably be virtual in character, as it cannot be reduced to the reality of the text or to subjectivity of the reader, and it is from this virtuality that it derives its dynamism. As the reader passes through the various perspectives offered by the text and relates the different views and patterns to one another he sets the work in motion, and so sets himself in motion, too."[347] This simultaneous "setting in motion", which concerns both the reader and the text, is central to Iser's investigation. This movement, however, is necessarily overlooked by theories that focus solely on the meaning of the text.

Insofar as Iser's aim is to investigate the processes between text and reader, the notion of the reader with which he will be working needs to be specified. After pointing out the problems inherent in concepts such as the ideal reader, the super-reader as conceived by Michael Riffaterre, the intended reader as conceived by Erwin Wolff, and the informed reader as conceived by Stanley Fish, he comes up with his own concept of the implied reader

[347] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 21.

(*der implizite Leser*),[348] which he defines thus: "The concept of the implied reader is therefore a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him: this concept prestructures the role to be assumed by each recipient […] Thus the concept of implied reader designates a network of response-inviting structures, which impels the reader to grasp the text. No matter who or what he may be, the real reader is always offered a particular role to play, and it is this role that constitutes the concept of the implied reader."[349] Iser's notion of the implied reader, unlike Fish's informed reader, does not therefore specify what competencies the reader should have in order to be able to interpret the text responsibly. He examines this reader only in terms of the extent to which he engages in such play with the text as sustains his reading process. For this process to be successful, the reader needs to know "what to play" and "how to play it". In this respect, the textual structure has two basic components, which Iser goes on to call the "repertoire of the text" and the "strategies of the text". These components of the textual structure guide the reader into his role and, in doing so, trigger further complex processes – the actual playing-out of the role, i.e. structured acts in the reader.

We might describe Iser's repertoire of the text as what is to be played. These are those components of the text with which the reader is familiar from the real world, which transcends the world of the literary work with which the reader is currently interacting. Thus, according to Iser, repertoire may include "[…] references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged […]."[350] In literary works, however, these references are deprived of at least some degree of their original context, the system of thought to which they refer, because they are always rendered as a certain distortion (sometimes to a greater degree, as in science fiction, other times less so, as in a realist novel). This greater or lesser distortion stems from the process of selection that always takes place within the repertoire of the text. Through the selection of certain social, historical, or artistic norms, these realities shed, at least to some extent, ties that seem to be commonplace in everyday life, and the fragments selected in the text

[348] Iser had previously introduced this concept in his previous book, *The Implied Reader*, where he uses it to explore the type of reading activity played out in selected literary works. In *The Act of Reading*, however, the term is used more generally as a means of describing the basic characteristics underpinning the process of reading a literary work.

[349] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 34.

[350] Ibid., p. 69.

foist new connections on the reader. And yet this happens against the background of the original context that is made present in these fragments. Iser hence notes that "The literary recodification of social and cultural norms thus has a dual function: it enables contemporary readers to perceive what they normally cannot see in the ordinary process of day-to-day living, and it enables subsequent generations of readers to grasp a reality that was never their own."[351] Selection, then, is the driving force behind the reading processes elicited by the repertoire of the text.

Inasmuch as we have discussed repertoire being concerned with what the reader is supposed to play out in the process of reading, this is an area covered by text strategies. These essentially dwell on the ways in which the different parts the text offers the reader are connected. We can think of strategies as the narrative or poetic techniques employed in a text. As Iser notes, "The organizational importance of these strategies becomes all too evident the moment they are dispensed with. This happens, for instance, when plays or novels are summarized, or poems paraphrazed."[352] The strategies of a text form a set of stimuli on how the various fragments of the world to which a literary text refers can be strung together by the reader. Needless to say, each type of text has its own specific strategies. In a novel, for example, strategies may manifest themselves in the way the different perspectives from which the "world" of the work is presented are arranged. For a novel, Iser mentions four types of perspectives: those of the narrator, the various characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader.[353] Different configurations of these perspectives can then initiate phenomena such as the reader's growing distrust of the narrator, which underlies the concept of the unreliable narrator. The main activity that the strategies of the text initiate in the reader is therefore combination.

The repertoire (through selection) and strategies (through combination) of the text thus guide the process of establishing a literary work's "world" and enable the reader to communicate with this "world". In Iser's own words, "Selection brings about the background-foreground relation, and this allows access to the world of the text. Combination organizes the chosen elements in such a way as to allow comprehension of the text. Selection establishes the outer link, combination the inner."[354] So far, we have been discussing selection and combination in terms of the repertoire and strategies of the

[351] Iser, *How to Do Theory*, p. 63.
[352] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 86.
[353] Ibid. p. 35
[354] Ibid., p. 96.

text, that is, the formative forces of a text's structures. It is on this basis that these operations also enter into the actual playing-out of the reader's role, into the structured acts of the reader.

In relation to the reader's structured acts, i.e. the actual playing-out of the text, Iser points out, in particular, that the text is never handed to us as a whole, but always as a series of successive events. The individual components of a literary work's world are not exposed all at once, but are only gradually put together by the reader. According to Iser, it is characteristic of the reader that he cannot see the world of a literary work from one single point, but takes a "wandering viewpoint" (*der wandernde Blickpunkt*) of it. In the process of reading, we constantly find ourselves on the borderline between what has already happened and anticipation of what is to come. Seldom are our expectations fulfilled, or at least fully fulfilled, and they are therefore mutable. Iser says the same goes for what has already happened; this is mutable in that new renderings of the world from other perspectives may force a reassessment of previously constituted realities. Iser observes that "It is clear, then, that throughout the reading process there is a continual interplay between modified expectations and transformed memories".[355] This interplay of modified expectations and transformed memories then provokes another complex process of selective and combinatorial activities. Aspects of certain characters or events are abandoned in the course of the text, others are retained, but we are often forced to connect them in a different way as a result of the changes. Some elements of a particular literary world then come to the fore and others recede into the background; we exclude many previous expectations and move forward in developing only a few.

It is this cumulative selective and combinatorial process of the act of reading that can be described as Shusterman's process of understanding rather than as the process of interpretation. We do not have the opportunity to look at the text as a whole and pick out our own preferred interpretive strategy; we are inside a process that has not yet ended and we are driven to read on by emotionally charged "modified expectations" and "transformed memories". Interestingly, in describing the key characteristics of the act of reading, Iser refers to John Dewey and quotes a passage in which Dewey describes one of the fundamental motifs of experience in terms of "an experience". "The junction of the new and old is not mere composition of the forces, but is a re-creation in which the present impulsion gets form and solidity while old, the 'stored,' material is literary revived, given new life and soul through

[355] Ibid., p. 111.

having to meet a new situation."[356] According to Iser, it is this dynamic motif of experience that is exemplified and signified by the process of reading a literary work. "The old conditions the form of the new, and the new selectively restructures the old. The reader's reception of the text is not based on identifying two different experiences (old versus new) but on the interaction between the two."[357] In this context, Iser centres on Dewey's contention that aesthetic experience intensifies this very creative unification of past and present, and because it has no clearly defined external goal, it allows us to actively experience the kind of creativity that underlies our active everyday experience. Iser develops Dewey's motif in an interesting way.

By analysing the processes that occur in the reading process, Iser's *The Act of Reading* tries to show, above all, that the process of reading a literary work is communicative. This communication, however, does not take place between the schematic text and the reader; the text merely paves the way for such communication. As Iser himself contends, "[…] as we read, we react to what we ourselves have produced, and it is this mode of reaction that, in fact, enables us to experience the text as an actual event. We do not grasp it like an empirical object; nor do we comprehend it like a predicative fact; it owes its presence in our mind to our own reactions, and it is these that make us animate the meaning of the text as a reality."[358] Here, Iser is showing that what we are actually doing during the reading process is constantly playing out a communication between our reactions to passages of text we have already read and the need to reconcile them with reactions that have newly emerged. In doing so, he offers us a vivid glimpse into the experiential processes of selection and combination that underlie our everyday actions, but are obscured by the specific goals they allow us to fulfil. Iser does not believe that, in the reading process, we view the text as an empirical object or predicative fact; rather, we experience it as a "live event". Only as this event plays out can the need be triggered to better understand what it is that we have actually experienced, compelling us to interpret the text and pin down its meaning.

In my view, Iser expresses ideas that provide interesting support to Shusterman's defence of the distinction between understanding and interpretation and thus complement his arguments. At the same time, he productively develops the basic motifs of Dewey's aesthetics. Nevertheless, it should be added that Iser does not attempt to present a concept through which he defends

[356] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 60; Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 132.
[357] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 132.
[358] Ibid., pp. 128–129.

the relevance of everyday experience to aesthetic feeling. He is aiming for the opposite: to show how works of art, as aesthetic objects, illuminate everyday experience. The pursuit of this line, then, sets him apart from Shusterman's thinking. Even so, I believe that his concept reveals distinct pragmatist factors that are largely consistent with the intellectual climate of pragmatist philosophy.

In Defence of Use: The Boundaries and Criteria of Interpretation of an Artistic Text

DAVID SKALICKÝ

A work has such a never-ending plurality of interpretations that its meaning cannot be an intrinsic property simply waiting to be uncovered. And yet two options still remain available to us here: to search for meaning in the work's past (in the events surrounding its birth or in the semantics of contemporary speech), or to accept the meaning that is ascribed to the work in the future and is open to perpetual semantic recontextualisation. Roland Barthes makes his choice explicit in his famous essay "The Death of the Author" (1968): "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."[359] The reader's role is no longer to be a kind of archaeologist of meaning, but its creator. Interpretive theories of the last half-century subscribe to this agenda. Bar the odd exception,[360] these are theories on what constitutes such "meaning-making".

In the introduction to his *The Limits of Interpretation*, first published in 1990, Umberto Eco writes that in *The Open Work* (Opera Aperta), written in 1957–1962, "I advocated the active role of the interpreter in the reading of texts endowed with aesthetic value. When those pages were written, my readers focused mainly on the 'open' side of the whole business, underestimating the fact that the open-ended reading I supported was an activity elicited by (and aiming at interpreting) a *work*. In other words, I was studying the dialectics between the rights of texts and the rights of their interpreters.

[359] Barthes, "The Death of the Author", p. 148.

[360] In 20th-century literary studies, the most prominent "exception" is Eric Donald Hirsch, who argues that the subject of (objective) interpretation should not be the (elusive) significance of a work, but its (enduring) meaning, which Hirsch identifies with authorial meaning (see Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, p. 216).

I have the impression that, in the course of the last few decades, the rights of the interpreters have been overstressed. In the present essays I stress the limits of the act of interpretation."[361] It would appear that, three decades after *The Open Work* and two decades after "The Death of the Author", it was no longer necessary to defend the reader's right to be a creator of meaning instead of a mere seeker of pre-packaged meaning; rather, what was needed was a defence of the rights of the text to have a say in this meaning-making.

Eco continues to advocate the Peircean theory of unlimited semiosis,[362] which, he says, "does not lead to the conclusion that interpretation has no criteria. To say that interpretation [...] is potentially unlimited does not mean that interpretation has no object and that it 'riverruns' for the mere sake of itself. To say that a text potentially has no end does not mean that *every* act of interpretation can have a happy ending. Even the most radical deconstructionists accept the idea that there are interpretations which are blatantly unacceptable. This means that the interpreted text imposes some constraints upon its interpreters. The limits of interpretation coincide with the rights of the text (which does not mean with the rights of its author)."[363]

He repeats these sentences in the introduction to the first essay in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992),[364] a collection that, besides three of Eco's essays, includes polemical contributions by Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler, and Christine Brooke-Rose. As the title of the book suggests, Eco categorises the limits of the act of interpretation, and the acceptability and unacceptability of interpretations, in terms of interpretation, overinterpretation, and use. Interpretation is not meant to be a reconstruction of authorial intention, but nor can it be the interpreter's arbitrariness. The object of the interpreter's concern should be the *intentio operis* (the intention of the text),[365] defined as "a system of instructions aiming at producing a possible reader whose profile is designed by and within the text, can be extrapolated from it and described independently of and even before any empirical reading."[366]

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361 Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 6.

362 In this regard, see, for example, Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, pp. 175–199, and Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, pp. 23–43.

363 Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, pp. 6–7.

364 See Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, pp. 23–24.

365 "The text intention is not displayed by the Linear Text Manifestation. Or, if it is displayed, it is so in the sense of the purloined letter. One has to decide to 'see' it. Thus it is possible to speak of text intention only as the result of a *conjecture* on the part of the reader. The initiative of the reader basically consists in making a conjecture about the text intention" (Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 58).

366 Ibid., p. 52.

Eco employs the term "use" to refer to such diverse treatments of the text as: (i) tearing out a page to roll a cigarette; (ii) trying to find evidence in the text to explain the author's personality or its influence on the work;[367] (iii) what Richard Rorty called the approach of the strong pragmatist who "asks neither the author nor the text about their intentions but simply beats the text into a shape which will serve his own purpose."[368] I think it is indisputable that neither the first nor the second example is about interpretation, as this requires a semantic decoding of the text followed by an effort to name its significance. To read a text merely to look for some information in it, for evidence of this or that, or perhaps to subject it to syntactic analysis, is not to interpret it (at least in the sense in which interpretation is being discussed here). As to whether the third example can also be viewed as use and not interpretation, that, I would say, is more open to debate. Most of all, we need to ask ourselves what relationship we understand these two concepts to have, i.e. whether or not they are mutually exclusive.

In relation to an object such as a work of art, *use* appears to be inappropriate, in some respects perhaps low, material, selfish. The words "use of a work of art" seem to imply the sort of treatment where we would smash up a statue so that we could use its fragments to reinforce the foundations of a house we are building. Anyone who "uses" a text disregards its rights, violates it, beats it into a shape that suits them at that moment. Either they don't read it at all, or they read it in an inappropriate way, like someone who reads Kundera's *The Joke* in search of clues to real events showing that Milan Kundera denounced someone to the authorities, or like someone who treats a text simply as a basis for their own reverie.[369] Those who use a text do not listen to its voice, do not engage in dialogue with it, do not ask questions of it, and make no attempt to answer the questions the text asks them, but just harp on – like those who meet up with someone else in order to unburden themselves and expect the other person simply to sit there like a non-judgemental confidant who will listen and nod in the right places.

The pragmatist, on the other hand, takes a completely different view of the semantics behind the word "use": "On our view, all anybody ever does with anything is use it. Interpreting something, knowing it, penetrating to its essence, and so on are all just various ways of describing some process of

[367] Ibid., p. 58.
[368] Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 151. *Cf.* Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, pp. 55–56.
[369] See Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, p. 10.

putting it to work",[370] writes Rorty in "The Pragmatist's Progress", an essay polemicising against Umberto Eco's concept. The pragmatist does not shy away from grasping a work of art as an instrument created with the intention of serving some purpose, or as something that we use for particular purposes (whether or not in keeping with the intentions of its creator). No one is stopping us from turning a book into a coaster for our mug of coffee, and, frankly, some books may be more useful in that role than if we were to read them. What is art for? What purpose can it serve? Why should we read artistic texts, listen to music, watch theatre and dance, look at paintings, sculptures, and fine-art photography, or go to see films? The fact that interpretation is more than simply the process of reading (reception) invites further questions: why should we try to interpret works of art? What is interpretation good for? What return do I get on the effort I have to invest in such interpretation? And even: why should I strive for interpretation rather than overinterpretation? Why should I try to make my interpretation coherent, comprehensive, economical?

I cannot find an answer to these questions in Eco's reasoning. Eco focuses on semantics, not pragmatics. He looks for the limits of interpretation in the workings of language, its literalness and referentiality – in what it may or cannot mean (both an ordinary message and a literary work can mean many things, but not everything), and in what it may or cannot allude to – rather than in the context of human experience (i.e. in the context of our goals, interests, or institutions). Interpretation, in his thinking, often seems to be a game that is more about uncovering the *model reader*[371] than about the experience of the empirical reader and how the work may affect them, what challenge it may pose to them. Interpretation in Eco's concept does not ask what possibilities, meanings, and values the work actualises, it is not an effort to recontextualise the work[372] with an eye to our contemporary experience of life, but "a metalinguistic activity – a semiotic approach – which aims at describing and explaining for which formal reasons a given text produces a given response (and in this sense it can also assume the form of an aesthetic analysis)."[373]

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370 Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 93.

