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**THE ETHICS OF READING:  
INGARDEN, ISER, RICOEUR**

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**PhD Philosophy  
University of Sussex  
November 2016**

**STATEMENT**

I hereby declare that this thesis, whether in the same or different form, has not been previously, submitted in whole or in part to this or another University for a degree.

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**THE ETHICS OF READING: INGARDEN, ISER, RICOEUR**  
**SUMMARY**

This thesis explores the ethical impact of literary narrative fictions on the reader. It does so by focusing mainly on the reading experience since one of the main claims of the thesis is that literary narrative fictions are co-products of the author and the reader. In that sense the aforementioned impact cannot be understood without taking into account the creative acts of the reader. The exploration is carried out by focusing on three scholars whose investigations on the problem of literary experience can be read as complementary works.

In the first chapter I descriptively lay out Roman Ingarden's investigation on the ontological and structural character of the literary work of art along with his phenomenological inquiry into the cognition of this work. By examining his basic claims about the nature of the literary work of art and its cognition, I discuss the ontological incompleteness of these works which necessitates the active role of the reader in giving the work its final shape.

In the second chapter I focus upon Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory. Iser's theory goes parallel to Ingarden's in the sense that they both accept the openness of the work to the creative acts of the reader. Iser, however by his notions of depragmatization, negation and negativity suggest us a two-way traffic between the fictional work and the reader. Through the reading proses, by virtue of the negations and de-pragmatizations, the work invites the reader to reflect on the familiar norms it represents and suggest to her a new model to understand the real world. In this way, while giving a shape to the work, the reader is also shaped by it.

The third chapter addresses the phenomenological hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. By exploring his notion of "narrative identity" as a mediator between the *ipse* and *idem* identities, my aim is to show the influence of the literary fictional narratives in understanding the identity of the individual subject as a temporal, historical, and intersubjective being. It is only through this understanding that we can construe the subject in her ethical identity. I will also focus on Ricoeur's notions of "emplotment," and "threefold mimesis," which implies the active role of the reader in realizing the literary narrative fiction, so that I can reveal how fictional narratives enhance the notion of narrative identity.

*For Seda -with love and squalor...*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Works by Roman Ingarden

AA	“Artistic and Aesthetic Values.” <i>The British Journal of Aesthetics</i> 4, no. 3 (1964): 198–213. doi:10.1093/bjaesthetics/4.3.198.
CLWA	<i>The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art</i> . Translated by Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
<i>Controversy</i>	<i>Controversy over the Existence of the World: Volume I</i> . Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013.
<i>Letter</i>	“The Letter to Husserl about VI [Logical] Investigation and ‘Idealism.’” In <i>Ingardeniana: A Spectrum of Specialized Studies Establishing the Field of Research (Analecta Husserliana)</i> , edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, 419–38. Dordrecht, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1976.
LWA	<i>The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation of the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature</i> . Translated by George G. Grabowicz. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
<i>Motives</i>	<i>On the Motives Which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism</i> . Translated by Arnór Hannibalson. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1975. doi:10.1007/978-94-010-1689-6.
OST	“On So-Called Truth in Literature.” In <i>Selected Papers in Aesthetics</i> , edited by Peter J McCormick, 133–62. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985.
OT	“On Translations.” In <i>Ingardeniana III: Roman Ingarden’s Aesthetics in a New Key and the Independent Approaches of Others: The Performing Arts, the Fine Arts, and Literature</i> , edited by Anna-Teresa - Wawrzycka Tymieniecka Jolanta W., 1st ed., 131–91. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991.

<i>PL</i>	“Psychologism and Psychology in Literary Scholarship.” In <i>Selected Papers in Aesthetics</i> , edited by Peter J McCormick, 79–90. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985.
<i>PT</i>	“The Physicalistic Theory of Language and the Work of Literature.” In <i>Selected Papers in Aesthetics</i> , edited by Peter J McCormick, 163–80. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985.

### Works by Wolfgang Iser

<i>Act</i>	<i>The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response</i> . Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.
<i>FI</i>	<i>The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology</i> . Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
<i>IR</i>	<i>The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett</i> . BOOK. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.
<i>Prospecting</i>	<i>Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology</i> . Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
<i>RP</i>	“The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach.” <i>New Literary History</i> 3, no. 2 (January 1972): 279. doi:10.2307/468316.
<i>Theory</i>	<i>How to Do Theory</i> . Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

## Works by Paul Ricoeur

<i>ASH</i>	“Action, Story and History: On Re-Reading the Human Condition.” <i>Salmagundi</i> , no. 60 (1983): 60–72.
<i>CC</i>	<i>Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay</i> . Translated by Kathleen Blamey. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
<i>EH</i>	“Existence and Hermeneutics.” In <i>The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics I</i> , edited by Don Ihde, 3–26. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974.
<i>FP</i>	<i>Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation</i> . Translated by Denis Savage. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.
<i>FR</i>	“The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality.” In <i>A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination</i> , edited by Mario J Valdés, 117–136. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
<i>Hermeneutics</i>	<i>Hermeneutics: Writings and Lectures</i> . Translated by David Pellauer. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
<i>HFD</i>	“The Hermeneutic Function of Distanciation.” In <i>Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation</i> , by Paul Ricoeur, translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>Husserl</i>	<i>Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology</i> . Translated by Edward G. Embree and Lester E. Ballard. 2nd ed. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007.
<i>IA</i>	“Intellectual Autobiography.” In <i>The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur</i> , edited by Lewis Edwin Hahn, 1–53. Chicago: Open Court, 1995.

<i>IT</i>	<i>Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning</i> . Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.
<i>Just</i>	<i>Reflections on the Just</i> . Translated by David Pellauer. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007
<i>LN</i>	“Life in Quest of Narrative.” In <i>On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation</i> , edited by David Wood, 20–33. London: Routledge, 1991.
<i>MH</i>	“Metaphor and the Central Problem of Hermeneutics.” In <i>Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation</i> , by Paul Ricoeur, translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>MR</i>	“Mimesis and Representation.” In <i>A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination</i> , edited by Mario J Valdés. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
<i>MT</i>	“The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text.” In <i>Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation</i> , by Paul Ricoeur, translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>NI</i>	“Narrative Identity.” In <i>On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation</i> , edited by David Wood, 20–33. London: Routledge, 1991.
<i>OA</i>	<i>Oneself as Another</i> . Translated by Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
<i>OI</i>	Paul, Ricoeur. “On Interpretation.” In <i>From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II</i> . Translated by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991.

<i>PH</i>	“Phenomenology and Hermeneutics.” In <i>From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II</i> . Translated by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991.
<i>RM</i>	<i>The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language</i> . Translated by Robert Czerny, John Costello, and Kathleen McLaughlin. London: Routledge, 2003.
<i>SI</i>	“Self as Ipse.” In <i>Freedom and Interpretation</i> , edited by Barbara Johnson. New York: Basic Books, 1993.
<i>TDI</i>	“The Text as Dynamic Identity.” In <i>Identity of the Literary Text</i> , edited by Mario J Valdes and Owen J Miller, 175–88. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.
<i>Text</i>	“What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding.” In <i>Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on language, action and interpretation</i> , by Paul Ricoeur, translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>TN</i>	<i>Time and Narrative</i> . Translated by Kathleen Blamey, Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

## INTRODUCTION

Does something important happen to us when we engage as readers with literary texts? I pose this question because of a hunch, shared by many, namely that literature matters to our lives. Those who seek to develop and defend this view claim that literary works, in one way or another enhance a part or parts of human life. Such claims have been opposed by those who argue that literary texts should be approached merely as works of art, that is they should be evaluated only from an aesthetic point of view, and that they do not need to say anything to the reader about herself or the world she inhabits. These views are usually signaled under the labels, autonomist, non-cognitivist, and aestheticist and their formulations of the problem show differences. We may for present purposes group all these positions together under the title autonomism. The common point of the autonomist ideas is their insistence that the value of literature rests on the containment of it as an autonomous discourse which saves it from the encroachments of political, moral or commercial interest.

In this thesis, I argue that literary texts are ethically significant for their readers. That is, there is an affective relation between a literary text and the reader. Hence I side with those who claim that literature has an effective power on the reader. However, I also argue that the autonomists are right in their concern that literary works should be appreciated for their fictional and aesthetic character. I will claim that in order to reveal the peculiar significance of these works for the reader, we need to heed this concern of the autonomists. In addition, such an attitude is also necessary to save literature from the instrumentalist attempts of the clumsy types of moral and political criticism that tend to reduce literature to a mere subservient role, to moral didacticism and ideological

propaganda. In order to achieve my aim, I will mainly focus on the act of reading; the advantage of this approach is that the act of reading shows the ethical engagement of the reader without neglecting the aesthetic and fictional character of the literary work.

In this introduction, I situate my understanding of the ethical significance of literature amongst those given in current discussions. I first reveal the recent debates on the autonomy and ethical significance of literature along with the important paradigmatic changes in contemporary literary theory and philosophy in order to make my position clearer.

## 1. The Moses Affair

Wayne Booth starts his seminal work, *The Company We Keep*, by recounting an incident that was regarded as a scandal by the members of the humanities teaching staff at The University of Chicago in 1960s. One African-American staff, Paul Moses, indicates his annoyance with the involvement of a particular book in the list that has been assigned, and most likely would again be assigned to the students of the department. The book is *Huckleberry Finn*, which has been in the curriculum of the department for years. As his story was reported in the corridors and coffee lounges among the faculty, it goes something like this:

It's hard for me to say this, but I have to say it anyway. I simply can't teach *Huckleberry Finn* again. The way Mark Twain portrays Jim is so offensive to me that I get angry in the class and I can't get all those liberal kids to understand why I am angry. What's more, I don't think it's right to subject students, black or white, to the many distorted views of race on which that book is based. No, it is not the word "nigger" I am objecting to, it's the whole range of assumptions about slavery, and its consequences, and about how whites should deal with liberated slaves, and how liberated slaves should behave or will behave towards whites, good ones and bad ones. That book is just bad education, and the fact that it's so cleverly written makes it more troublesome to me. (Booth 1988, 3)

Booth reports that Moses' reaction was regarded by the faculty members as violating academic norms of objectivity. He could neither read properly nor think properly about what criteria might be relevant to judging a novel's value. Booth says, "we had been trained to treat 'a poem *as* a poem and not another thing' and to believe that the value of a great work of fiction was something much subtler than any idea or proposition derived from it or used to paraphrase its 'meaning.' *We knew that sophisticated critics never judge a fiction by any effect it might have on its readers*" (Booth 1988, 4; emphasis mine). In this sense, at that time, Wayne Booth and his other colleagues in The University of Chicago blamed Moses to commit "what in that context seemed an outrage: an overt, serious, uncompromising act of *ethical criticism*" (3; emphasis mine).