371 In *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Eco characterises the model reader as "a set of textual instructions", while "the main business of interpretation is to figure out the nature of this [model] reader" (p. 16). On Eco's notion of the model reader, see also, for example, Eco, *The Role of the Reader*.

372 See Rorty, "Inquiry as recontextualization".

373 Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 54.

Interpretation between semantics and pragmatics

Semantic theories of interpretation could be described as those that seek the boundaries and limits of interpretation on the semantic level of the sign, i.e. on the level of its sense or meaning (as per Frege's *Sinn*), or on the level of its reference (as per Frege's *Bedeutung*). Let's start with the referent.

"If there is something to be interpreted, the interpretation must speak of something which must be found somewhere, and in some way respected", writes Eco.[374] He gives the example of a slave who has brought a basket of figs along with a letter from his master, from which it can be discerned that he ate a few on the way. Yes, here we have something that can be found somewhere and, in a way, respected: a slave, a basket containing one amount of figs, and a letter that writes about another amount. But how does this relate to art, where we only have the analogy of that letter? If a friend sends me a basket with the message "Sending you some figs", I will expect to find figs in the basket. If a poet writes this in a sonnet, I probably won't look for figs, because I have been taught that poetry is a different language game that cannot be enjoyed much if we play it in the same way as we do with scientific, journalistic, or simply communication texts.

According to Frege, we should not be asking questions about the referent (*Bedeutung*) of a work of art if we do not want to forgo the pleasure of art.[375] However, as Roman Ingarden and the possible-world theorists show, the referent does not necessarily have to be an autonomous reality; it may also be a reality constructed by human imagination. This is a referent different from the autonomous referent: a referent dependent – if it is to be communicated – on its expressive externalisation (*Zeichen*), as well as on the existence of a consciousness endowed with the abilities and competences enabling it to reconstruct this referent on the basis of a signifier. It is a referent that is incomplete and finite in some respects – what Eco calls the "small world"[376] and what is known in contemporary literary theory, in particular, as the fictional world. This world could be viewed as an extensional object that, in a way, imposes on our interpretations of the literary text limits similar to those the real world sets for our interpretations of real events.[377] Much like the letter attached to the basket of figs specifies a particular number of figs,

[374] Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 43.
[375] Frege, "Sense and Reference", p. 216.
[376] See Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, pp. 74–75.
[377] Obviously, only in certain respects – there are fundamental differences that are no less significant.

The Brothers Karamazov writes about Ivan, Smerdyakov, and the murder of the old Karamazov, but not about Stalin and the Second World War.

For Lubomír Doležel, the fictional world is one of the pillars on which the identity of a literary text rests, as, together with style, it remains "relatively stable in the diversity of readers' interpretations".[378] The procedure involved in evaluating the truth of statements about fictional worlds then gives us the opportunity to grasp these relatively stable entities (characters, properties, places, events, etc.) and thus describe the fictional world as a structure of fictional facts. Unlike non-fictional texts, such truth statements cannot rely on the perception of the entity itself or on a series of various kinds of statements attesting to the existence and character of such an entity, but solely on the unique texture of a particular sign explicating or implying the contours of the fictional world. "An examination of the text, specifically its semantic structure, is a necessary criterion for the validity of interpretation," writes Doležel.[379]

What does "relatively stable" mean? In his *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Richard Shusterman writes: "Any idea of a firm and definite distinction between descriptive truth (presenting the work's core of incontrovertible properties) and interpretive elaboration is undermined by the fact that what is taken as descriptively true will often depend on which interpretation of the work we come to adopt. For example, Hamlet's love for his father (which he both declares and expresses in mourning, melancholy behavior) has been taken as a descriptive 'hard fact' of the play. But if we come to adopt the plausible Freudian interpretation of Hamlet's mood, delay, and behavior towards his mother, this apparent firm fact evaporates into Hamlet's self-deluding rationalization. More generally, we can be led from what we originally see as simple facts about the work to reach an interpretation of the work which dislodges or recasts the facts by showing the work in such a way that the original descriptions no longer ring true or adequate."[380] The difference between description and interpretation, Shusterman argues, is pragmatic: "it is not that we all agree on how to describe the facts and differ only in what interpretations we elaborate from them. It is rather that the descriptive facts are simply whatever we all and strongly agree upon, while interpretations are simply what command less consensus and display (or tolerate) wider divergence."[381] It is impossible to draw clear boundaries between the two. That

[378] Doležel, 'Literární text, jeho svět a styl', p. 8.
[379] Ibid., p. 12.
[380] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 87.
[381] Ibid.

relatively stable core of fictional facts is not a universal given. Its contours will always move away from the facts on which we all agree (in the world of Shakespeare's drama we have the character of Hamlet; his father was murdered by his brother Claudius) and gradually become blurred, uncertain, problematised (Hamlet's love for his father).

However, it is not so much the concept of the referential core of artistic texts that this consideration problematises as its relevance in relation to the limits and criteria of their interpretation. If we reduce the referent of the artistic sign to the factual core of what we all (or more or less all of us – the competent majority – etc., depending on what kind of consensus we require) agree on, this opens the door to statements about the world of the literary text that are, for the most part, very banal. The hypothetical realm of fictional facts – Eco's figs in the basket, which are not brought to us by a real slave, but which the fictional text tells us about – provides us with arguments we can deploy to reject only those interpretations that are plain wrong. Interpretations of note emerge only when we have left the safe core of fictional facts.

Let's turn our attention from the referent to the question of meaning/sense (Frege's *Sinn*). In a polemic with Derridean semantics and its emphasis on the permanent deferral of ultimate meaning, Eco views the existence of literal sense as a guarantor of interpretive limits: "Every discourse on the freedom of interpretation must start from a defense of literal sense."[382] For him, infinite interpretive plurality is bound by the intersubjective context of literalness. That context is both a backdrop for metaphorical meanings and a fixed point for the evaluation of our interpretations. Where do we look for literal sense? In "Is There a Text in This Class?", Stanley Fish draws on an anecdote about a teacher who misunderstood a student's question. He concludes that the literal sense of this anecdote is twofold – one in the context assumed by the teacher, the other in the context assumed by the student: "both interpretations were a function of precisely the public and constituting norms (of language and understanding) […]. It is just that these norms are not embedded in the language […], but inhere in an institutional structure within which one hears utterances as already organized with reference to certain assumed purposes and goals. Because both my colleague and his student are situated in that institution, their interpretive activities are not free, but what constrains them are the understood practices and assumptions of the institution and not the rules and fixed meanings of a language

[382] Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 53.

system."[383] Literal and figurative meanings are similar to facts and interpretation – there is no clear break between them and they are a matter of consensus in the context of a particular social practice. Literature and its interpretation, for their part, are a type of practice in which signifying conventions are not infrequently reflected upon and new trajectories of signification are explored. As Culler writes: "What Eco calls *overinterpretation* may in fact be a practice of asking precisely those questions which are *not* necessary for normal communication but which enable us to reflect on its functioning."[384] What Eco calls "overinterpretation" may in fact be a practice of asking precisely those questions which we expect not in practical communication, but in the interpretation of an artistic text. Just as the really interesting interpretive questions appear only when we move away from the realm of facts on which we all agree, they also surface only when we move away from the domain of literalism.

If we were to abandon the notion of a fixed and universally valid semantic framework that guides and limits our interpretations, that does not then mean that we would be left with a semantic and value vacuum where anything is allowed to be interpreted in any way and where any interpretation is as good as any other. Our interpretations play out within a contextual framework of certain norms, values, interests, and shared linguistic practices, which – for pragmatists, at least – is not only sufficient, but also, indeed, *adequate* to the situation of someone who does not have a "God's-eye view" of the world.[385] As Fish adds, "the positing of context- or institution-specific norms surely rules out the possibility of a norm whose validity would be recognized by everyone, no matter what his situation. But it is beside the point for any particular individual, for since everyone is situated somewhere, there is no one for whom the absence of an asituational norm would be of any practical consequence […]."[386]

And this practical consequence is what it is primarily about. "On this account, our aims in interpretation are not to dig out and describe the objectified meaning already carefully buried in the text by its author, but rather to develop and transmit a richly meaningful response to the text. The project is not to describe the work's given and definitive sense, but rather to *make sense* of the work," writes Richard Shusterman.[387] Interpretation includes

[383] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p. 306.
[384] Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, pp. 113–114.
[385] See Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, pp. 3–18.
[386] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p. 319.
[387] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 92.

what hermeneuticists refer to as *application* (Gadamer) or *appropriation* (Ricoeur). Interpretation should not be viewed as a sort of crossword puzzle or riddle that has only one answer; to interpret is not to discover and name some intentional object generated by the text itself, nor to reproduce some sense or meaning hidden from the inattentive eye, but to draw the text into the context of our lived experience. It is in these contexts that a literary work acquires what Mukařovský called "aesthetic value", by which he meant a work's ability to connect with us in our current experience of life.

Interpretation, use, and institutional context

"You cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it. An open text, however 'open' it be, cannot afford whatever interpretation," writes Eco.[388] He is fundamentally wrong: I can use the text as I want, I can interpret it as I like – no one can stop me from doing so; certainly the text itself cannot stop me from doing so, any more than a lamp can stop me from trying to hammer a nail with it. I have no idea what lamps want and what they don't want; I only know that a hammer is better suited to hammering nails, and that lamps are more useful for illuminating a room, which hammers are no good for at all. If I want to shine a light on a book at night, an ordinary hammer is useless; I need a working lamp. And it's the same with texts – we also treat them as tools more or less suitable for certain purposes. If I want to learn something new from them about myself and the world, to broaden and deepen my experience of the world, I cannot use them as I want; rather, the way I handle them needs to be adapted to that end. If I want to be successful in that respect, I cannot beat out of them whatever meaning comes to mind; I must listen to what they are saying and allow them to surprise me, to challenge what I know and believe. Nor can I interpret the text as I please if, for instance, I intend to publish my interpretation in a peer-reviewed journal. Because then my interpretation enters an institutional framework known by aesthetics as the *artworld*. "By getting rid of the idea of 'different methods appropriate to the natures of different objects' [...]," writes Rorty in "Inquiry as recontextualization", "one switches attention from 'the demands of the object' to the demands of the purpose which a particular inquiry is supposed to serve."[389]

388 Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p. 9.
389 Rorty, "Inquiry as recontextualization", p. 110.

Few are likely to deny the existence of publicly acknowledged criteria of interpretation.[390] Eco, in his writings, focuses on how to define the criteria of interpretation. For him, coherence, comprehensiveness, and economy are crucial: the better interpretation (i.e. the "presumption of the intentio operis") is the one that is more comprehensive (discovering more meanings), more coherent (able to combine them into an internally consistent whole), and at the same time more economical (more sparing). He does not ask, however, where these criteria come from, who sets them, and how binding they are (i.e. in relation to that public acknowledgement). He ignores the institutional context and overlooks what Stanley Fish calls the interpretive community. There are undoubtedly certain hierarchies of power within this community: at seminars, the student interpreter does not have the same power as the teacher to determine whether his or his fellow students' interpreting is good or bad. Whether an interpretive study by the teacher is good or bad, on the other hand, is a matter for the reviewer, who recommends it for publication, revision, or rejection. The interpretive community may be bound by rigid rules dictating that we can write only about certain authors, rely only on certain authorities, and praise only certain features of works – as was the case with Czech literary criticism in the early 1950s, when one had to praise Wolker, rely on quotations from the genius that was Stalin, and celebrate socialist realism and the tastes of the proletariat. That is no longer the case, and practically anyone can write whatever they want on the web; but if you want to be taken seriously by experts so that you can make a living as a literary scholar or an art critic, you have to take into account what arguments are seen to be relevant by those who make the decisions, what interpretive practices are acceptable, and what discourse is appropriate.[391]

The semantics that is Eco's focus in his musings on interpretive limits and criteria does not reflect the communicative (semiotic) situation in its totality, but extracts from pragmatics, i.e. from the user of the sign. As the name of this semiotic discipline suggests, this dimension is fundamental to pragmatism. The "hermetic" approach to the text, in which Eco finds the equivalent of a radical reader-oriented interpretation (as represented, in many people's eyes, by deconstruction), provokes in a (neo)pragmatist like Rorty or Fish no anxiety, no vertigo about permanently escaping meanings entangled in an endless web of mutual references. They view interpretation as a contex-

[390] Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 25.

[391] Consider the distinction Rorty makes between normal and abnormal discourse, as expounded in the chapter "The Ironist Who Would be a Poet's Helper".

tually anchored activity – as communication taking place in the context of human practice, specific human experience, speech, understanding, institutional interests, individual goals, etc. In relation to these – albeit differently in different cultural, social, contemporary and, to some extent, individual contexts – a particular interpretation appears as good or bad, intelligible or unintelligible, stimulating, original, standard, dull, etc. Interpretation is a description that the pragmatist evaluates not on the basis of fidelity to the object being described, but as a tool that proves useful or useless in the context of specific goals.[392] I can cobble together an interpretation that sees in Hašek's Švejk an allegory of Jesus Christ. Am I engaging in interpretation, overinterpretation, or use? Does it really matter? Isn't it more relevant whether it will be useful in the pursuit of the goals I set myself?

The terms "interpretation", "overinterpretation", "underinterpretation", and "use" suggest a kind of universal hierarchy: the first is best and desirable, the last the opposite. Yet there may be a particular situation where this does not hold true. When Eco defends himself against certain (over)interpretations of his work, one of his arguments is: a hypothesis like that is "uneconomic". This does not mean that we cannot assess the value of such interpretations in certain situations. If everyone, as was the case with New Criticism at the time, were to read literary texts using a "close reading" approach, that is, focusing attention solely on the text itself and its semantics (ambiguity, irony, paradox, etc.), it would soon be difficult to come up with an interpretation that is somehow new, stimulating, and interesting. In that situation, what Eco would call an overinterpretation may point to new meanings, open the text to new contexts, and thus make it more desirable than an interpretation that, while attentive to coherence, economy, and complexity, only regurgitates what we have heard many times before. However, novelty and stimulation in interpretation are not qualities that we value only when literary scholarship finds itself cornered by the same old interpretations stuck in a loop – it is because of these qualities that it makes sense to produce new interpretations of works that have already been interpreted. And, as Jonathan Culler writes, "like most intellectual activities, interpretation is interesting only when it is extreme. Moderate interpretation, which articulates a consensus, though it may have value in some circumstances, is of little interest. […] Many 'extreme' interpretations, like many moderate interpretations, will no doubt have little impact, because they are judged unpersuasive or redundant or irrelevant or boring, but if they are extreme, they have a better chance, it seems to me,

[392] Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 92.

of bringing to light connections or implications not previously noticed or reflected on than if they strive to remain 'sound' or moderate."[393]

When Eco analyses examples of some of the interpretations of his own novel,[394] he concedes, for example, that – whether or not he intended it – there is an undeniable semantic context in the text. Or he argues that a hypothesis is not economic. But he also contends that it tells us nothing of interest. –. Isn't interestingness or usefulness precisely the criterion with which we would be completely satisfied in the context of concrete human practice?

The pragmatist context, which reaches beyond the limits of linguistic semantics, leads us out of the rather bleak landscape of Derridean philosophy and deconstructive criticism, at the horizon of which "not only does the critic say something that the work does not say, but he even says something that he himself does not mean to say", where "moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight."[395] This is very apparent in Paul de Man's critical approach: insight is always simultaneously blindness, revelation always simultaneously concealment, interpretation a constant flux inviting reinterpretations. But what is the point of this flux, which is doomed to failure? What is the purpose of our efforts to achieve an understanding of a literary work if, at the same time, that understanding is a misunderstanding? The pragmatist starting point is to bring the values of the subject and intersubjective institutions into this autonomous play of linguistic meanings.[396] A literary text somehow touches the subject who reads it. It touches the cognitive, emotional, intuitive, and imaginative aspects of his being. It touches his perception of the world and his understanding of himself and others. It touches his individual and unmistakable experience of the world, an experience that is both spiritual and physical. And that sort of receptive framework is a framework of values within which it is impossible to claim that a particular interpretation is as interesting and productive as any other. And just as an individual is not an isolated universe unto himself, so too are his values shared and challenged, accepted and rejected, functioning in an intersubjective and institutional space. "To say that interpretation (as the basic feature of semiosis) is potentially unlimited does not mean that interpretation has no object and that it 'riverruns' for the mere sake of itself. To say that

[393] Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 110.
[394] See Eco *et al.*, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, pp. 74–88.
[395] de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 109.
[396] See Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 90.

a text potentially has no end does not mean that *every* act of interpretation can have a happy ending."[397] This statement by Eco, already quoted above, is true not in a closed universe of signs, but in a world in which people are addressed by literature, speak and write about it, are praised and criticised for their interpretations, and as a result are even promoted or expelled from universities. And it is only in such a context – rather than by the concept of "intentio operis" – that the realities involved in the interpretation of literary texts can, in my view, be explained "economically and coherently".

In "Ethics Without Principles", Rorty wrote: "Once we give up the idea that the point of discourse is to represent reality accurately, we will have no interest in distinguishing social constructs from other things. We shall confine ourselves to debating the utility of alternative constructs."[398] From a pragmatist perspective, it goes without saying that this also applies to the limits and criteria applicable to the interpretation of works of art. Insofar as the distinctions between interpretation, overinterpretation, and underinterpretation are useful to us, there is no reason to fight them; it would just be better, I think, to define them by something more convincing than by reference to some intrinsic intention of a work. In my view, though, separating interpretation and use is misleading more than anything else. If we understand interpretation to mean the specific use of a text, this raises the question of what such use is good for, i.e. it guides our thinking towards the context of our goals, interests, and needs. And it is here – not in semantic considerations of intentio operis or literal and figurative meaning – that I think it is useful to look for limits and criteria in the interpretation of works of art.

[397] Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 6.
[398] Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, pp. 85–86.

Appropriation of a Theoretical Concept as an Instance of Cultural Transfer

PETR A. BÍLEK

Introduction

Literary theory evolves and changes not only through the transformations of individual, group, and generational thinking within a given sphere of communication (which is framed by the language it uses to communicate and the scope of recognised books, journals, conference presentations, etc., shared within the linguistic community thus configured), but also by taking inspiration from other spheres of communication, whether access to such other sphere is made possible by translation, by a personal connection to that sphere, or by my simply surfing those spheres needing to find what might fit my idea or my concept. Yet inspirations borrowed from elsewhere do not come to a new sphere of communication in a form that is free of problems and semantically stabilised. They can be viewed as dynamic processes taking place within the mechanisms of cultural transfer, not least of which is the aspect of adaptation: the negotiation that occurs when a newly "borrowed" concept is introduced into a new sphere, where it is gradually (and with greater or lesser degrees of focus and intensity) linked to concepts already existing and in use there.

This process can take many different forms. In some situations, such newly adopted concepts even rise to a quite dominant position, either because they are enforced by the ideological powers (concepts such as *popular feeling* [lidovost], *tendentiousness* [tendenčnost], or *partyism* [stranickost] in Czech literary criticism of the 1950s), or because an entire conceptual field is perceived to have a certain vacuity, leading to a fixation on these new concepts (concepts such as *post-modernity* or *discourse* in 1990s Czech literary criticism). This makes it difficult to generalise about the mechanisms and factors playing key roles in such a situation. What is at play here is an event solidly

shaped by a given situation's specific historical context, which always embodies numerous distinct uniquenesses; the semantics of the adoption and adaptation of a concept is always strongly fused with pragmatic considerations. Therefore, efforts to understand more general features and phenomena may benefit not only from a string of case studies, but also from the use of the principle of analogy: mechanisms similar to the transfer of concepts from one semantic domain to another also work, as I will try to demonstrate, in certain aspects of the fictional text, and from observing these, I think, we can make certain generalisations about conceptual transfer.

Why might it be useful to interpret processes in which a theoretical concept from a particular setting is borrowed and then embedded and adapted in a new environment, as in cases of cultural transfer? Perhaps for the very reason that the terms commonly used to characterise and express this process in theoretical discourse (*borrowing*, *adopting*, *influencing*, *embedding*, *developing*) are largely metaphorical. The principle of the root metaphor, deriving from agrarian or organic ideas of growth, crops, and cultivation, can be observed at work in them.[399] And yet it is precisely this figurative explanatory rhetoric that may obscure the fact that the process of conceptual transfer involves many other acts and manifestations that do not form such a fluidly coherent metaphorical whole.

Use of the farming-like root metaphor, as generated by the discourse of literary theory, results in the metaphorical idea of an expert who knows all the available varieties of a given crop that are grown all over the world, an expert who is able to evaluate which variety is needed for our specific land, and who then sows or plants and then starts cultivating that variety in our country. However, a cursory glance at the pragmatic context shows that the actual process is far removed from this metaphorical idyll. To this day, the literary theorist has never possessed a familiarity with all relevant developments in this field globally, however pleasant it may be to project such an idea of oneself. Pragmatically speaking, the fact that many languages are closed to us and the fact that we do not have physical access to books and journals in which the field is continuously being developed are obvious impediments. While the physical inaccessibility of resources has become less of an issue in recent decades, the limitation posed by anthropological constraints has become even more apparent: it is not within the power of an individual or a team to keep track of all the developments in the field, even in a single cultural and linguistic area, let alone on a global scale. Even

[399] The architect behind the root metaphor concept is Stephen C. Pepper.

the small patch cultivated by Czech literary theory seems too vast in this respect, not to mention the harvesting of Anglophone, Francophone, and German-language pastures.

In inquiries into inspiration, discourse in literary history works with an interpretative framework that could be described as scholastic optimism: respect for the thinker being studied usually demands that we not dig too deep and that we draw quite sweeping conclusions from fragmentary evidence. Milan Jankovič's interpretation of the way Roman Ingarden's ideas were absorbed by Jan Mukařovský may serve as proof of this: "Mukařovský studied Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, discussing, among other things, expression and meaning, according to correspondence from 1931. In the same year, as we know, *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (*The Literary Work of Art*) by Husserl's pupil Roman Ingarden was published, offering a model of how a literary work is constructed in multiple layers, including that of meaning. Ingarden's work was certainly well known to Mukařovský; it is echoed in his university lectures."[400] The choice of the verb "studied" is symptomatic, drawn as it is from correspondence, i.e. evidence that would equally allow for the less concentrated and complex verbal designation "read". Even more striking is the scholarly optimism in deducing that Ingarden's writing was "certainly well known" to Mukařovský, even though the basis for this deduction – the said university lectures – only proves that he was undeniably familiar with (and in his lectures quoted from) the book's introductory section. My point is not that we should necessarily and automatically infer unfamiliarity in the absence of evidence that Mukařovský carefully read the book to the end. Nor, of course, am I concerned with psychologising the thinker and creating some kind of reading profile that would be characteristic for him, that is, constructing how he read and studied the sources that stimulated him. All I am concerned with here is a sort of "humanising" of a presumed situation where we do not have semantic evidence of reading: the pragmatic framework should simply also accommodate the idea that parts of books remain unread even by outstanding scholars, that some passages may be read inattentively, or that the mechanisms of the forgetting process also apply to these exceptional individuals, and that, therefore, something read fifteen years ago, without the possibility of returning to the text at any time thereafter, does not necessarily make the then-read text an inspirational source that is always at hand and with which the thinker actively works whenever the opportunity arises.

[400] Jankovič, "Dlouho očekávaná monografie", p. 105.

Semantics of appropriation

For a long time, stretching back to the 19th century, the idea of the circulation of concepts was rooted in the key interpretive category of influence. Influence tends to be grasped as a rather metaphysical, impersonal category related to the idea of emanation flowing freely through space. It is only in recent decades that the vocabulary of the arts, and also the vocabulary of literary studies, has leaned more towards the concept of *appropriation*. The shift in interpretative possibilities is obvious: the concept of appropriation carries within it much more material and concrete connotations of actors taking specific actions; the idea of passive emanation into space is thus replaced by the idea of active strategies and tactics, i.e. specific actions in specific situations. Conceptual construction ceases to be viewed as a process of monoliths suddenly emerging in space (analogous to the role of the monolith in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*) and is replaced by the idea of partial and sequential speech strategies, which move towards a perceived goal by successive steps that have a habit of turning out, in hindsight, to be detours or paths leading elsewhere. Appropriation is an act of active pilfering, and our reflections on these processes should be open to all the necessary steps that this activity (including the legal connotations – what originally belonged to someone else becomes mine or ours) entails, as opposed to the related "innocent" ideas evoked by the terms "borrowing" or "lending".

In his extensive entry on appropriation,[401] Robert S. Nelson explains the principles of appropriation by using the specific example of the quadriga, or sculpture of four horses, which was moved from the island of Chios to Constantinople and then to Venice, where it decorated the façade of St Mark's Basilica for a long time, before being spirited off by Napoleon to Paris as loot, only to be returned to Venice during the reign of Francis I, Emperor of Austria. Each of these spatial shifts was a significant appropriation. Nelson cites this example to show how, with each displacement and re-contextualisation, certain meanings engendered by the quadriga in its previous context are suppressed or eliminated altogether, while other meanings in the sculpture are retained and supplemented with new meanings occasioned by the new context. This analysis makes it possible to name the individual signifying events distinctly, while also ascribing to

[401] Nelson and Shiff (eds.), *Critical Terms for Art History*, pp. 116–128.

them a dynamically changing form, distinguishable through the links to specific agents of contextual change.

Nelson's interpretation is based on Barthes' concept of myth.[402] For Nelson, Barthes' secondary system of signification, in which the original open relationship between signifier and signified is closed by the frame of a new signifier bound to the evident signified, is entirely analogous to his interpretation of appropriation. Nelson points out that "Because appropriations, like jokes, are contextual and historical, they do not travel well, being suppressed or altered by new contexts and histories".[403] The original meaning surrenders to semiotic distortion, but this does not mean it is swept away completely. The original connotations undergo a significant semantic shift, and a new sign is created, but it arises by stealth, because the whole process comes across outwardly as natural and ordinary.

The process of appropriation works because of the incompleteness of what is extracted from the original context and transferred to another context; if the signs thus transferred were complete, the transfer would either not be possible at all or would have to expose complex processes in the adaptation and removal of unwanted effects. Likewise, when it comes to concepts from the literary or cultural sphere, transfer translates into a loss of position in a relatively complex and ordered terminological network or hierarchy; a concept is released from these constraints, but this limits the potential it has for meaning and use, and only a fragment is transferred, which, in the new context, must be semantically supplemented or carefully fitted into the existing hierarchical network. Some of the existing meanings of the concept are also used in its new contextual situation, but at the same time it must be provided with additional meanings and instructions for use.

Nelson links the concept of appropriation to the broader concept of representation. He refers to the subject-matter of 18th- and 19th-century English landscape painting, which can be interpreted as the appropriation of the landscape as territory belonging to the state, thus establishing and building the idea of the state as a symptomatic and distinctive territory, whether real or imaginary. Through this representation, rule over a territory that may appear artificial and temporary is presented as natural and permanent. This example therefore shatters the idea of inherently developmental forces and opens up the process of signification to the broader social context of a particular historical situation.

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402 See Barthes, *Mythologies*.
403 Nelson and Shiff (eds.), *Critical Terms for Art History*, p. 119.

Semantics of the proper name, Part I

Conceptual terms, i.e. terms from the field of literary or art theory for which the definition is difficult to express, and the content of which is revealed little by little rather than entirely straightforwardly through its use in expert discourse, function to a large extent analogously to proper names: we have a term serving as an umbrella to gather all sub-occurrences, which are constantly giving this term a more and more specific content, i.e. more and more comprehensive signifieds. Conceptual terms, like the proper names of existents[404] in fiction, operate on the principle of determinate descriptions generating the uniqueness of what they are signifying, while allowing for situationally contextual networking that characterises their position in relation to other unique entities. Unlike traditional descriptive terms, such as *anaphora* or *epizeuxis*, conceptual terms do not carry within them a simple relation between signifier and signified; their communicative potential fluctuates between some semantic content and a referential use in which only the semantic definition acquires potential productivity and applicability in literary-theory discourse. And this is also true of the names of characters or spatial entities in fiction – in any discourse, these too possess a certain contoured meaning, but this must be supplemented by knowledge of how and in which specific situations, interactions or introspective immersions a character has already manifested itself, or how a particular spatial entity has been specified and drawn into relations to other spatial entities. Although the principle of analogy has been used in literary theory more as a supporting implicative argument that allows us to relate different premises to each other and then draw conclusions from them, I will stick to it quite explicitly in this essay: the aim is to explore to what extent the analogy between the functioning of proper names in fiction and the functioning of the appropriative transfer of a concept from one linguistic and cultural domain to another carries weight and is productive.

Hašek's *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* (1921–1923) gained wider exposure in an English-speaking context through Cecil Parrott's translation, *The Good Soldier Švejk and His Fortunes in the World War* (1973).[405] The eponymous hero's name has retained its Czech spelling, complete with accent, in Parrott's English version; this removed the connotation of

[404] That is, characters and individually distinguishable spatial entities given a proper name – *cf.* Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 29–30.

[405] In 1973, the book was first published in this translation by Heinemann; in 1985, Penguin Books / Viking Penguin also published it as a paperback, thereby potentially broadening its impact and influence.

Germanness created by Paul Selver's original 1930 (abridged) translation, *The Good Soldier Schweik*), although the use of Schweik might have better guided the reader to the proper pronunciation of the character's name. Each variant spelling of the name is therefore an appropriation headed in a different semantic direction: Selver's original solution helps to domesticate the pronunciation of the character and, at the same time, the spelling hints at the broader Central European region dominated by the influence of the German language; Parrott's later solution is not just a "return" to the original – in the Anglophone context, the accent over the "S" actually engenders a manifest sense of exoticism, i.e. a sense that the hero's name and the novel as a whole belong to a different linguistic culture. There is thus a hesitancy to contextualise (which is then also reflected in uncertainty about pronunciation).

My choice of this particular example, however, is motivated more by another textual feature found on the very first page of the novel. The translation of the opening words of Mrs Müller the charwoman, "And so they've killed our Ferdinand",[406] is followed by a reference to a footnote telling us that "The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, nephew of the Austrian Emperor, Franz Joseph, was assassinated with his wife in Sarajevo by the Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, in 1914."[407]

This particular reference is, I would say, a rich and illustrative example of appropriation. The opening dialogue between the charwoman and Švejk draws on the distinct and clearly literary motif of misunderstanding: while Mrs Müller, in the world of the novel, is at that moment making a reference to the world of big names and political events, which she knows only vicariously, but nevertheless suspects their fatality (she expresses this clumsily with the possessive "our", which is obviously meant to provide a frame of reference for the assassination and its victim), Švejk is looking for possible referents of the name Ferdinand only in the world with which he is immediately familiar, that is, on the basis of his own experience. The misunderstanding between the novel's two characters is compounded further by how it would be understood by the reader, and the narrative strategy of the text plays on this – a contemporary reader, familiar with the political context of the fateful year of 1914 in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, but also an erudite reader today, understands that Mrs Müller's speech act makes sense if we perceive it as a reference to a bearer of the name standing outside the text, in the sphere

[406] Hašek, *Good Soldier Švejk and His Fortunes in the World War*, p. 3.
[407] Ibid.

of the actual world. At the same time, the reader also understands the reason (and the resulting humour) for the misunderstanding in a situation where Švejk is thinking of all the people named Ferdinand that he knows personally.