What should we understand from the concept of ethical criticism? Alessandro Giovannelli defines it as "the art critical practice of considering a work's ethical status or value in the assessment of its artistic worth" (2007, 117). This definition is shared by many contemporary analytic philosophers writing on the topic. Discussions turn mainly around the question of whether the ethical value of a literary work is a determining factor of its aesthetic value. Contemporary moralists argue that the ethical value of a literary work of art bears on the work's aesthetic value, whilst autonomists argue that although literary works may be subject to ethical evaluation, such evaluation never has bearing on the value of the work as art. In their moderate versions, both positions have been modified to accommodate some points of their opponents: moderate moralist claim that the ethical value of literary works bear on their aesthetic value *systematically*, but it does so only in some kinds or genres, whereas moderate autonomists claim that the ethical status of literary works bear, *on occasion*, on their artistic value, but it always

does so in an *unsystematic* way. Hence, the autonomist approach does not ban ethical talk about the literary works, but claims that such a talk is inappropriate for the simple reason that it says nothing about the literariness of the work in question.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for the autonomist the aesthetic interest is fundamentally different from the practical interest and it will be an error to assess an aesthetic work from an ethical point of view. It is obvious that the concern of the autonomists is to save the autonomy of the aesthetic characterization of the literary work since giving up this autonomy may result in reducing the work to a mere pretext where the aesthetic properties are handled simply as ornamental devices to express certain thoughts, ideas, or feelings.

Another source of resistance to the ethical criticism is the recent distinction between the fictional world of the literary work and the world of the reader which is formulated by Louis O. Mink with the gnomic sentence “stories are not lived but told” (1970, 557). This relates to the distinction between the life and narratives, the real and the fictional, the world and the word<sup>2</sup>. The fictional autonomist defending this distinction claims that the literary texts refer not to the world, but only to itself and to other texts. Hence, the fictional world of the literature is independent from the extratextual world. In this sense, it does not say anything to its readers about the world she inhabits. As a result, we cannot talk about any ethical significance that these works may have on the reader, or it will be a naïve error to ask how these works speak to and

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<sup>1</sup> For a summary of recent discussions on the issue of ethical criticism in analytic philosophy see (Carroll, 2000). Here Carroll introduces another category, that of radical autonomism: “the view that the ethical evaluation of artworks is always conceptually confused” (360). This characterization has been accepted by others such as Berys Gaut who claims that in the extreme version of autonomism, “it makes no sense morally to evaluate works of art, in the same way that it makes no sense for instance morally to evaluate numbers” (2001, 343). However, I agree with Alessandro Giovanelli that “no one seems to hold it.” Even Oscar Wilde, who has been taken as the paradigm of radical autonomism by Carroll “talks ethically about artworks in the very Preface [of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*], if indirectly, when he refers to morality as offering the content upon which an artist creates” (2007, 118). Here I follow Giovanelli’s taxonomy instead of Carroll’s.

<sup>2</sup> See (Gibson, 2007). Here Gibson states that before twentieth century the thought that literature has a general cultural significance was canonical, it was “when philosophy took its initial steps toward the so-called linguistic turn of the twentieth century, discussions of the nature of literature began to focus on the logic and semantics of literary language rather than out of its power of cultural articulation.” (5-6)

about its readers. In this sense, fictional autonomism seems to take a stand against what we call literary humanism. At this point, it will be illuminating to say a few words about this approach.

We can broadly define literary humanism as the approach, which argues that literary works have something to do with the human being, human self, or human existence.<sup>3</sup> One's engagement with literary works expands one's understanding of her position in the world. In this sense, literature has an ethical and cognitive significance for the reader. John Gibson characterizes the literary humanist intuition as

the thought –or hope– that literature presents the reader with an intimate and intellectually significant engagement with social and cultural reality. It is the idea, one familiar to all of us in some respect, that literature is the textual form to which we turn when we want to read the story of our shared form of life: our moral and emotional, social and sexual –and so on for whatever aspects of life we think literature brings to view– ways of being human. (2007, 2)

Fictional autonomist, on the other side, claim that literary works have nothing to do with the world of human praxis. What they do is to create imaginative words and imaginative characters living in these words. In Gibson's words,

The other intuition concerns how we understand the fiction that goes into a work of literary fiction. For it strikes us as equally intuitive to say that the imaginative basis of literary creation presents to the reader not her world but other worlds, what we commonly call 'fictional worlds'. If we think that literature tells us about our world, we have to make this square with the fact that we understand, and certainly read, literature as exempt from the task of worldly exegesis. A work of imaginative literature trades in aesthetic creation rather than factual representation. It speaks about people made of paper, who inhabit worlds made only of words. And from this it seems quite natural to conclude that literature is therefore essentially and intentionally silent about the way our world is, choosing instead to speak about worlds none of which are quite our own. (2007, 2)

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<sup>3</sup> Literary humanism has been discussed and defined by many thinkers in various ways. The common point of these different interpretations is the claim that, literary works, in one way or another enhances a part or some parts of human life. For different interpretations of literary humanism, see (Gaskin 2013), (Gibson 2007), (Mousley 2011), (Sheehan 2002).

In consequence, we can talk about two kinds of autonomism that seems to resist ethical criticism of literary works. I shall call them respectively aesthetic autonomism and fictional autonomism. The common point of these two positions is their concern about the main function of literature. They struggle to prevent the reduction of literary works into something else, into mere pretexts for introducing certain ideas about the world. In such a case, the aesthetic and fictional character of literature turns into a mere instrument for the introduction and propagation of these ideas. The concern here is totally understandable. However, we can ask at this point whether it is not possible to defend the ethical significance of literature without giving up its aesthetic and fictional character? I believe that it is possible to defend ethical criticism while staying in the autonomist circle, in other words, that we do not need to formulate these two positions as a dichotomy and that a way can be found to talk about the ethical significance of a literary work as a work of art. It seems to me that the distinction between moralism and autonomism is not as much clear-cut as the recent analytic philosophers claim.