Cecil Parrott's solution presupposes a situation where this passage will be received differently – both spatial and temporal distance dictate that the English-speaking reader will not necessarily be familiar with this entry in the cultural encyclopaedia, and perhaps not make the connection between the proper name Ferdinand and the historical figure of the heir to the Habsburg throne. The original meaning of the utterance, which also symbolically plays the key role in the first sentence of the entire extensive novel, becomes fragmented or fades into indeterminacy in its new context, and the sentence thus fails to stand out in any interesting or impressive way. Parrott addresses this loss of meaning by inserting a reference to the heir to the throne in the form of an explanatory footnote. This solution thus creates a reference, albeit rather jarringly from the perspective of translation methods. Its explicit form has several consequences: not only does it modify the text of the novel (the footnote gives the impression that it is part of the novel's text, not a paratextual note by the translator), but above all it distorts the character of the whole initial misunderstanding – because of the explanatory note, Mrs Müller produces a quite distinct act of reference, and thus Švejk's reaction appears to be completely out of place and unwarranted. The indistinctness of meaning occasioned by the way in which the charwoman has used the name (without any particularising characteristic) is removed by the explanation. While the original asks the principal question "What is it that leads Švejk to consider the bearers of that name, as demonstrated by his reply?", in the translation Švejk becomes a fool who has no real knowledge of the world, so the type of humour generated by the character is completely different.

In summary, the opening dialogical episode's richness of meaning relies on a situation in which Mrs Müller bases her speech on the assumption that her reference to the name Ferdinand is obvious, while Švejk thinks only in terms of the category of signification (all those who meet the condition of being bearers of the name Ferdinand), related only to the sphere of bearers of the name empirically accessible to him. It is only in the subsequent conversation that Švejk works out the referential context, i.e. the fact that the heir to the throne has been assassinated, enabling him to morph into a masterful interpreter of the whole event, in which he finds both unwavering logic and a meaning he has conjured up through his utterances. The Czech readers were and are in possession of the cultural encyclopaedia needed to understand the whole dialogue. This enables him to grasp both the presupposition of referentiality, as employed by the charwoman, and Švejk's understanding, which follows the path of signification. Consequently, they also understand

the resulting misunderstanding between the two characters and find in it a whole raft of meanings that will also apply to subsequent passages of the novel. The reader of the translation, i.e. the reader anticipated by Cecil Parrott, will get Švejk's semantic excursion, but will not understand the referentiality, and is therefore offered an explanation in a footnote, even at the cost of disrupting the semantic context of the comic and meaning-bearing misunderstanding underlying the dialogue.

And more or less the same process can be observed with appropriative transfers in literary theory: a concept is transposed from one constituent source and in one specific rendering, but the transfer deprives it of its referential "history" in the sense of being rooted in the discourse in which it originated and in which it was continuously developed dialogically in relation to other contemporary concepts, to the coherent language of the time, and to the method used to think about literature in that original context. When Vítězslav Nezval, Adolf Hoffmeister and other attendees of the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers "bring" the concept of *socialist realism* to a Czech setting in 1934, all they actually offer this domestic environment is a distinctly metaphorical sign, which necessarily has to pass through a series of further negotiation processes, adaptations, and interpretations. The transfer strips the concept not only of its original purposefulness as a tool limiting the influence of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), but also of its ideological and political nature: its genesis is linked to the narrative of the working meetings between Stalin and Gorky, at which it is said to have been begotten as a highly symbolically sanctified instrument. What is lost is the concept's role as an instrument in the battle fought between Nikolai Bukharin, Andrei Zhdanov, and others over how Soviet culture is to be interpreted. Thus, a sort of conceptual "stub" is transposed into a new context, that is, the context of Czech culture of the mid–1930s, where its signifiers (both the component "socialist" and, most of all, the component "realism" or "reality") engender a complex search for potential signifieds in the specific context of contemporary Czech concepts, which have almost nothing in common with the meaning attributed to the concept in the original Soviet context. The whole discourse about the negotiation of the meaning of the concept of *socialist realism* is also subsequently influenced by the symbolic power of references to the original Soviet concept as a sacred source area, thus limiting or realigning any leeway for adaptation to the needs of the Czech situation.

And this fleetingly outlined mechanism of transfer can, I think, be generalised: the transposed concept always becomes, to some degree, an indistinct and thus unsatisfying metaphor, whose meaning can only gradually become established through continuous contextualisation. The conceptual vacuity

that inevitably results from this metaphoricalness can be filled by this contextualisation, but it can also continue to act as a productive factor that allows different actors to ascribe different meanings to an identical concept, thus creating space for their own interpretation or separation from the dialogical consensus on the concept that usually emerges over time.

Semantics of the proper name, Part II

Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979) has been published in more than one English version. Until the mid–1990s, it was published in Michael Henry Heim's translation from the Czech, after which it appeared in Aaron Asher's translation from the French version. A comparison of the two translations yields numerous possible observations and conclusions, but for our purposes, I think, it would be productive to dwell on the two different ways of translating the passage which in the Czech original reads: "Ulice, v níž se narodila Tamina, se jmenovala Schwerinova. [...] Její otec se narodil na třídě Černokostelecké. [...] Matka se k otci nastěhovala na třídu maršála Foche. [...] Tamina prožila své dětství na Stalinově třídě a její manžel si ji odvedl do nového domova z třídy Vinohradské." [408] The narrator's account is concentrating on the fact that the name of one particular Prague street kept changing, but what is interesting for us is the way in which these names are appropriated in the English text. Place names referencing historical figures pose no problem, and the two translations are more or less identical; the translation is not forced to engage in any appropriative activity because the referential indistinctness borne by names like Foch, Schwerin, and perhaps even Stalin is already handled by Kundera's narrator, and this indistinctness will work similarly for both the Czech and the English-speaking reader. Much more interesting is the solution used to translate place names that refer not to persons, but to a particular local characteristic; and thus hold their own inherent nominal meaning. Michael Henry Heim favours the double occurrence of the name – first a version bearing traces of the Czech, then a version of the translation of the name into English: "The street Tamina was born on was called Schwerin. [...] Her father was born on Cernokostelecka Avenue – the Avenue of the Black Church. [...] When her mother married her father and moved there, it bore the name of Marshal Foch. [...] Tamina spent her childhood on Stalin Avenue, and

[408] Kundera, *Kniha smíchu a zapomnění*, p. 167.

when her husband came to take her away, he went to Vinohrady – that is, Vineyards – Avenue." [409]

This solution may appear to be convoluted from a translation perspective, but Heim is making it clear that he wants to preserve both components. The "Czech" version ("Cernokostelecka", "Vinohrady") conveys a reference – it allows us to locate the street on contemporary maps of Prague and, for the English-speaking reader, it accentuates the novel's exotic setting in the then touristically (and hence empirically) unfamiliar Prague, thereby reinforcing the possible autobiographical reading of these passages, which make use of a highly authorial narrative situation. The subsequent "equivalent" after the dash then supplies the hitherto absent semantic component of the name; once translated, the name completely loses all referential validity on the altar of meaning. This unusual translation solution thus introduces the theme of mediateness and a double reader into the text and explicitly thematises the translation process of adapting the text, perceived as an act of cultural transfer.

Asher's solution dispenses with these brokering functions altogether. It leaves the place names only their potentially referential function of being a specific street on the map of Prague, and forgoes the fact that these are "speaking" names with their own semantics. However, this rather detaches the names in question from the personal names used in the role of a place name, where their "speakingness" is rendered by the reference to the historical figure that each of them contains: "The street Tamina was born on was called Schwerinova Street. […] Her father was born on Cernokostelecka Avenue. […] When her mother married her father and moved in there, it was Marshal Foch Avenue. […] Tamina spent her childhood on Stalin Avenue, and it was on Vinohrady Avenue that her husband picked her up to take her to her new home." [410] Through their semantic vacuity, then, the names "Cernokostelecka Avenue" and "Vinohrady Avenue" are closer to the way in which the name of the novel's protagonist, Tamina, functions – as an exotic combination of syllables, as a randomly created signifier whose relation to the signified is completely arbitrary. Asher also adopts, entirely passively, the inconsistency already initiated by Heim in the referential field – the nominal component of the street name is "cited", while the general designation of the street type (třída = *Avenue*) is translated, which blurs the referentiality somewhat; moreover, by analogy to "Cernokostelecka Avenue", we should see "Vinohradska Avenue", not "Vinohrady Avenue", appropriated into English. This results

[409] Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1994), p. 158.
[410] Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1996), p. 216.

in an intriguing hybrid containing constant and dynamic intermingling and competition between "Czech" and "English" semantic, syntactic and other elements, as well as competition deriving from the semantic act of signifying with an extra-linguistic act of reference.

The hybrid solution created by Heim's translation and adopted in Asher's translation has a further interesting dimension. While the general component of the place name is translated ("Avenue"), and thus functions on the principle of meaning that can be adequately translated – specifically, the localising component referentially retains the sense of belonging to a Prague setting, in which several of the novel's plot levels are played out – and hence nothing obvious is lost by this act of translating "třída" into "Avenue", something is definitely lost before our very eyes when we see "Cernokostelecka": the diacritics.[411] Again, this absence can be perceived and interpreted not only in a technical sense (i.e. the fact that, at the time the novel was first published in English, the typesetter may not have had the right diacritical marks to hand, as is the case with contemporary computer typesetting), but also in a symbolic sense. In "Cernokostelecka", the reference to one specific place in the actual world is present, but at the same time it is bracketed or inhibited by the absence of diacritics. "Cernokostelecka" is simply not the same as "Černokostelecká", unless we ascribe the entire disparity to the aforementioned limitations of the encoding technique, that is, the absence of appropriate fonts in the typesetting.[412] "Cernokostelecka", like the names "Husak" and "Tomas" (instead of the "correct" Czech Husák and Tomáš) from the English version of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), should not, I would say, be considered a failed, technically imperfect transcript. The point of these words, in my view, lies more in thematising the shift from a "mere" reference to a character or a spatial entity borrowed from the actual world towards the exposition of its specific textuality. "Cernokostelecka Avenue" is therefore, in a sense, a step on the way to referencing the spectrum of Prague's real-world

411 The same would be true of the other case if it had kept to the nominal analogy and used "Vinohradska Avenue" instead of "Vinohrady Avenue".

412 Even if we did, the question might still arise as to why the new editions do not have the accent, as they could have been edited hand in hand with other authorial interventions that were made in the text, especially the replacement of the recurring name "Karel Gott" with "Karel Klos", which is used to refer to the novel's character embodying the role of the "idiot of music" (in the English editions, this change comes only in Asher's translation, i.e. from 1996).

413 Sometimes, of course, it may also happen that an appropriated term, in its new territory, spreads beyond a specific conceptual area – a good example is the popularity of the term *narativ* in contemporary Czech journalistic and political discourse.

streets and topography, but it is an incomplete step, interrupted (or bracketed) by the absence of the appropriate diacritics, which makes the street name a pseudo-referential entity since, in the diacritic-less version, no such entity occurs in the actual world, just as there was never a president named "Husak". I give the example of the character "Tomas" because here the element of textuality comes to the fore most conspicuously when we are trying to land on the appropriate pronunciation: should we treat the assumed diacritical marks "as if they were there", or should the pronunciation also respect the specific nominal form, characterised as it is by the absence of diacritics?

The above examples, I think, provide a host of productive analogies in the domain of literary theory terminology. Examples in the vein of "Husak" or "Cernokostelecka" are cut from the same cloth as terms like Derrida's *différance*, i.e. a neographism, which is meant to express the priority of writing over speech and which is not translatable into oral form, or, rather, its uniqueness is completely lost there (just as the written, textual form of the names we have discussed is lost if we add the absent diacritics when pronouncing them, because how else should we pronounce them but "properly" and "normally"). I believe that this example also highlights a case where certain appropriated terms also contain, in their original linguistic and cultural context, an analogically outlined, half-open, yet simultaneously somehow bracketed reference to their non-conceptual use – for instance, the term *discours* in Francophone territory and the term *plot* in both the Francophone and Anglophone domains. This rootedness of a concept in the sphere of non-conceptual common language is again suppressed and eliminated by appropriative transfer, even though the notional conceptualisation in the original environment takes into account and works with this rootedness.[413]

It transpires that gradually changing what a term denotes within the framework of expert discourse is much more productive than ostentatiously declaring a shift in meaning by changing the term,[414] analogous to the example

[414] This is also true when the chosen translation equivalent undergoes a loosening of meaning in the new context and is subject to semantic shifts resulting from the non-conceptual content of the term already existing in the language in question. An example of this is the term *ozvláštnění*, chosen as the equivalent of the Russian formalist concept of *ostranenie* (остранение) in the Czech translation of Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose* (Teorie prózy; 1933). The Czech version, in its non-conceptual, intuitive use, acquires the meaning of a kind of ornamentalisation, a kind of embellishment, and the original conceptual meaning of "to make something common unfamiliar" (i.e. to "alienate" from ordinary perception) is lost here. It seems that it is still preferable to accentuate the original conceptual meaning rather than propose, after years of use, a new term that would perhaps better convey that conceptual meaning.

of the substitution of the proper name Gott with Klos in Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Paradoxically, for those familiar with the previous version, this change appears to be significantly more loaded in meaning (as there is a marked aspect of revision, of rewriting) than for those who encounter the non-referential name Klos in the newer version without knowing the previous one; similarly, all other edits Milan Kundera made in this novel compared to the original Czech edition from Toronto are perceived with hypersensitivity.

Conclusion

One can only agree with Kathleen Ashley and Véronique Plesch's assertion that appropriation is always a certain reconfiguration of originality. The appropriative transfer of theoretical concepts should be thought of as processes that are motivated; as these authors state, they are processes by which we gain a certain power over something. When we think this thesis through, we realise that this is power over both the original context (I am selecting and choosing this out of all the possible things in the sphere to which I have access and in which I have a choice) and the context into which the concept has been parachuted (I am now the one undertaking and directing this exercise in implantation and I am doing so with a purpose). At a time when literary theory was building its projects on the assumption of the integrity, systematicity, and careful horizontal and vertical hierarchy of the various concepts in use, the appropriation of a concept could have been viewed as a need to fill in a manifestly missing piece. In an era when the discourse of literary theory has had to abandon similar assumptions of comprehensiveness, such a move no longer carries the ethos that a gap needs to be filled and instead becomes much more serving of the self ("self-serving" is turned on its head here to convey the elimination of the negative connotations of the term). The appropriation of concepts in contemporary literary scholarship is more like a ritual ostentatiously accentuating something, thereby sidelining or excluding everything else.

Appropriated concepts, generally speaking, mean something different in the context into which they are introduced. Their use is predicated on a different contextual setting and presupposes a different type of creative use than the use of the concept in its original context: "appropriation in its play of improvisation generates new meanings for a new context." [415] This

[415] Ashley and Plesch, "The Cultural Processes of 'Appropriation'", p. 6.

is not a one-off "translation" taking place at a particular time and offering a stabilised result; rather, as Nelson's above example of the quadriga shows, it is a phenomenon with persistent continuity: the appropriated concept's belongingness to a particular temporal and spatial domain is never completely severed. Yet at the same time, the act of appropriation should have sufficient force to allow the new concept to function autonomously: when fictional worlds theories "borrow" the concept of possible worlds from the realm of philosophy and modal logic and reshape it into a concept of fictional worlds, where, however, the initial notion of a possible world still plays a significant argumentative role, these theories should be able to develop it in a way that will appear unacceptable and inappropriate or completely misleading and erroneous in the original realm. This evolution is unfolding in a different discursive field using different argumentative techniques, but above all in pursuit of a completely different purpose than is necessarily the case in the original territory. This is one reason why it seems useful to disabuse ourselves of the notion that something is disseminated through the influence and acceptance of the idea of appropriative acts; the urge to supervise something that – now seen in the hands of others – may seem like a dangerous toy to the original "owners" is lost. Appropriating is not borrowing; it is not incumbent on the appropriator of a conceptual term to return it – sooner or later, but certainly at some point – in its original and intact state. The right of appropriation is created – and repaid – by the very willingness and determination to make the appropriative transfer. Just as with a translator it stems from a determination and willingness to render the best possible translation of the chosen text, yet this in no way guarantees that the resultant translation can be transferred back to the original if the original is lost.