One of my aims in this thesis is to show that in order to defend the ethical significance of literary artworks, we do not need to take an anti-autonomist stance. Central to my argument is the distinction between the evaluation of literary works from an ethical point of view and the claim that engaging with these works is ethically significant. It is the latter claim that concerns me here since what I want to establish is the ethical significance of the engagement of the reader with the literary works. In order to achieve this aim, I will mainly focus on the act of reading, the point where the world of the reader and the world of the work intersects. I will question whether something important happens to us when we engage as readers with literary texts during the act of reading. The reader I have in mind is a knowing reader. She is aware of the fact that what she encounters is a literary text, that is the world presented by the work is a

fictional world, and this world is presented to her by means of certain aesthetic devices. Hence, my problem is not the significance of the ethical value of the work on its aesthetic value, rather it is the significance of the aesthetic and fictional characterization of the work on its ethical significance. I argue that, by formulating the problematic in this way we can reveal the ethical significance of literary works as works of art. But before formulating my position in a more detailed way, I want to dwell on the recent discussions a bit more so that we can see that the problem is indeed a very complex and multifaceted one which requires us to reflect both on the structural properties and literary strategies of the text and how these structures and strategies are apprehended by the reader in the act of reading.

## 2. The Problem of Referentiality: Reality or Realities?

Moses' protest is, indeed, a precursor of the controversy on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which had hitherto been accepted as one of the classics of American literature<sup>4</sup>. In 1960s a reaction to Twain's novel arouse mostly among African-American critics who claim that the novel depicts African-Americans as dehumanized, objectified, and stereotyped. One critic even accuses the book to be "the most grotesque example of racist trash ever written" (Wallace 1992, 16). The reactions to the book even spread among the public and many African-American families demanded the book to be removed from the high school curriculums claiming that reading the book in class

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<sup>4</sup> T.S. Eliot declares *Huckleberry Finn* as "a masterpiece" (2004, 17), while Lionel Trilling marks it as "one of the world's great books and one of the central documents of American culture" (2008, 105), and Ernest Hemingway states that "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*. ... There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since" (1998,23).

annoys their children.<sup>5</sup> Hence, there is a vast difference in the reception of the same novel by different readers in different epochs. And this difference results from the changing social conventions about the issue: Due to the growth in awareness of racial stereotyping since Twain's time, present-day readers are bound to be more struck than readers of earlier times by certain features of the work related to race issues.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the change in the horizon of the reader brings about a change in the meaning of the work.

What we refer by "meaning" here is not something that is pre-given before the act of reading. It can neither be identified with the intentions of the author, nor be searched in the text in the same way as a miner searches for the mine buried in the soil. The meaning of a literary work is constructed by the co-creative acts of the reader through the event of reading. The reader, in this formulation, is not a mere receiver of a meaning buried in the text or intended by its author. As Georgia Warnke aptly puts it,

The understanding of a work of art involves participation in its meaning. The audience of a work of art is not as much a mere receiver of information as a catalyst of content. It follows that the audience does not simply acquiesce to the viewpoint of a work of art in coming to understand it, as the defense of mimesis suggests. The audience rather participates in the meaning and truth the work of art has . . . The meaning of a work of art is shared by creator and audience. (1987, 68).

This understanding helps us to understand how the meaning of *Huckleberry Finn* and its significance for its readers have changed in recent times; it reveals how a work that has once been declared as the "masterpiece" of American literature can now be interpreted as "the most grotesque example of racist trash ever written." The changing perceptions of *Huckleberry Finn* also shows us the historical aspect of the perception of the one and the same work. This historical aspect can be more clearly

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<sup>5</sup> The debate about the exclusion of *Huckleberry Finn* from school curriculums is neatly discussed by Allen Carey-Web in (Carey-Web 1993). For an overview of criticisms about the race issue in *Huckleberry Finn*, see (Leonard, Tenney, and Davis 1992).

<sup>6</sup> For a history of change in the reception of *Huckleberry Finn* see (Arac 1997).

understood by the notion of “the life of a work.” As we will see in the following chapters, this notion implies the changing interpretations of one and the same work in different epochs of history. The meaning that is attributed to the work by its readers is not independent of the social and historical conditions that circumscribe the reader, in other words the social horizon of the reader. Hence, during its lifespan the same work may be attributed various meanings and the meanings attributed to the work by the readers sharing the same social and historical conditions may show similarities. These similarities constitute what we shall call an “interpretative canon”. However, these canons, as we have seen, are always subject to be displaced by other canons that may appear later. I will talk more about the historicity of the perception of one and the same work in the following pages. However, I now want to look at the other part of the discussion; the literary convention held by the colleagues of Moses who blamed him to be unable to recognize a great classic when he met one.

The reaction of the faculty members to Moses’ position exemplifies the dominant attitude of the day against literature; that of formalism; the position of which is clearly revealed in the following quote from Booth:

We continued to resist, in class or in print, of the twin questions that seemed to us blatantly non-literary: Is this “poem” morally, politically, or philosophically sound? and, is it likely to work for good or ill on those who read it? If we knew of critics who questioned our happy abstract formalism –Yvor Winters, F.R. Leavis, the Marxists– we considered them dogmatic mavericks, either the last remnants of moralistic, pre-aesthetic past or the would-be forerunners of a totalitarian revolution.

Of course, this attitude is not peculiar to formalism, various theoretical schools in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century took a similar position. And what is common to these schools is their supposition that the literary work as the object of a literary science is an objective text. In Edward Wasiolek’s words:

There were many movements during the years 1930-1960, but they diverged like spokes from a hub, and what brought them together was a

common and unquestioned assumption that critical discourse was a commentary about, and measured by, an objective text. ... criticism was an act of approximating in language a “work that had objective status, and that its intelligibility and worth were measured by that objectivity.” (1973, 6)

At this point, in order to claim that the recent responses to *Huckleberry Finn* –of which Moses’ affair can be seen as a paradigm– are legitimate, we need to challenge this *sine qua non*. We mentioned above that formalist and structuralist schools of literary criticism in twentieth century tried to establish a “science” of literary studies by attributing the text an objectivity. They achieved this aim by suspending the referential function of the text and focusing on its structural properties. This is how Paul Ricoeur describes the situation:

It proceeds from the suspension, the *epoché*, of the ostensive reference. To read in this way means to prolong this suspension of the ostensive reference to the world and to transfer oneself into the “place” where the text stands, within the “enclosure” of this wordless place. According to this choice, the text no longer has an outside, it has only an inside. Once more, the very constitution of the text as text and of the system of text as literature justifies this conversion of the literary thing into a closed system of signs, analogous to the kind of closed system phonology discovered at the root of all discourse and that de Saussure called *la langue*. Literature, according to this working hypothesis, becomes an *analogue of la langue*. (MT, 162-63)

A literary text says something to the reader. Formalist criticism focuses on this something that the text says, and by means of structural analyses it explains what is said by the text, it reveals its logic. But explaining a text and interpreting it are different things: “We can, as readers, remain in the suspense of the text, treating it as a worldless and authorless object; in this case, we explain the text in terms of internal relations, its structure. On the other hand, we can lift the suspense and fulfill the text in speech, restoring it to living communication; in this case, we interpret the text” (Ricoeur *Text*, 152). Hence, a literary text does not only say something; it says something *about* something. Formalism achieves its objectivity claim at the expense of this *about*. To put

in another way, by formulating literature in analogy with *la langue*, formalism suspends what Gadamer calls “the matter of the text.” And by suspending the matter of the text, we also lose sight of the *significance* of the text, see it as a close system that has nothing to do with the world of the reader. What is at stake in Moses’ situation, however, is the significance of the literary text for the reader. Hence, if we are to claim that a literary work is ethically significant for its readers we should go beyond the formalist formulations and scrutinize again on the relation between the world of the text and the world of the reader. This can be done by apprehending literature not as an analogue of *la langue*, but as a discourse. As Emile Benveniste puts, “discourse is language put into action” (1971, 223). This formulation gives discourse an eventful character. Paul Ricoeur –who draws his theory of discourse on Benveniste’s basic assumptions on discourse– defines the eventful character of discourse as in the following:

All discourse is produced as an event; as such, it is the counterpart of language understood as a code or system. Discourse *qua* event has a fleeting existence: it appears and disappears. But at the same time – herein lies the paradox– it can be identified and re-identified as the same. This ‘sameness’ is what we call, in a broad sense, its meaning. All discourse, we shall say, is realized as an event but understood as a meaning. (*MPH*, 167)

Hence, by apprehending literary work as a discourse and not as an analogue of *la langue*, we attribute to the reading act an eventful character. In this sense, every individual reading becomes a unique event; a communicative event between the text and the reader. And the significance of this event may exhibit differences among themselves. This is due to the involvement of each reader in the event of reading with her unique horizon. To put in a Gadamer like fashion, the reading act is the fusion of the horizon of the reader and the horizon of the text. The meaning, and the significance of

the text arises from this fusion. The meaning of the text is constructed through the realization of discourse *qua* event.<sup>7</sup>

The eventful character of the reading act also negates the dogma of fictional autonomism we mentioned above. The autonomist distinction between the world of fiction and the extratextual world also stems from the theories of structuralist linguistics. In its extreme mode, this position claims that literary language is by its nature self-referential, thus literature is something that is totally self-contained. Judgements we find in a literary work does not refer to any extra-textual situation, hence a literary work can only be legitimized in and through itself. The aim of the distinction is indeed to save the autonomy of the fiction, and in this sense, it is a reaction to the understanding of nineteenth century literary realism which finds its basic formulation in Stendhal's mirror metaphor: "Ah, sir! a novel is a mirror travelling down the road. Sometimes it reflects the blue of the heavens to the eye, sometimes the mud of the filthy puddles on the road." (2002, 374).

At this point we should say a few words about the referential function of the fictional narratives. The nineteenth century understanding of literary realism belongs to an era in which literature was seen to be one of the main means of promoting social enlightenment. Literature was supposed to help us to recognize the reality in a clearer way. By pointing the mirror to the corners of the world that we are not accustomed, it was showing us the aspects of reality that we were not hitherto aware of. This aspect of reality, however, was a pre-given, it had already been there, though we had not realized it till the novel reflects it to our gaze. In this sense, a novel was not different from a work of sociology or a documentary. Is it possible for an author today to write novels like these; like the novels of Zola, Stendhal or Balzac? Paul Ricoeur, for example, says

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<sup>7</sup> The appropriation of a text that belongs to an era that is unfamiliar and alien to the reader will be considered in more detail in the second chapter of this thesis. For a well-constructed summary of the problem, see (Jauss, 1985)

that it is not, “because one of the functions performed in the past by the novel –taking the place of sociology– no longer has any reason to exist” (CC, 177). The sociocultural enlightenment, which was once one of the main functions of literature, is now carried out by other media, such as documentaries, newspaper articles, reportage and other means of culture industry. No one any more need to read a novel in order to gain information about a minor group, or a social class in the society that is least-known to us, or about the least-known cultures and geographical regions of the world. We have now access to other mediums through which we can feed our epistemological hunger in a more direct and easy way. As Wolfgang Iser says, “as a medium, literature is put on a par with other media and the ever-increasing role that these play in our civilization shows the degree to which literature has lost its significance as the epitome of our culture. The more comprehensively a medium fulfills its sociocultural function, the more it is taken for granted, as literature once used to be” (FI, x).