Post-analysts, Neopragmatists and Jacques Derrida: Initiations for Literary Theory

VLADIMÍR PAPOUŠEK

Derrida's thinking became established in literary studies mainly through an American derivative, the Yale School, i.e. through deconstruction. As a result, Derrida is usually read via a sort of "extract" tailored to the requirements of deconstructionists, each having leached from Derrida only what he absolutely needed for his own purposes. There is nothing unnatural about this, and in a way it simply confirms what the French philosopher meant by *différance* and *dissemination*. On the other hand, one cannot help suspecting that these subjective intentional acts of reading have obscured many facets of Derrida's ideas that could have been productive for literary studies, but have been lost in deconstructionist aberrations that quite naturally condense his thinking through the "blindness and insight" effect.[416]

Indeed, virtually each of the well-known members of the Yale School moved ever further away from Derrida's thought constructions, or, rather, increasingly felt less of a need to study and read Derrida. While Paul de Man, whose work we recall above, makes very productive use of Derrida's initiations in *Blindness and Insight* (1971) and *Allegories of Reading* (1979), Geoffrey Hartman and J. Hillis Miller – not to mention Harold Bloom – represent such radical aberrations that Derrida's original inspirations can barely be made out any longer. Hartman's desire for critical writing that is aesthetically consistent with the work being interpreted, Miller's unreadability, and Bloom's obsession with finding the "origin" or "the enginery of birth and creation" do not particularly accord with what Jacques Derrida thought and wrote about. The philosophers'argument that literary scholarship uses him

[416] See de Man, *Blindness and Insight*.

merely as a vehicle for the creation of new mechanisms of interpretation is more or less valid. On the other hand, philosophers also call for Derrida to be excommunicated from philosophy because he does not play by the rules of the game, that is, the traditional discourse which philosophers have established throughout history, and which in itself is a source of irony; take Ladislav Klíma, for example, who points out that the teachers of philosophy are many but the philosophers none. Klíma was referring specifically to the Czech landscape, but in certain respects his remark can also be read as a universal observation. As adherence to traditional rules engenders repetition, but not productive thinking, it comes as no surprise that many original philosophers were from the ranks of thinkers outside that traditional convention (Gödel, Wittgenstein, Husserl, Frege, Kuhn, and a host of others). Derrida would thus appear to be someone who thinks, provokes with his thinking, but belongs nowhere. He is much talked about and often remembered, adored, excommunicated, or condemned, without perhaps in many cases being studied in depth. I myself witnessed a bizarre scene in which a would-be professor delivered a lecture referring to Derrida's work as unacceptable and damnable (he was a theologian), only for it to transpire in the ensuing discussion that he had read nothing by him and knew nothing of him other than his name. His sole inspiration was some sort of metalanguage whispered in the corners of public spacetime.

The question therefore arises as to whether these scattered facets of possible new initiations could be retrieved if we were to part with the traditional redirection of Derrida's thinking towards literature and literary theory through the paths of deconstruction. There must be a way of embarking on a fundamental new reading of Derrida and of playing a game of new discoveries in a situation where the author of the original concepts can no longer defend himself with contemporary polemics or discussion. It would be peculiar, however, to pass over what has been said in those contemporary discussions, and it would be an egregious loss, too, since it is precisely the unease that Derrida's thinking fomented that makes it possible to study the plethora of textual traces that have been left far beyond the discussions of deconstructionists. Derrida stirred particular excitement among Anglo-Saxon rationalists, analytic and post-analytic philosophers, and naturalistic and realistic neopragmatists, that latter often sharing inspirations and parts of vocabularies with post-analytic philosophers since the boundary between pragmatism and analytic or post-analytic philosophy is very loose and differs more in the mode of argument than in the underlying rationalistic principles.

In the passages that follow, then, we will concern ourselves with debates and clashes, as well as a search for commonalities, between Derrida and post-analytic thought, especially that of Donald Davidson and his followers,

and among neopragmatists such as Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam. In the course of this analysis, we will try to answer the question as to whether new possibilities and premises for literary studies can be found in this domain of contemporary speech. We will focus on readings of Derrida in the work of the realist Putnam, on interpretations of the followers of Davidson and his relationship to Derrida, and, finally, on the debate between neopragmatists and deconstruction, in which Rorty and Derrida were key participants.

Hilary Putnam: irrealism and deconstruction

In "Irrealism and Deconstruction", one of the chapters of *Renewing Philosophy* (1992), Putnam, as the leading exponent of neopragmatism and a defender of realism, which is intended to withstand relativising theories that originated, in particular, in the thinking of Jacques Derrida, discusses the philosophical concepts devised by the French philosopher and compares them with the ideas expressed by Nelson Goodman in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978). One of Putnam's long-running concerns in his work was the question of the identification of the physical world, the identification of objects and their relationship to speech. He sides with logical analysis, which guarantees the possibility of rectifying the experience of an individual with the experience of another individual so that a probable or true version of the state of affairs in the physical world can emerge. As a mathematician by original training, Putnam is aware of the disjuncture between the existence of objects such as mountains, rivers, stars, and the ways in which they are conceptualised. Take, for example, the existence of "scientific objects" – an astrophysicist will use the term "star" or "constellation" differently from a poet or any lay observer.

His defence of the possibility for subjects to describe the real world, however much one statement may differ from another, brings him close, in a way, to Searle's theory of "brute facts". In his consideration of Goodman's ideas, Putnam concentrates in particular on Goodman's verdict that, when statements vary, they also give rise to varying versions of the same world.[417] Putnam counters this by arguing that different types of statements can describe the same state of affairs: "The whole point of what I just said is that very *different* sentences can describe the very same state of affairs."[418]

[417] Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, p. 110.
[418] Ibid., p. 117.

In response to Goodman's rhetorical question "Can you tell me something we didn't make?", Putnam observes that "we didn't make Sirius a star".[419] On the other hand, however much he rejects the possibility that different physical systems could exist in Goodman's two different worlds, Putnam acknowledges that Goodman does not dispute the existence of states of truth in his work.[420]

Putnam defends the right of logical inquiry to describe the physical world and challenges Goodman's relativism, which he seems to see as less harmful than Derrida's philosophical system, his point of departure here being the belief that the speech that is the focus of Derrida's inquiry cannot be split into two parts, one part describing the world and the other describing our conceptual descriptions. We cannot, Putnam asserts, describe the world without describing it.

Putnam views Derrida's thinking as both an attack on realism and a call for philosophical irresponsibility, which can have extremely negative consequences in society. Putnam's entire book is thematically oriented, as its title suggests, towards an attempt at restoring philosophy to its social prestige and importance in describing the states of the world, which undoubtedly implies a return to a certain tradition of discourse. And tradition is precisely the aspect that Derrida is always prodding in his writing as something that is translated from the past into the present and engineers a claim to power over the present.

Putnam attempts to salvage the idea of the real world represented by language and levels the accusation at Derrida that any attempt to reach an external world through an idea means a return to what he (Derrida) calls "the metaphysics of presence".[421] Putnam's understanding of Derrida seems to be that, as far as Derrida is concerned, there is no way to describe actual states of the external world, or, rather, there is no way to describe them except by means of a "metaphysical image of the present", which must necessarily be false, since the present is inexpressible in its volatility and movement. Put simply, it would be impossible for me to tell someone standing next to me and looking in the same direction as me at the same time as me that I can see, for example, a mountain called Sněžka. I believe that Putnam seriously misrepresents Derrida's point about "the metaphysics of presence" because Derrida never explored, nor was he interested in, situations of naturalistic

[419] Ibid., p. 114.
[420] Ibid., p. 120.
[421] See Putnam, *Pragmatism*, p. 20.

observation, the rectification of observation, or collateral information on reality; rather, he discusses text and writing, which we know Putnam himself is well aware of because of his remark "in Derrida's hands (or perhaps I should say 'in Derrida's pen', given Derrida's relentless emphasis on *writing*)".[422]

After all, European metaphysics is not based on the identification of real objects in the external world, but on an attempt to codify this external world through writing. And it is this possibility that Derrida attacks when he points to the sign indicating the absent more than the present, or the diffusion of meanings in the written constructs of the human world. Putnam seems to want to make Derrida responsible for the disavowal, diffusion, and fluidity of the physical world *per se*, but the French philosopher does no such thing. He discusses how historically, through inscription and written texts, certain beliefs about the properties of reality, the properties of the external world, are solidified, and shows them to be false beliefs because they are based on settled final states that are ideas, not reality. Every child, upon being taught the rudiments of celestial bodies at school, imagines the Earth as a sphere and Saturn and Uranus as similarly solid spheres, but none of this coincides with reality. The pictures in atlases or on the internet are deceptive, representing objects that do not exist in the way, inscribed on a picture or map, they enter our imaginations. In reality, the Earth resembles a lumpy potato; Saturn may have rings, but they are more gaseous than solid; Pluto may not be a planet at all, despite what has been inscribed in our memories, and so on. It is this "inscription" that Derrida, I believe, has in mind. It is not a matter of denying or establishing an external world, of identifying particulars, or of having some shared knowledge of the external world, the absence of which would mean that two observers looking at the same object would never reach any agreement. The existence of an external object is not dependent on one observer calling it a mountain and another a cat, for example. If, to those differing observers, we add others who agree that they see a mountain, then the one who calling it a cat will be declared a fool or a crank, although it cannot be entirely ruled out that someone claiming something quite extreme and inconsistent with the experience of the others (for instance, that the mountain is holy and gives off a special aura) will not ultimately persuade the others to share his vision. But this is precisely what Derrida does not address; he is not concerned with reference. If we were to stick to our game of observing a mountain, Derrida joins the game at precisely the moment that the mountain inscribes itself in text, as something firmly embedded

[422] Ibid.

in the system of signs constituting the image of the world, because this firmness inscribed in the system affects any further reference, any further observation of the mountain that is subsequently inscribed and constitutes the metaphysics of the mountain, as something always present right here and now. In my view, for Derrida this is a process where the inscribed is read, and this act of reading never constitutes the presentiation of signs, however much such an illusion may be created by the act when it is in progress. If, for example, a judge cites the law under which he is passing a sentence, then the judge's speech is not a realisation of the law he is reading, but the judge's interpretation of what is written in support of his current action, and this interpretation can be challenged and reinterpreted on appeal. In other words, Derrida is showing the openness of the sign world and that any possibility of justification sought in written texts is illusory and false.

Putnam believes there is a problem in the fact, as he sees it, that Derrida considers the notions of "justification", "good reason", and "warrant" as sources of repression, and this, Putnam postures, is dangerous territory for extremism.[423] Putnam interprets Derrida's thinking as the radical opposite to pragmatism, where the tradition is, let's say, "compositional", that is, based on a certain openness of negotiation and consensus within the community, a democratic tradition associated in particular with John Dewey. Derrida, on the other hand, is portrayed as representing disintegration, scepticism, and disbelief in anything. It looks like Putnam is keen to see him as someone who dismantles any belief in the possibility of consensus on the external world, and at the same time as an exponent of the ultra-left who razes trust in democratic systems. In doing so, he uses Derrida's thinking, or writing, ideologically rather than engaging with it in depth. The fact that, in Putnam's texts, there are only a handful references to a relatively small number of Derrida's works is a testament to this.[424] The image of Derrida's disruptive influence seems, then, to have arisen more out of a certain broader discursive milieu and also out of a need to create an image of opposition to defend one's own positions, that is, the intention to revitalise philosophy, to restore its respect, and to defend pragmatism as a domain of common sense and democratism.

In "Irrealism and Deconstruction", the study cited above, Putnam discusses Derrida's relation to Saussure and his observation that the phonemes of one language are part of a specific system of differences that does not corre-

423 Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, p. 132.

424 Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the author is ignorant of other works; he just doesn't operate with them, and that in itself cannot but attract attention.

spond to the system of differences of another language. Putnam argues that when Derrida uses Saussure he is committing the same error as the analytic philosopher Jerry Fodor, namely "that sameness of meaning makes strict sense only in the impossible case in which the two languages or texts in question are *isomorphic*."[425] Hence, according to Putnam, Derrida's radical "doctrine" (as Putnam puts it),[426] which draws on Saussure's belief in the incommensurability of languages on the one hand, and resembles Nelson Goodman's irrealism on the other.

Putnam knows full well and acknowledges that Derrida's ideas predate Goodman's, yet makes that comparison anyway. The "doctrine of incommensurability" would seem not to matter so much here. Putnam, in his study, goes on to express some sympathy for Goodman's irrealism because he represents a thinker who, despite his conviction that there are no reflectible standards of truth about the external world, has not given up the will and hope to seek such indications. "Goodman describes himself as a 'constructionalist'; he constantly stresses the idea that the lack of pre-existing standards is a challenge to philosophers, rather than a reason for dismay."[427] The words "constructionalist" and "challenge" are what are significant in this quotation – this is precisely what is important to Putnam: a belief in the constructive building of the human world through common sense and practice, and at the same time a consciousness of the belief in that action. Insofar as Putnam discusses the incommensurability of languages, he is arguing that there can be a reasonable consensus on meaning when translating from one language to another, whereas in Derrida he sees the absolute negation of such a possibility. He gives Derrida credit for pointing out the collapse of a philosophical tradition, but he also shows that this collapse does not mean the collapse of the human possibility of describing the external world. He also draws attention to Derrida's followers (without naming them) who interpret logical standards as repression.[428] In doing so, he is paving the way for his final judgement in which he accuses Derrida of philosophical irresponsibility that causes irreparable damage in society.[429]

I feel that, in Putnam, Derrida is drawn into a political game in which his argument relating to presence and absence, to the movement and dispersion of signs, is entirely ignored. On the one hand, he is called an irrealist, no matter

[425] Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, p. 127.
[426] Ibid., p. 128.
[427] Ibid., p. 129.
[428] Ibid., p. 130.
[429] *Cf.* ibid., pp. 132–133.

that his thinking primarily concerns the world of signs, the system of their differences, and metaphorics, and that relations to the identification of the external world of objects and events can only be read secondarily, through interpretations that, as history shows, are extremely diverse. Derrida cautions against the illusion that there is a possibility of closing and ending the game of differences, but he does not deny the existence of Mount Everest. The discursive milieu of the French left from which Derrida emerged is perhaps more important for Putnam. Yet Derrida was never an activist philosopher like Jean-Paul Sartre, mixing analytical observation and logic with ideology. His writing is much purer in this respect. In my view, the main fallacy of Putnam's reading of Derrida is that he is too intent on finding a distinct opposition to logic, realism, and rationality, to pragmatism. Derrida may serve that purpose, but this obscures the very possibility of realism itself, because instead of rational inquiry, Putnam's reading in this case, not elsewhere, is shot down by an ideology that never clarifies anything.

Derrida and Davidson: an interpretation of Samuel C. Wheeler III

Donald Davidson's followers have paid considerable attention to Jacques Derrida's thinking, and the relationship is not defined here in the strictly dismissive way that it is by Hilary Putnam. The most prominent figure in this respect is Samuel C. Wheeler III, professor of philosophy at the University of Connecticut, who has attempted to find overlaps between analytic or post-analytic philosophy and the arguments raised by Derrida.