In addition to the developments in alternative media, the change in the horizon of the reader also stimulated a change in the understanding of how literature intercourses with reality. The realist authors of nineteenth century were concerned with human reality. However, this concern is shared by the great literature of other ages. As Nietzsche observes, “all good artists imagined they were realistic” (quoted in Sheehan 1989, 820). This phenomenon is clearly exemplified by Erich Heller as in the following:

Dante claimed that the world of the *Divine Comedy* was the real world. Cervantes meant his Don Quixote to rehabilitate the true sense of reality in his reader’s minds, which had been perverted by manufacturers of abstruse unreality. In the literary debates of the eighteenth century in Germany, Shakespeare was held up before the adolescent poetical talent of the nation as the supreme example of realistic insight . . . Goethe praised Homer for his realism. Ortega y Gasset blamed Goethe for his obstinate refusal to face his true reality. Nietzsche extolled Goethe as a “convinced realist” who had conquered and transcended the deeply anti-realistic insight of his age. (1966, 89).

The problem here is, then, not that some literary works represent reality while some do not, but that the understanding of reality they claim to represent is different from each other. As Nietzsche says, “What then, is it that the so called Realism of our writers tells us about the happiness of our time? . . . One indeed led to believe that our particular happiness does not spring from what really is, but from our *understanding of reality* . . . The artists of our century willy-nilly glorify the scientific ‘beatitudes’” (quoted in Heller 1966, 95, emphasis mine).

The “realistic” subject matter of the great novels of the nineteenth century literary Realism is by no means new. As Erich Heller observes, “from Petronius to the English eighteenth century, many writers have given us weighty literary documents of life as it was lived, enjoyed, or bungled by people in the unheroic and unspectacular regions of the world” (95). What is new in the pages of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, or Tolstoy is the passion and desire for understanding the human world in a rational way; an ambition for the rational conquest of the world. In this sense, the distinctive quality of nineteenth century Realism, according to Heller, is a Hegelian quality:

How tedious would be Balzac’s descriptions if they were not alive with the zeal for absolute rational possession of the things described; how cheap would be Stendhal’s melodramas if the emotions were merely evoked without being completely controlled by the analytical intelligence and made transparent by the master eye that sees through everything. And Dostoyevsky’s genius is closely allied to the spirit of detection, his singular greatness being due to the fact that the light by which he searches is also the fire by which he is consumed. Nor is that a mere accident that Tolstoy –who certainly was not a Hegelian– repeatedly protested: Reason, that is, good – almost as if he were Hegel himself. (1966, 95-96)

At this point we can say, in a Ricoeur-like fashion, that it is not possible any more to write novels like that of Zola, Stendhal or Balzac, because the world we are living in is different from the world of those authors. That is, our understanding of

reality shows significant changes from their understanding of reality. And consequently, we need new forms, new textual strategies, and new ways of representation in order to depict this new understanding of reality. The modernist novel, indeed, is an attempt to answer the problems raised by this new understanding of the world; the world of modern times and the individual subject's experience of this new world. Theodor Adorno, defines the modern world as a disenchanted world. The human beings are torn from one another and from themselves. If one depicts this world in the same way as a Realist author, she would be guilty of a lie: "the lie of delivering himself over the world with a love that presupposes that the world is meaningful, and [s]he would end up with insufferable kitsch along the lines of local-color commercialism" (Adorno 1991, 31). Hence, to depict this enchanted world or the shattered, fragmented reality modern novel needs to redefine realism: "*if the novel wants to remain true to its realistic heritage and tell how things really are, it must abandon a realism that only aids the façade in its work to camouflage by reproducing it*" (Adorno 1991, 32).

We mentioned that for nineteenth century realism, the novel is seen as a mirror-reflection of reality; a reality that can be conquered rationally. Hence for these novelists, reality is characterized as an ordered unity which can be grasped and represented by the novel in a direct way like a mirror which reflects us the world we live in. However, modern novel has revealed that such an understanding of reality is indeed an illusion. As Wolfgang Iser observes, "only in memory do we have the freedom necessary, if we are to bring the disordered multiplicity of everyday life into the harmonious form of a coherent gestalt – perhaps because this is the only way we can retain meanings of life. Thus, the gestalten of memory extract meaning from and impose order on the natural heterogeneity of life" (*Act*, 125). In this sense, what Realistic novel represents is not the real life, but the configured representation of it by memory. This is

what Umberto Eco means when he claims that modern novel is more realistic than the Realist novel: “Naturally, life resembles *Ulysses* more than *The Three Musketeers*, but we prefer to think of it as the other way around.” (1989, 118). Hence, the modernist novel is a reaction to the “lie” of Realist novel, the lie of the meaningfulness of the reality itself. What the modern novel suggests, instead, is a reality, the meaning of which is a construction: The meaning of reality is constructed by human beings inhabiting this reality:

The traditional realistic novel can no longer be regarded as a mirror-reflection of reality, but is, rather, a paradigm of the structure of memory, since reality can only be retained as reality if it is represented in terms of meaning. This is why the modern novel presents reality as contingent and 'meaningless', and in so doing it shows a reaction to conventional habits of perception by releasing reality from the illusion-making structure of memory. (*Iser Act*, 125).