In "Indeterminacy of French Interpretation: Derrida and Davidson", he pointedly declares his effort to seek a relationship between Davidson's concepts of radical interpretation and Derrida's arguments about the impossibility of the precise identification of meanings: "I show how a line of thought of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida is a version of the thesis of indeterminacy of radical interpretation as purified by Davidson."[430] The premise of his line of reasoning could not be plainer. Davidson, in his elaboration of Willard Van Orman Quine's concept of radical translation, concludes that, in the face of any meaningful utterance, we are always in a situation of radical interpretation, that is, in a situation of our own field of meaning, of determining the content of what is presented to us, and this aspect of inde-

[430] Wheeler, "Indeterminacy of French Interpretation: Derrida and Davidson", p. 477.

terminacy is then related to the thinking of Jacques Derrida. Wheeler, in his essay, forges a link between the premises of Derrida's theory and Saussure. In particular, he focuses on the idea of the arbitrariness of the sign, which always requires an interpretation or supplementation that does not interpret itself. He then goes on to suggest that signs are identifiable within a particular system as a set of distinctions. Derrida, Wheeler says, transforms Saussure by starting from a system of signs that can be identified in some way, that is, that are repetitiously repeated, which is only possible with what is written. It is here that the illusion of presence, iterability, and sameness arises. The sign represents something that is not fully present and at the same time, as it were, presentiates itself in the present written text. Here Wheeler's argument is term-based. But no sign, or token, as a guarantee of presence will guarantee the relevance of what the token is supposed to guarantee, that is, every token is a basis for interpretation. If the text can be understood, then the "token" in Wheeler's rendering is something more like a certain type of utterance, or a sign of representation, not just, say, a phoneme. "From this point of view the iterability of representations, their status as tokens of given types, is a feature that cannot be completely present." [431]

Wheeler thus bridges the gaps between Davidson's and Derrida's vocabulary. Whereas Quine and Davidson, steeped in the tradition of analytic philosophy, usually consider the utterance, i.e. the speech act, Derrida's vocabulary is much looser in this respect, and, moreover, Derrida does not refer to speech as a primacy, but always as a copied text in which alone one might speak of iteration, persistence, or the illusion of sameness. Both Davidson and Quine, building on Austin, speak of the action of speech in a particular situation; whether this be the classic description of the field linguist, the native and the opportunity to translate an unfamiliar language through a real situation, or Davidson's story about Mrs Malaprop, it is always an expression of the natural situation of living speech. Derrida's strategy is quite different because his terms are presence, absence, the metaphysical illusion of presence through the present sign. Derrida's universe appears in his vocabulary as a movement, a summoning, a passing, a referencing of the erosion of the inner and the outer, an erosion of the distance of subject-object perception. In analytic philosophy, the element of distance is always maintained, not least because the original starting point was logic, which does not address anything other than the formal truth or falsity of a statement. Hence Austin's project on the truth or falsity of speech acts. The performative is confirmed

[431] Ibid., p. 483.

in a real situation by witnesses; subsequently, illocutions are statements that will or will not have a consequence – a perlocution. If this project is to be workable, a real situation and the distance present in it, conducive to a judgement about the nature of any given speech act, are needed. Derrida's concept is aimed at describing a complex illusion emerging in European civilisation's history of writing and, associated with this, the emergence of a metaphysical tradition shaping European philosophy. American pragmatism did not experience this tradition, and the thinking of American analytic philosophers is in some ways closer to pragmatism than to what emerges in European thought, however European in origin analytic philosophy may be. This closeness lies in empirical argumentation, in the embedding of concepts into the real backdrop of the external world, whereas Derrida's vocabulary deconstructs the European metaphysical tradition by metaphysical means. At this point, doubts might be raised about the productivity of what Wheeler is attempting to do, given the significant incommensurability of vocabularies and strategies, and thus the plausibility of the whole attempt.

On the other hand, Wheeler's strategy is understandable – he needs to establish a common starting point, and for him this is the situation of interpretation, which in both Derrida and Davidson must always be based on the indeterminacy of meanings. However, a comparison between Davidson's radical interpretation and Derrida's idea that no word-sign can be present in the fullness of meaning, leading to the *différance* and *dissemination* of signs, runs into the same problem. The concept of radical interpretation, I believe, is that a certain speech is made by a certain person with the intention of achieving something, and this is only possible when it is made in the presence of some other person or persons. This is supported by Davidson's theory of triangulation, which is concerned with the relationship of the speaker to the recipient and their experience of both speech and external reality. If we are not wrong, then Davidson must always have in mind something like an action taking place in a particular time and space, that is, some "presence", or some "once-presence", or fictive presence in which the act of speech and of its effect or, conversely, the act of its disappearance, depending on the strength or weakness of the act, has taken place. And, thanks to radical interpretation, it is shown that there is nothing in this action that is not subject to interpretation, because what is said and how it is said succumb to indeterminacy. Similarly, even if one considers an act that has a written form – for example, a law, command or decree that someone quotes – it is still, I think, in Davidson, and also in Quine, an act in which something happens, in which what is said or written works towards some effect or reveals its emptiness and weakness. The point is that, for example, the effect of a law that it is forbidden to ride a horse into a bar differs depending on the

particular time and particular community; cited in 21st-century Europe it will come across as empty and weak, but it will also point to some past situation that cannot be made present. I see a fundamental difference between Davidson and Derrida here, because Derrida starts from the general attribute of a written sign that can never reach fullness, and any presentiation of it shows that *différance*. Davidson does not address movement in time or history, or over long periods of time. His time is the time of the action of speech and the consequence, i.e. metaphorically speaking a short time, whereas Derrida is describing something that arises within long-developing beliefs in historical time and forms a tradition defined by the relation of speech and writing, whereby what is written is considered the saturation of what was originally spoken, and a constant is created that, here, acts as a matrix of sorts for all the actions deriving from that relation of speech and writing. This matrix or paradigm shapes the mechanics of any particular action in which language, speech, and writing are considered. That Derrida reverses the situation and questions the primacy of speech over writing, while at the same time showing the indeterminacy of the meanings of written text, or rather their indeterminacy and permanent movement, destroys their apparent guarantee relying on their illusory permanence. The whole process then allows a hidden paradigm or hidden matrix that is seemingly invisible to emerge, but in doing so it fatally determines all the actions of speech and writing within a certain tradition.

Samuel C. Wheeler III is convinced that, through the basis of interpretation and the consensus between Davidson and Derrida on their belief in the indeterminacy of words and sentences, he has found a commonality between them and ultimately calls Derrida a "fellow-traveler with Davidson's views of interpretation."[432] As aware as Wheeler is of the differences between Davidson and Derrida, he would like to see them as two riders galloping in the same direction. But I think Wheeler's argument, however sophisticated, is not entirely convincing. Any convergence between Davidson and Derrida seems to me to be very fleeting, and they don't really need each other for anything. It is not just a matter of the difference in their vocabularies, but primarily the difference in what they look at and how they talk about it. Whereas Davidson is an empiricist who works with the sign, the word, the speech act, as something that affects the external world in a particular action and is produced by particular speakers and their deeds, Derrida is impersonal, he is not interested in the individual speech act and its effect, he is interested

[432] Wheeler, "Indeterminacy of French Interpretation: Derrida and Davidson", p. 494.

in what speech, writing, a sign on a "big screen", does in space and historical time, what it shapes as an instrument, a power mechanism, which then acts as an invisible mandator in a particular speech and at a particular time, not as a deity, of course, but as a mechanism ensuing from the nature of the signs that are of man's own making.

In "Truth Conditions, Rhetoric and Logical Form: Davidson and Deconstruction", Wheeler takes the comparison of Derrida's and Davidson's thought, or rather two distinct traditions of discourse – the analytic and poststructuralist European traditions – further, and his emphasis on the comparison of the means of logic underlying the analytic tradition and rhetoric yields a number of significant findings. In particular, the use of simple paradigms in determining meaning, as is typical of analytic philosophers (for example, the old favourite "The cat is on the mat"[433]), ultimately leads analytic philosophers to conclude that rhetorical aspects are at play alongside the logical form, which, Wheeler argues, shows how this school of thought, especially in the work of Davidson, arrives at the same conclusions as both Derrida[434] and his followers. Wheeler draws particular attention to Paul de Man's *Allegories of Reading*.[435]

Wheeler claims that "Logical properties are really successors of *logoi*, or Forms, which lie behind the words and which the words express."[436] *Logoi* (from *logos*) are related to the magic of speech and cannot be misinterpreted; they are simple truths in themselves,[437] as Wheeler states. This means that *logoi* take the form of both a sign and an object existing in the external world. A belief in mathematical forms as entities of the universe is part of the tradition of mathematics and philosophy, Leibniz's *Theodicy* and theory of monads being an obvious example. Wheeler then turns his attention to Aristotle, which is quite understandable considering that belief in the existence of pure forms is traditionally associated primarily with Plato. He recalls that it is in Aristotle, though anti-essentialists have neglected him, that we can find an emphasis on the fact that "there must be a distinction between features the object must have to continue to be itself and features the object could lose and still exist."[438] It is this duality, the distinction between a physical

[433] Wheeler, "Truth Conditions, Rhetoric, and Logical Form: Davidson and Deconstruction", p. 145. The same example is used, for instance, by John Searle.
[434] The notes refer to the first part of *Of Grammatology*.
[435] Wheeler, "Truth Conditions, Rhetoric, and Logical Form: Davidson and Deconstruction", p. 157.
[436] Ibid., p. 146.
[437] Ibid., p. 147.
[438] Ibid., p. 148.

entity in the external world and a feature of something that is not there, however much it may exist, that Wheeler believes is an argument to reject *logoi* as a fundament of magical speech, as represented by Derrida in his thinking; both Quine and Davidson arrive at a similar rejection through their study of logical forms. In speech and writing, then, logic and rhetoric form a dialectical dynamic – not a binarity, but a movement where the isolation of the individual parts ceases to make sense because it is part of a permanent movement. According to Wheeler, for both Quine, Davidson, and Derrida, words are nothing but words, marks, and every mark is subject to interpretation.[439] " So there is no separating the logical connections and features from the rhetorical connections and features." [440] In Davidson, he points to the use of rhetorical devices in the notions of force, mood, and convention.[441]

While it is clear to Wheeler that Derrida does not address logical forms, he again draws attention to him through deconstruction – specifically, again, through Paul de Man, who, in his chapter on Rousseau in *Allegories of Reading*, highlights situations where figurative language, metaphor, becomes assertion, and points to the "undecidability" of whether to assign the content of speech to rhetorical or logical relations.[442] This underlines again how useful it is for Wheeler to draw on a deconstructive reading of, for example, de Man rather than on the rhetoric of Derrida himself, because here it would be difficult to demonstrate any relationship between logical forms and rhetoric. On the other hand, Wheeler's reference to the relationship of logic, magical speech, with *logoi* and rhetoric is significant and helps to understand the sources and origins of a particular tradition. Equally significant is the attention he pays to Aristotle's search for a relationship between the present and absent object, in which a basis is formed for the negation of magical speech and *logoi*, as something present in external reality, in immutability and persistence. Wheeler, referencing Davidson, shows how every speech act is dependent on the situation in which it is uttered, and its force or truthfulness is dependent on the determination of the truth conditions in the situation in which it is made. In other words, as noted above, rhetorical and logical devices cannot be separated. "There are no *logoi* behind logic. In a way, logical and rhetorical connections are both patterns in the behavior or inner causal workings of organisms in an environment." [443]

[439] Ibid., p. 149.
[440] Ibid.
[441] Ibid.
[442] Ibid., p. 150.
[443] Ibid., p. 155.

Wheeler's analysis seems to be fully in the tradition of analytic and post-analytic philosophy, and the only point at which we might say there is any consensus with Derrida is when he contends that no *logoi* lurk behind logic. Derrida does not explore logical tools, but his study of the logocentrism born of the sanctity of writing and the permanence of the sign, a logocentrism that constitutes a matrix that has long been historically insurmountable, a paradigm that dominates culture, arrives at much the same conclusion reached by Davidson's inquiry into the truth values of the sentence and the speech act. We have already noted that Wheeler is aware of the differences between Davidson and Derrida. As he observes, Davidson, Wittgenstein, and Quine stand on one side and Derrida and Heidegger on the other,[444] but, from these different sides and different types of tradition and vocabularies, they reach the same conclusion.

Although Wheeler's use of Derrida seems to be rather proclamatory, based on the well-known implications of his thinking, and does not explore him in any depth, his determination of contingences and distances is more productive than that of the whole American school of deconstruction, perhaps with the exception of Paul de Man, if only because Wheeler and other followers of Davidson start from an examination of the source – the sign, the question of meaning, the question of the speech act – whereas deconstructionists like Hartman and Miller have latched on to the search for differences and contradictions in the text as precisely the kind of universal tool that eventually turns into dogma. This meant that certain aspects of deconstruction were repeated over and over again as a kind of mantra, while at the same time moving from the position of a scientific analytical tool to a more ideological or political one, or resurgent types of theology coalesced – witness Bloom and his leaning towards Kabbalah and Gnosticism, Hartman and his belief in a new aesthetics of the critical text, and Miller and his tendency towards ethical aspects and his rather religious-sounding conviction of the unreadability of the text in general.

On the other hand, there is the crisis of analytic philosophy that occurs at the moment absolute faith is placed in logic and mathematics, when these tools are assigned the role of *logoi*, and it turns out that the way to gain access to fully correct thinking through these tools, as posited by the members of the Vienna Circle, led down a new path – guided by the thinking of Quine and Davidson – on which the search for metaphysical truth was replaced by a search for truth values arising between the speech of a certain speaker, the

[444] Ibid., p. 156.

recipient, and the situation in which the action takes place, which in itself precludes any path other than the search for relations in a given context, while, as Wheeler shows, logic cannot be separated from rhetoric. What is said in meaningful sentences carries various possible implications of meaning, which are evaluated logically by the recipient of speech and the producer according to the given situation. If I claim to be an excellent skier, even though I don't ski at all, it could of course be assumed that if I made my claim while I was on skis and standing on a hill (which is more than unlikely) someone might say "prove it", and the truth value of my statement would become evident very quickly. But it would be much more likely for me to assert my claim in, say, a café somewhere, and here the recipient will need to assess whether I am being ironic, which may be apparent from the context, or lying, for which they would need to know something about me. Either way, the statement itself conveys nothing more than a few words strung together into a syntactically meaningful whole, but otherwise means nothing. It is only when logical tools are put to work on the statement and the circumstances that anything can be inferred. For example, a person in such decrepit and unathletic shape is hardly going to be an accomplished skier.

Similarly, in the context of literary scholarship, or rather the interpretation of literary texts and the evaluation of the processes that occur in relation to movements in discursive formation and in the institution of literature, this integration of rhetoric and logic, together with Davidson's triangulation, appears to be a more productive tool than deconstruction itself, as conceived by the aforementioned American deconstructionists and, especially, their followers. The one-sided focus on the search for alterities, disorders, and aporias largely dislodged more complex ways of looking at the text and the literary processes that accompany it.

Speech acts in literature manifest themselves as actions within the text, but also actions outside the text, such as reading and then subsequently speaking and writing about the text, and making judgements; these are acts of varying force – authoritative interpretations, censorial interventions, bans, marginalisations, adorations, challenges, and warnings. Logical tools make it possible to assign a speech act within a specific action and the context thereof. Thus the sentence "Yes, it was me" has a different force of utterance depending on whether it is confessed in a criminal investigation or is a sentence in a crime novel. The sentence itself is neither fiction nor non-fiction, but can only be assigned a certain truth value once the context is known. Even here, the reader of a crime novel cannot rely solely on the assigned situation – that is, he is reading a novel, but he still has to decide whether the speaker is really admitting to something within the story, or merely, in a fit of emotion, taking responsibility for something he has not done, or lying, or being ironic to the investigator, and so on.

For example, the character of Mr Povondra in Čapek's novel *War with the Newts* takes the blame for the global catastrophe caused by the breeding and exploitation of newts because it was he who opened the door to the man who had discovered the newts, paving the way for him to meet the industrialist who would find a way to exploit them. What we have here, then, is a gesture expressed through a speech act; it is clear that Mr Povondra exemplifies the degree of carnage affecting even the most ordinary of individuals, which is what he represents, but that the blame cannot be heaped on Mr Povondra. Logical tools may make it possible to rectify the nature of a sentence in a given situation, but they are unable to disabuse a given statement of its indeterminacy of meaning. Logic meets rhetoric. The point is not at all whether or not Povondra's rhetoric is pertinent entirely and solely to the novel, that is, whether it is pertinent to "fiction" and nothing else, because it will always refer to what is not present, what cannot be defined in all contexts, i.e. to the entirety of the expression of someone hounded by the existential presence of destruction. When Čapek was writing his story and created Mr Povondra – his sense of responsibility and anxiety – he surely had in mind more than a catastrophe and its consequences within a closed fictional story. Mr Povondra's speech is directed into and out of the text. The indeterminacy of outside and inside that Derrida speaks of is very much in evidence here. The undecidability arrived at by Davidson and his disciples in their exploration of logical devices, then, really does converge on the same place charted by the French philosopher, but from a completely different pole and with a different vocabulary.