To put in another way, what the classical Realist novel does is to configure the external reality, which have a discordant character into a concordance through the configurational acts of the author. The modern novel, on the other hand, lays the burden of configuration on the shoulders of the reader. It achieves this aim by turning away from the techniques of representation of nineteenth century novel and moving towards formal experimentations. This movement has been interpreted by some critics as a renunciation of the referential function. However, what is renounced is only what Ricoeur calls the “ostensive reference”: The first order reference, which points directly to the external world is replaced with a second order reference which reveals aspects of the external world which were unknown to the reader before she confronted with the world of the work. We can understand this new kind of mimetic relation more clearly by looking at the achievements of twentieth century abstract painting. As Paul Ricoeur aptly puts,

It is in the twentieth century when painting ceased to be figurative that the full measure of this mimesis could be taken, namely, that its function

is not to help us recognize objects but to discover dimensions of experience that did not exist prior to the work. It is because Soulages or Mondrian did not imitate reality, in the restrictive sense of the word, because they did not make a replica of it, that their work has the power to make us discover, in our own experience, aspects up to then unknown. On a philosophical plane, this leads us to question the classical conception of truth as adequation to the real; for, if one can speak of truth in relation to the work of art, it is to the extent that this designates the capacity of the work of art to break a path in the real by renewing the real *in accordance with the work itself*, so to speak. (CC, 174)

Similarly, the modern novel has taught us that in order to understand the creative relation between the world of fictional narratives and the world of the reader, we need to apprehend the mimetic relation between these two worlds not as a mere replica, but as a productive reference. In other words, everyday reality is metamorphosed by fictional narratives through imaginative variations; this metamorphosed reality, in turn, engenders our understanding of reality. Consequently, fiction proposes to us a new world. This new world, of course, is not cut-off all external reality. As Theodor Adorno observes, “even those that are novels of fantasy as far as their subject matter is concerned attempt to present their content in such a way that the suggestion of reality emanates from them” (1991, 30). What is suggested by fiction, however, is not a mere replica of reality, but a “suggestion of reality”. The reader through the act of reading enters the “kingdom of as if,” in Paul Ricoeur’s words, or, to use Ingarden’s terminology, into a “quasi-world” created by the author according to the following formula: “be such and such, have those particular properties, exist as though you were real” (OST, 137). This imitation of reality is constituted by what Wolfgang Iser calls the “repertoire” of the text: The familiar elements in the text that are borrowed from the extratextual world. But we will see that even these elements are used in the fictional text in a configured way: they are de-pragmatized by the text by being removed away from its social context.

As a result, the fictional autonomist is right when she claims that the world of fiction is independent from the external world in the sense that what is represented by fictional narratives is a metamorphosed world, the world of the text. However, that does not necessarily bring about the conclusion that this world does not have any relation to the extratextual world, and that literature should be apprehended in itself. The world of the text refers to the external world, however the reference here is not a direct, ostensive, first order reference. What is at stake is an indirect reference that fulfills its function in the act of reading. We mentioned above that the discourse has an eventful character, so the act of reading. The reader, in her reading act, finds herself in a communication with the narrative text. Hence, the act of reading is a discursive event. And, at the end of this event, the reader cannot remain the same person as she were before the reading act. Her world, her understanding of reality is dislocated by the proposed world of the text. This is what we shall later call the “refigurative power” of literature. And if we are to understand the referential function of literature, we should scrutinize at this point; the point where the horizon of the reader and the horizon of the work intersects. It is also at this point that the ethical significance of the literary work finds its uppermost functionality. The literary work does not give us a prescription of a good life, but by dislocating, disintegrating our position in the world in virtue of proposing us new possibilities, or by revealing the aspects of our moral conventions that we had not realized up to that time. And this dislocation forces us to reflect our position once more, to question it. Hence the truth of literature should not be searched for in its adequacy to represent the already given reality, but in its power to augment this reality. As Paul Ricoeur says, “Narratives, folktales, and poems are not without a referent; but this referent is discontinuous with that of everyday language. Through fiction and poetry, new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up within everyday reality.

Fiction and poetry intend being, not under the modality of being-given, but under the modality of power-to-be” (*HFD*, 86).

The discussions up to this point have significant results for our purpose. First of all, they show us the importance of the historical aspect of the human activity that we call literature. The historicity of literature can be understood mainly in two ways: First, a particular work has its own history which we tried to explain by the notion of “the life of the work”. Second, our understanding of what literature is shows differences in different historical epochs. Indeed, this understanding is no more than a convention among the interpretative community. And the change of this convention depends on the horizontal expectations of this community which is effected by the changes in the social norms and paradigms.<sup>8</sup> The changing conventions in the understanding of literature is also significant for what we called the life of the work because a particular work may gain new meanings through the interpretation of readers that belong to a different convention; by means of these interpretations, a work that belongs to an old paradigm may appear in a totally new way in the new paradigm. This is indeed what happened to the Realist fictions in modern times. They were once seen as the true representations of the extratextual world; but due to the change of social and literary convention they are now mostly interpreted as representations of a certain understanding of reality.

As a result, the historicity of literature once more shows us the complexity of the issue. As a historical phenomenon, the human activity we call literature always resists our denotational efforts; whenever we think that we have grasped its definitive characteristics, it escapes from our definitional circles by invalidating the literary conventions of its day and by re-appearing in new forms and by adopting new strategies. Through this new forms and strategies, literature denounces not only the

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<sup>8</sup> I will elaborate on this point in more detail in the second chapter of this thesis when I discuss Hans Robert Jauss’ theory of literary history.

literal conventions, but also the social conventions of its time. This situation makes the things more complex and harder for us to handle. However, as we will see, this unstable character of literature also gives it a fruitful character for our purpose because by destructing the current conventions it opens for us new ways of thinking about our moral disposition on the world.