Undecidability about the truth values of a speech act, where logical devices allow for an analysis of truth only up to a point, i.e. the point where they encounter rhetoric, also calls into question theories working with definitions of "fictional worlds", or fictional discourse. The negation of subject-object perception and the negation of rigid designators of the truth of sentences (with the exception of Tarskian T-sentences) mean that all such distinctions work with the possibility of precisely determining the truth of what given discourses or given worlds contain and how to distinguish them from what they are not. Distinctions within a system are only made possible by signs, not by the worlds they designate, because if signs exhibit the properties Derrida most often speaks about, i.e. *dissemination* and *différance*, and the inquiries of Quine, Davidson, and their followers confirm this theory, then it is impossible to form metaphysical stabilities on their basis other than by a violent act of imposed belief.

Jacques Derrida begins his essay "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" with a statement by Antonin Artaud from 1948: "Dance

/ and consequently the theater / have not yet begun to exist".[445] Artaud's statement regards his reflections on the relationship between the distance of the stage and the auditorium, a stage on which cruelty is repeatedly performed. For Artaud, cruelty means something that is part of the body and cannot be transferred and repeated on stage, and therefore calls for the erasure of the stage. Derrida then develops the idea of the stage as a traditionally theological space through which divine forces were represented; Artaud excommunicates these forces from the stage with his reference to the reality of cruelty. However, the presence of the reality of true cruelty, pain, and the body challenges this representation and shows it to be a void, while the repetition of the duel of cruelty, good and evil, on stage points to the unfinishability of representation.[446] Artaud's call for the erasure of the stage and the reduction of the theatre and its entanglement with the existential self-reflection of the individual allows Derrida to demonstrate the instability of sign images striving for metaphysical validity. For him, this is just an unfinishable play of signs. Their definitive status, their absolute truth value, is indeterminable.

Vladimír Pucholt, a well-known Czech actor of the 1960s, once told a story about the director Jiří Krejčík, who, upon being stopped by the police for a trivial traffic violation, responded with a speech act that went something like this: "I am guilty, I demand the ultimate punishment, the death penalty". Was this speech act a fiction or non-fiction? Was it off-stage theatre or an impulse of expressivity belonging only to that real situation? And if this incident goes on to be told as a story and disseminated in discourse, what is it? What are its truth values? We cannot but decide that this utterance exists as a sentence (or sentences). The position between outside and inside, stage and auditorium, is completely unknowable, indeterminable.

The untapped possibilities in Derrida's thinking are perhaps pointed out more by those who belong to a completely different tradition, i.e. those in the camp of Wittgenstein, Quine, Davidson, and others. Instead of adoring prophets or dismissing devils, it is more productive to re-examine the sources – signs, words, speech, writing. Derrida's language has sometimes been characterised as incomprehensible, as if he were drawing on a reading of surrealist poets rather than classic philosophy. Like them, he is not afraid of metaphors, because metaphors confirm the indeterminable and eternal movement of signs, which he himself discusses.

[445] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 292.
[446] Ibid., p. 316.

Rorty and Derrida (deconstruction and pragmatism in debate)

Deconstruction and Pragmatism, which contains a debate on these two prominent contemporary currents in the American humanities, dominated by the views of Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida, was published in 1996. The debate draws in Simon Critchley, as a supporter of deconstruction, and Ernesto Laclau, who identifies himself as a political theorist, or perhaps a political scientist, and who acts more or less as a neutral element in the debate.

In her preface, editor Chantal Mouffe draws attention to the many controversies that both philosophers, Rorty and Derrida, have brought to current intellectual debates, with both typically linked to the political context, to the debate on democracy, and to other tenets of political public life. Here, themes that seem to permanently haunt both Rorty and Derrida, but at the same time, to no small extent, overshadow their philosophical thinking, come to the fore. It is as if both philosophers are held responsible for the consequences of their thinking, however scant the evidence showing whether the relationship between cause and effect is identifiable with them and therefore relevant or, let us say, true, that is, whether their ideas are responsible for the emotional disposition of the left-leaning western intellectuals who appropriated them in their time as oracles and bearers of truth.

Fortunately, the preface glosses over the crux of the debate, which is structured as follows. Rorty gets to speak first and explains his relationship to Derrida, then Critchley analyses how Rorty reads Derrida. Rorty responds briefly to Critchley. This is followed by Laclau's input, which is rather extemporaneous and overly general. Finally, Jacques Derrida speaks, negating some of the ways of understanding his work as described by Rorty, but most of all defining his own positions. Derrida's input can be considered the most valuable because it most accurately points out the differences between how he is generally read in the US, through American deconstruction, and what is fundamental to his thinking.

In his opening remarks in the debate, entitled "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism", Rorty begins with a defence of Derrida against conservatives who make him out to be "a frivolous and cynical despiser of common sense and traditional democratic values".[447] And whom they excommunicate from philosophy as a discipline. On the other hand, he castigates deconstructionists for believing that, in Derrida's thinking, they have found a means of determining what is really going on in literary texts, a method to unmask

[447] *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, p. 13.

authors and their books and to tell what is actually playing out behind the false front.[448] As far as Rorty is concerned, the activities of the deconstructionists have added very little to our understanding of literary texts.[449] He draws attention to Derrida's admiration for the great authors and texts to which he permanently turns in his own texts.

Rorty, characteristically, skirts around pragmatist thinking and draws on more a general basis referring to analytic tradition in order to demonstrate the point at which pragmatism and Derrida converge. Specifically, he singles out Wittgenstein and the heirs to analytic philosophy, Davidson and Quine; he employs Quine's "museum myth" to point out that these philosophers and Derrida concur in their understanding that, in the use of natural language, it is necessary to reject the notion of a relationship between an object – its meaning – and a word, to reject Fregean dualism, as the post-analysts did, and as Derrida did from a different position. As much as Rorty appreciates Derrida's early more strictly philosophical and less idiosyncratic texts,[450] he sees in them a certain expression of respect for the philosophical tradition and Derrida's need to get himself published; Rorty prefers texts like "Envois" and "Circonfession" because they seem more vivid to him. It is here, however, that he identifies a polemical aspect when he disagrees with the Levinasian strain of Derrida's assessment of ethics and politics as something culturally significant. Rorty's contrasting view is that politicians and their activities are the opposite to "cultural politicians"; they are an arena of individuals engaged in political practice. Here, he refers to Dewey, who sees politicians as those who do not do philosophy.[451]

Rorty is clearly splitting Derrida into two parts, the first of which is closer to classic philosophy, but is, as we can judge from Rorty's remarks, less interesting and less intense than the later texts, though these are criticised for abandoning the customs of the discipline and going down paths that are difficult to define. Rorty places Derrida in his theory of final vocabularies – in the types of private and public vocabulary that echo his own theory. It is as though he were confirming, in this way, some of the deconstructionists 'notions of productive "misreading" in Bloom or the transformation of theories in Miller.[452]

448 Ibid., p. 14.
449 Ibid., p. 15.
450 Ibid., p. 17.
451 Ibid.
452 See Miller, *New Starts: Performative Topographies in Literature and Criticism*. Derrida, in his response, takes issue with this division of the private and the public, as will be discussed below.

Simon Critchley, in the very title of his contribution, "Deconstruction and Pragmatism – Is Derrida a Private Ironist or a Public Liberal?", is responding to Rorty's selection of dictionaries. He begins by asking whether pragmatism is deconstructive and whether deconstruction is pragmatist.[453] He answers the first question in the affirmative, arguing that pragmatism has deconstructed all foundationalist theories (Platonism, metaphysical realism, analytic neo-Kantianism), as well as all clear disjunctions of representation between the subjective mind and external reality.[454] Similarly, he argues, deconstruction can be regarded as pragmatist, before immediately challenging this rhetoric as too superficial in his game and setting himself the aim of interrogating, in particular, Rorty's reading of Derrida's work. His focus here is precisely on Rorty's distinction between two incommensurable vocabularies, the private and the public, which are part of different language games, one private and one public. Critchley dismisses this idea as utopian. He wonders whether such a person – one possessing two different vocabularies – can even exist, using the example of immigrants to the US who have strong Christian beliefs and are also committed to social justice: their private beliefs, and their belief in social justice, constitute a vocabulary that is in no way indivisible. Critchley then goes on to challenge Rorty's thesis that gave rise to the question of two vocabularies in the first place, i.e. the thesis based on a distinction between Derrida's early and later work, where, according to Rorty, Derrida dropped the binding frameworks of theory and gave free rein to fantasy. Critchley wants to defend Derrida's position as a public thinker as well as a private figure and, as a consequence of this, the fact that "deconstruction is pragmatist, *but it is not pragmatist all the way down.*"[455]

In his reply to Critchley, Rorty agrees with Critchley that he had made too much of the difference between early and later Derrida, which he does not find so significant at the moment, and then concentrates on describing differences in the American conception of pragmatism: "A traditional difference between European and American intellectuals has been that the latter think that the moral and political decisions we face as individuals and as citizens are quite clear, and that the vocabulary in which we typically formulate them does not need extensive revision. So they are slow to recognize the relevance of philosophy to politics, and inclined to think of philosophy as something you can take or leave alone–something which need not be approached in

[453] *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, p. 19.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid., p. 37.

a spirit of moral seriousness."[456] According to Rorty, the Derridean-leaning American left is trying to make Americans more European in this regard.

As germane as most of the observations and arguments of both Rorty and Critchley are, and as accurate and succinct as they are in the context of their time and contemporary thought, the very contingency of speech, as Rorty speaks of it, and the transformation of discourse in the historical context, as Foucault speaks of it and which was rejected by Rorty at the very beginning of this debate, show the historical limitations of a discussion that is hemmed in by the epistemological horizon of contemporary knowledge and vision and that, ultimately, is in the grip of vocabularies and discursive rules. Rorty's term *vocabulary* is very hobbling in some respects. Foucault does not speak of a vocabulary – the term always implies a set of distinctions determined by the elements of that set – but, instead, of the rules of discourse, discursive formation, i.e. observation an order of magnitude higher that draws attention to the dynamics of speech shaping the essentially invisible but present rules and regularities that govern the speech of a particular society at a particular time. Rorty's reasoning begins, as he himself writes, with individuality and a practical confrontation with the problems of external reality, whereas in Foucault even this encounter is governed in advance by some set of rules, that is, rules that apply within the discursive ordering of a certain period, language, and culture.

Thus, the questions of both Rorty and Critchley, the defender of Derrida, seem to be based on a clear notion of the recognisability of what they are dealing with, without in any way querying the rules of the game, which Critchley might have studied in Foucault, and Rorty – eliminating Foucault – perhaps in Davidson. Instead, we get this rather mechanical separation of the public and the private, and at the same time a constant conflation of purely theoretical thinking and questions of morality, social justice, and the public effect of the intellectual's speech or vocabulary. In his reply to Critchley, Rorty hints at certain rules, but, as Critchley shows in his reference to Rorty's utopianism, he himself transgresses them. The discussion on pragmatism and deconstruction thus constantly stumbles between theory and thinking about the political implications and the responsibilities of theory for public space.

In my view, what has been overlooked here is the need to examine both Derrida's philosophy and pragmatism as pure theories, and I would not say that later Derrida is less philosophical or theoretical than earlier Derrida; we just need to position him differently in his own game (Rorty). Again, these

[456] Ibid., p. 47.

theories should be explored through the lens of theoretical argumentation that examines their falsifiability, and not by taking a certain theoretical concept out of one context and casting it into another, without thinking about the conditions under which it occurs and what kind of language game it is, and without the speaker's self-reflection on what role he is playing in that game. It is thus a question of what the rules of the game are and how to deal with them.

Jacques Derrida, right at the start of his final entry to the debate, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism", points out that he is speaking French, which makes him different from all the other participants in the debate, and that the question of language is essential in the debate. He draws attention to the necessity of argumentation and the exchange of arguments, albeit with everyone arguing on the basis of their own language under certain conditions and rejecting others. In other words, if Derrida can be understood, he is saying that every system of argumentation in a particular language has its own rules, which differ from the rules of argumentation in another language, thereby creating obvious differences, and therefore it is always necessary to ponder "… reconsidering the protocols and the contexts of argumentation, the questions of competence, the language of discussion, etc." [457] He suggests some similarity here to how the question of context in speech action is treated by the post-analysts, Davidson and Quine. Derrida then notes a number of overlapping motifs between pragmatism and deconstruction, and combines the words pragmatism and grammatology to coin the portmanteau "pragrammatology".

Derrida goes on to negate all binary oppositions arising from Rorty's reading – the early and later Derrida, romanticism versus naturalism, and private versus public. On the other hand, he resists the charge that he confuses literature and philosophy, or reduces philosophy to literature.[458] Making the point that the differences in this area are significant for him, he notes that "I am very attentive to the difference of space, of history, of historical rites, of logic, of rhetoric, protocols and argumentation." [459] In other words, Derrida draws attention to the differences, but he does not argue for the opposition of literature versus philosophy, something of which he stands accused by all proponents of the purity of philosophy. As a matter of fact, he defends literature as the source of what he names above as a set of differences

[457] Ibid., p. 80.
[458] Ibid., p. 81.
[459] Ibid.

"Literature is a public institution of recent invention, with a comparatively short history, governed by all sorts of conventions connected to the evolution of law, which allows, in principle, anything to be said."[460]

I believe that this mode of argumentation is characteristic of Derrida – we see how he reverses the proposed opposition and shows how one cannot simply separate literature from philosophy in some distinctive metaphysical observation of the inner turning into the outer, and by the same token philosophy is contained in speech and a source of speech is in literature, along with a host of historical distinctions and differences.

At the same time, he uses this example to demonstrate the irrelevance of all the binary oppositions that have been discussed, an attempt to identify private ironists and public liberals, the final private and public vocabulary. Derrida clearly agrees with the pragmatists, in particular, about the need to rectify the context and seek differences that are part of the actual or historical situation, but which pragmatism rather underestimates. It is pragmatism's focus on practical actual solutions to, for example, political problems – as discussed by Rorty – that, up to a point, precludes temporal reflection and therefore the historicity of philosophical reflection. In Rorty's characterisation, philosophy functions in the political practice of Americans as something less substantial – a "take it or leave it" approach that certainly galvanises actual decision-making but limits historical reflection. It is precisely the latter that Derrida draws attention to in relation to literature. There is another crucial aspect in which his attention to literature is evident, namely the French philosopher's own language, which is built on figurative language, specifically metaphor. Derrida also places metaphor at the centre of European metaphysics.[461] Metaphorical speech excludes fixed distinctions between objects of speech because it appears whenever speech is directed at distinguishing objects and situations in a certain crisis and refuses to make do with a simple deixis turned to the external world. Attention was also paid to metaphor[462] by Davidson and then, inspired by Davidson, by Rorty in "Contingency of Language".[463] Rorty connects the discovery of a new metaphor with the replacement of an entire vocabulary. However, what he evinces in his study is not the replacement of vocabulary, but rather the transformation of discursive rules with the necessary discovery of new words. His example

[460] Ibid., p. 82.
[461] *Cf.* Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 207–271.
[462] See Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean".
[463] See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 3–22.

of the French Revolution sounds very appealing and rather convincing, but only until you start to examine the metaphor more closely. The vocabulary of the old did not give way to the new, as a horse was still called a horse, a road a road, but there was a paradigm shift in the status of the aristocrat and religion, a change in appraisement, in directive rules governing guilt and punishment, in the notion of nobleness, and in the concept of what the fourth estate is. The metaphor *liberté, égalité, fraternité* did not so much replace vocabulary as change the rules of discourse, the way of speaking on various topics. And the metaphor spawned derivative metaphors, other figurative speech. Rorty's notion of vocabularies thus seems rather mechanical and less plausible, on the one hand, than Foucault's thinking about the rules of discourse and, on the other, than the figurative speech of Derrida, who thus loosened the rigid metaphysical distinctions that have dogged the agency of human speaking and writing throughout the history of the European tradition of writing. I feel that if we were to look for any overlaps between Derrida and the American tradition of thought, the French philosopher is much closer to Davidson than to Rorty.

Looking at the debate as a whole between Putnam, Rorty, and Davidson's disciples about deconstruction, and in particular about the work of Derrida, it seems that, try as they might, they found few convincing overlaps. Rather, it would appear that these linguistic and cultural traditions are so different that never the twain shall meet; there is not what might be described, with a little overstatement, as a great mutual understanding. Putnam reads Derrida negatively, i.e. as an element foreign to pragmatism; Rorty attempts to "tame" Derrida's thinking by inserting distinctions that take the form of artificial binary oppositions – public/private, romanticism/naturalism, or early/later Derrida – but this is divorced entirely from the theoretical aspects enunciated by the French philosopher, which are, in fact, based on the negation of binary oppositions. Wheeler, as one of the followers of the post-analysts, believes that certain aspects of the comparison of Davidson's contextualism with Derrida are relevant, but even here we find in the author's scheme of thought, in the end, a binary opposition, constituted by the contradiction of logic and rhetoric. Unlike Rorty, however, Wheeler works to remove and negate it. From this perspective, the heirs of Davidson appear to be closer than the neopragmatists Rorty and Putnam to the thinking of Derrida's work. Even so, the two discourses remain quite distinct. While there is still a definite, and not indistinct, wisp of desire to nail down meanings and seek fixed distinctions among the post-analysts and neopragmatists alike, which stands to reason considering the very nature of empirical pragmatism, premised as it is on the individual's real and practical situation in an external world where its general unknowability can be acknowledged, it is necessary, on

the other hand, to seek tools that will prove useful in the practical handling of a given existential situation.

Derrida is not bound by this principle in the slightest. His concept is the tradition of European metaphysics, constructed around the illusion of the primacy of speech and of writing as speech fixed in time, the illusion of a sacred sign through which power is exercised. When he points to the incompleteness of the sign and its permanent differentiation, and refers to what is absent, this is in absolute contradiction to any fixing of distinctions. Hence the American pragmatists 'reading of his work is broadly doomed to failure, as, for example, was the match between the hermeneuticist Gadamer and Derrida. Be that as it may, Derrida does not seem to be a kind of "outlier" cloistered within his own discourse, playing the dumb deflector in every debate like the woman weeding in the field of flax in Božena Němcová rendering of "Hansel and Gretel". His *différance* calls for vigilance whatever the situation of the speech, which oscillates, or rather always turns inextricably, on the axis of the private (the existential) and the public (tradition and rejuvenation) in a system of language from which, over time, discourse is fashioned and metamorphosises. In this reference to the current action of speech, which is part of the collateral information on the external world, and therefore tradition,[464] a similar approach based on Davidson's theory of triangulation can be intimated, whereby a speech act or a set of speech acts, spoken or written, must be subject to triangulation between the intentionalities that are currently in play, including those that are not present but of which there may be any knowledge – by tradition, via knowledge of the community in which this or that act of speaking, writing, or reading operates, of customs, rituals, or taboos, of one's own shame, fear, or determination to transgress current limits. The nature of this triangulation precludes any metaphysical permanence – anything written, for example, does not represent defined meanings, but becomes an action of radical interpretation again and again, but with no "invariant mass" that allows it to be registered as an exhibit always open to new viewing, as in Quine's metaphor of the museum myth. It could be argued that, in Davidson, we can hear a call to be wary of establishing the definitiveness of signs as building blocks for metaphysical constructions that is similar to Derrida, except that Davidson does not consider the power implications of this construct. This is because he does not explore the depth and construction of the European metaphysical tradition, but looks at the

[464] Davidson speaks explicitly of tradition in "Locating Literary Language", his contribution to *Literary Theory after Davidson*.

agency of speech through the prism of practical interpretation in situations of actual human speaking, writing, and reading.

However, the reflections of philosophers such as Putnam, Davidson, and Rorty do not directly touch on literary scholarship, although they all deal with literature in some way. Jacques Derrida so much so that he is sometimes considered more of a literary theorist than a philosopher. It is useful, I believe, to explore how philosophers treat literature, and whether this sheds light on opportunities for literary theory itself to identify new initiations.

The trouble with the classic American deconstructionists, I suspect, lies in their somewhat mechanical understanding of what was being offered to them by Derrida's inspiration. All too soon, deconstructionism became a set of tools applied to literary text with the intention of finding its aporias. That is one side of the coin. The other is that this mechanical iterability superimposed on texts in the public space generally led to excessive ideologisation, that is, to a situation where all texts produced by a certain type of society were viewed with suspicion and distrust – and this suspicion engendered a new stability, an ideological conviction and, in point of fact, a new metaphysical concept, only with the opposite sign of the tradition that Derrida had challenged.

In Rorty and other neopragmatists, conversely, we find that literature is considered a kind of matrix that does not take shape until it is given specific individual or group treatment. In Stanley Fish, this then leads to the theory of interpretive communities, which creates the impression that the value of a literary text and its meaning is shaped *ad hoc*, in acts of group treatment. Such contemplation, thought through to the end, would lead to a denial of all literary canons, all traditions of writing and reading that form some model ordering that can be seen in retrospect, perhaps, as an object to be questioned, an object of distrust. The scale of entropy and contingency would be so great if viewed outside Fish's class that the awareness that some works are more important than others could not occur at all. And if we pivot back to philosophers, then why would Derrida turn his attention to works that have a certain dominance in a given language or culture, and why would Davidson analyse James Joyce or Lewis Carroll and not some unknown poet from Fort Worth or Corpus Christi?

A philosopher seeking, as Derrida said, the sources of contemporary speech and contemporary laws and rituals in a literary text, or, like Davidson, examples for a theory of radical interpretation in literary language and figuration clearly needs great literary works at least so that he is able to communicate with his audience. An argument drawing on a well-known figure

such as Proust or Joyce will manifestly have more impact than an argument based on a collection of poems written by one Bill Smith from Kansas City.

From the perspective of literary studies, then, several aspects emerge:

1. Employing a philosophical concept of thought to create tools of literary scholarship or to produce a one-sided belief of applicability serves little purpose or use because it ultimately leads to stereotyping, ideology, and a new metaphysics.
2. Neither the neopragmatist nor the deconstructionist approach in any way addresses the questions that literary scholarship asks, which are directed at the formation of a work itself and at how it is treated, with all the attendant historical implications.
3. But what does seem plausible, I think, is a turn towards openness in philosophical thinking, especially in Derrida and Davidson, in the sense that literary scholarship will not look for simple tools to grasp questions of interpretation, literary tradition, history, canon or group belief, but will direct its attention towards the unenclosed and unfinishable movement of signs and speech acts. A literary work is a source of speech that turns both to the historical horizon of its creation, its laws, imagery, and ideology, and to the current action of reading and interpretation. It applies both private intentions and private convictions, as well as a certain type of group belief, but one that is not defined only by the current set of participants in the current negotiation and the currently shared belief; this is a subset of a much larger set, a context that is modelled in advance and whose shape – a fractal, however unstable and indeterminable in detail – influences the decision-making and the mode of belief of that smaller group. In other words, neopragmatist, post-analytic philosophy, together with the thought of Derrida, offers, I believe, a rich vein of initiation for literary theory if these original sources are exploited, if literary scholars 'questions are asked in the argumentative milieu of original philosophy, if attention is turned to the movement of signs, to language and its systems, and if literary scholarship accepts the reality of the unfinishability of the debate on literary interpretation, history, and tradition.

Finally, I wonder: is it even possible today to strictly separate literary theory from philosophy and philosophy from thinking on literature?

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Summary

The monograph *Inside and Outside of Texts* turns to post-analytic and neo-pragmatic philosophy, which belongs among the major trends of the twentieth-century philosophy and whose focus on the questions of language makes it close to literary theory. The individual chapters probe the speech act theory (J. Searle, M. L. Pratt, J. H. Miller), concepts such as radical translation (W. V. O. Quine), radical interpretation (D. Davidson), root metaphor (S. C. Pepper), metaphysics and irony (R. Rorty); it turns to the question of dependence of praxis of literary criticism on theory, to the notion of aims, borders, and limits of interpretation, to R. Shusterman's reflections on popular culture, and J. Derrida's considerations on deconstruction. The goal of the book is to examine possibilities that these theories, concepts and terms open for thinking on literature.

The chapter "The Linguistic Turn in Philosophy, and Literary Scholarship: Speech Act Theory, Radical Translation, and Radical Interpretation as a Source of Inspiration for Neopragmatist Literary Studies" investigates possible initiations from the speech act theory and philosophy of language that can provide the ability to develop literary-theoretical thought and to enrich it fruitfully. In the first part, an attempt is made to identify the areas of these initiations in classical philosophical theories of J. L. Austin, J. Searle, W. V. O. Quine, or D. Davidson. In the second part, attention is paid to the history of thinking by literary scholars inspired by these areas such as M. L. Pratt, J. Hillis Miller or authors of the anthology *Literary Theory after Davidson*. The third part is dedicated to the reflection on the possibility to apply these initiations in literary interpretations, on the questions of fiction and general issues of communication within the discourse on literature and literary history.

The chapter "Root Metaphor in and beyond Literary Criticism" presents the theory of root metaphor by Stephen Coburn Pepper, which is an attempt to demonstrate ways to substantiate, in a non-dogmatic manner, the most general philosophical theses. Pepper developed his thoughts on the theory of root metaphor not just in regard to metaphysical systems, but he took into account the area of art criticism too; this close bond between philosophy and art criticism, however, does not stand out from his own thoughts. The chapter, on the other hand, strives to emphasize and substantiate this close relation between metaphysics and art criticism. The presentation of Pepper's basic, relatively adequate world hypotheses – formism, mechanism,

organicism and contextualism – thus draws attention to characteristics that these hypotheses display both in metaphysical conceptions and art criticism.

The chapter "The Ironist Who Would Be a Poet's Helper: Richard Rorty's Neopragmatism and Dilemmas of a Literary Scholar" analyses Rorty's nominalist vision of human culture, coined with a sense for historicity in his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. The analysis focuses on the role of arts in Rorty's vision with regard to his concepts of contingency in language and personal identity and his thoughts on metaphysics, irony and desire for self-improvement and for societies based on more freedom and justice. The essay attempts to transport Rorty's thoughts from the realm of philosophy into the realm of literary history and theory: When thinking about literature, we should also distinguish metaphysics and irony, standard and non-standard discourses. After all, most of the categories taken for granted by majority of literary scholars can also be approached from the point of their contingency and thus can be subjected to their re-definitions.

The chapter "The Aesthetic Value of Works of Popular Culture from Richard Shusterman's Pragmatist Perspective" focuses on Shusterman's texts that coined his concept of popular arts, aiming to incorporate such types of art into a broader aesthetic concept of arts and culture. The chapter analyses Shusterman's attempts to avoid the historical terms based on classifications and distinctions, substituted by the ideas of fluency, coalescence, and motion. Paying attention to the chronological development and original contexts of Shusterman's texts, the analysis shows that his original attempt to legitimize the popular arts at the field of academic aesthetics shifted into an autonomous concept of the art of living. Such a shift positions the character of the artwork into the periphery to grant the central position to the newly coined idea of somaesthetics.

Pragmatism has always been hostile to all kinds of metaphysical concepts deprived of any connection to our practical living, however ambiguous such a living may be. Our academic reflection of literature tends also to distinguish between praxis, e.g., analyses of distinctive fictional texts and their authors, and theory as a realm of abstraction. Can literary theory offer anything useful? Should not we perceive theory from the pragmatic point of view as an escape from praxis, as S. Knapp and W. B. Michaels suggest with the help of their title 'Against Theory? The chapter entitled "The Point of Literary Theory: The Meaning and Function of Literary Theory through a Neopragmatist Prism" raises such a question. The argument goes on to show the dependence of praxis of literary criticism on theory: It is thanks to the theory that we are capable to identify literature in a permanent act of negotiation; it is theory that offers us a vocabulary that allows to describe and interpret distinctive pieces of fiction. Newly arriving theories build up new terminological tools we can use as instruments in particular debates. Such instruments eventually broaden the scope of options we have to think and talk about literature.

The notion of aims, borders, and limits of interpretation has been one of the key themes of literary theory in recent decades. The Neo-Pragmatic view (or views, better saying) of interpretation is the central theme of the chapters that follow: "A (Neo) pragmatist View on Literary Interpretation and What Lies (or not) Beneath" and "In Defence of Use: The Boundaries and Criteria of Interpretation of an Artistic Text". They respond to the concepts of Knapp and Michaels, Rorty's polemical account of interpretation and utilization according to Umberto Eco, Stanley Fish's construct of interpretative communities, and Shusterman's attempt to distinguish between interpretation and understanding, developed into his plea for simple amateurish reading that aims at mere understanding. Wolfgang Iser's analysis of the process of reading has been also involved since it offers ideas that gets in touch with the philosophy and literary theory of Neo-Pragmatic type.

The chapter "Appropriation of a Theoretical Concept as an Instance of Cultural Transfer" examines the process of appropriation, which can be observed in the works with fictional status and which can be, metonymically, related to the problem of acquisition of forms from different language and cultural areas in literary theory. The analysis shows that the process of appropriation works in both cases precisely thanks to the non-completeness of what is taken out of the new context and transferred into a different one: if signs thus transferred were complete, the transfer would either be not possible at all or it would have to reveal the complex processes of repetition. With the premise of analogy between the functioning of proper names in fiction and concepts in the area of thinking on literature it shows that the transfer of the concept into a different cultural area makes the concept to lose its rootedness in the sphere of non-conceptual common language, on which the conceptualisation counts and with which it works. The analysis arrives at the conclusion that the appropriation of concepts in the contemporary literary theory has more the character of a ritual, which accentuates one thing, while rejecting or suppressing everything else.

The final chapter "Post-analyst, Neopragmatists and Jacques Derrida: Initiations for Literary Theory" focuses on discussions and controversies and also on searching for aspects shared by Jacques Derrida's thought with post-analytic and neo-pragmatic thinking. It reflects the reading of Derrida in the work of the realist Putnam, the search for a relation between Derrida and Davidson with Samuel C. Wheeler III and the discussion between neo-pragmatists and deconstruction with its key participants Derrida and Rorty. The chapter strives to answer the question whether new possibilities and new premises for literary-theoretical thought can be found on these grounds of contemporary speech. It arrives at the conclusion that to use a philosophical concept to create tools of literary theory or to originate a one-sided confidence in its usefulness is neither functional nor useful, as it eventually leads to a stereotype, ideology and new metaphysics. Neither the neo-pragmatist, nor the

deconstructivist approach deal in any way with questions asked by literary theory, questions situated on the level of the creation of the work itself, as well as on the level of treating the work with all the historical consequences. What seems plausible, on the contrary, is the turn towards the openness of philosophical thinking as represented by Derrida or Davidson, in the spirit of which the literary theory will not search for simple tools to close questions of interpretation, literary tradition, history, canon or group belief but, instead, will turn its attention to the non-closed and non-closable movement of signs and speech acts.

Index

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF TEXTS

Vladimír Papoušek
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David Skalický
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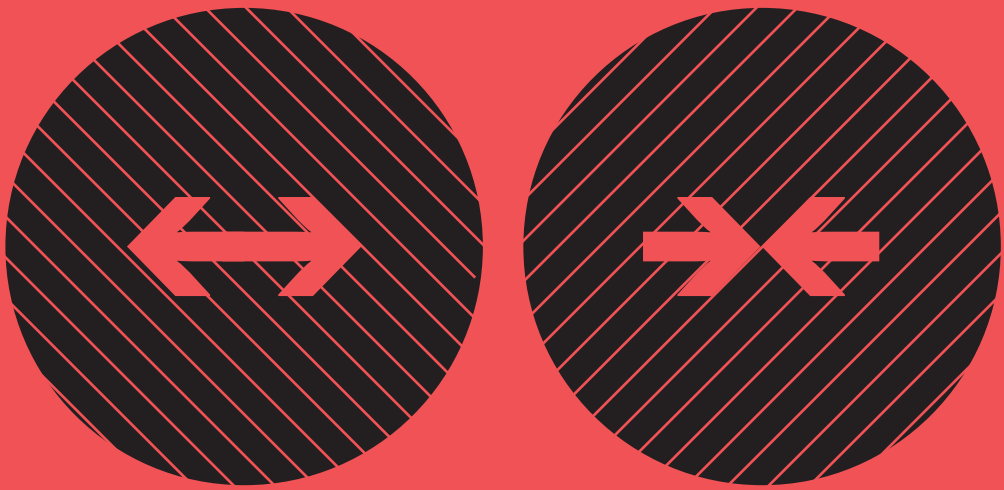

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