Another important significance of our discussion so far is about the distinction between the autonomist and ethicist positions. I claimed before that in order to defend the significance of literature, we do not need to give up the aesthetic autonomist claim. Our analysis about the fictional character and referential function of literature has also shown us that we neither need to give up the fictional autonomist claim in order to defend the ethical significance of the work. Rather, we need to stick up for the fictional character of literature if we want to reveal the ethical significance of fictional narratives that are unique to them. Hence, it will be my aim in this thesis to remain faithful to the aesthetic and fictional character of the fictional narratives while exploring their ethical significance.

### **3. The Turn to Literature, the Turn to Ethics, and the Turn to the Reader**

Wayne Booth started his career as a defender of “happy abstract formalism,” and he was one of the faculty members blaming Paul Moses for committing “what in the context seemed an outrage: an overt, serious, uncompromising act of ethical criticism” (1988, 3). It took him about twenty years to accept that Moses’ reaction was indeed legitimate: “Though I would of course resist anyone who tried to ban the book from *my* classroom, I shall argue here that Paul Moses’s reading of *Huckleberry Finn*, an overt ethical appraisal, is one legitimate form of literary criticism” (1998, 4).

This turn in Booth's personal career reflects a broader turn in literary studies in the late seventies which was accompanied by a similar turn in philosophy. Michael Eskin, in a relatively recent article, defines this phenomenon as a "double turn": "a 'turn to ethics' in literary studies and, conversely, a 'turn to literature' in (moral) philosophy" (2004, 557). Eskin claims that the turn in literary studies to ethics have its roots in the reaction to the putative formalism of deconstruction, along with the growing influence of thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, and the broader influence of the developments in inter-disciplinary areas such as queer studies, postcolonial studies, multicultural and feminist criticisms, all of which grounds themselves in ethico-political commitments.<sup>9</sup> Concomitantly, the contemporary turn in moral philosophy –especially in Anglo-American philosophy– to literature can be viewed, according to Eskin, as a "homologous response to the putative formalism of analytical moral theory in favor of a more Aristotelian –eudaimonistic and aretaic– approach to human existence as it is played out by singular persons in specific situations, which are, so the claim goes, best illuminated in and through the works of literature" (558). This double turn, should not be understood however, as the opening of a new field which has not been on the scene hitherto. The relation between ethics and literature has always been a concern for literary theorists and philosophers at least since Plato's contributions on the issue. At stake here is a renewed interest in the topic, which has been kept in exile by formalist schools in the past. In this sense, it seems to me more appropriate to use the notion, "re-turn" instead of "turn". Hence what we observe since 1980s is a "double re-turn" in the

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<sup>9</sup> For the influence of these discussions –which are mostly voiced by scholars whose home base is not philosophy– on moral philosophy see (Baier 1998). In this article, Baier focuses on the influence of feminist scholars on the way ethics is discussed in academic institutions and how this new voices contributed to the discussion by enlarging the field of ethics to the realm of other disciplines such as politics, literature, cultural studies etc.

aforementioned disciplines, or to put in another way a simultaneous rise of interest to ethics in literary studies, and to literature in (moral) philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

Both disciplines change their focus from the formalist and analytical descriptions of their subject matters –literature and ethics– to a wider approach of understanding the place of their subject matter in the overall make-up of human-self. Hence these turns show a similarity in their orientations. But despite this similarity, and despite the simultaneity of their occurrence, it is difficult to talk about a continuity between these two turns. There is a gap between the contemporary analytical philosophers of literature and the literary theorists. As Terry Eagleton observes, the distinction mainly stems from that age-old contention between Continentals and the Anglo-Americans: “If literary theory springs largely from the former sector of the globe, the philosophy of literature hails from the latter” (2012, x). And sometimes the gap is so deep that these two disciplines seems to belong to two different planets: “One camp behaves as though it has never heard of Frege, while the other acts as though it has never heard of Freud” (Eagleton 2012, x).

During 1970s there happens another paradigm change in the theories of textual interpretation that is significant for our question. This is the change of focus from the formal structure of the literary work, to the experience of reader. The formalist paradigm of understanding literary text as a closed semantic system is relocated by the understanding of literary work as a co-creative product of the author and the reader. The emphasis on *intentio operis* is replaced by an emphasis on *intentio lectoris*. In Umberto Eco’s words;

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<sup>10</sup>Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack in their preface to their edited book on the relation between ethics and literature says: “The title of this volume —Mapping the Ethical Turn— is not meant to suggest that only in recent years have we seen a shift toward the marriage of ethical thought and literary study. Rather, as with the meaning of the verb to map, this volume, in certain ways, seeks to tell a story that highlights a terrain that has always been there” (Davis and Womack 2001, 9)

In a structuralistic framework, to take into account the role of the addressee looked like a disturbing intrusion since the current dogma was that a textual structure should be analyzed in itself and for the sake of itself, to try to isolate its formal structures. In contrast, during the 1970s literary theorists, as well as linguists and semioticians, have focused on the pragmatic aspect of reading. The dialectics between Author and Reader, Sender and Addressee, Narrator and Narratee has generated a crowd, indeed impressive, of semiotic or extrafictional narrators, subjects of the uttered utterance (*énonciation énoncée*), focalizers, voices, metanarrators, as well as an equally impressive crowd of virtual, ideal, implied or implicit, model, projected, presumed, informed readers, metareaders, archireaders, and so on. (1994, 44)

The relation between the literary work and the reader has been handled by various theoretical approaches such as hermeneutics, the aesthetic of reception, reader-response criticism, theory of aesthetic response, semiotic theories of interpretation, to name but a few.<sup>11</sup> What they have in common is an interest in the relation between the literary work and the reader in the act of reading. The phenomenon of reading has been handled by the best part of these approaches as an interaction between the text and the reader. According to this position, the meaning of the text is co-created by the creative acts of the reader in the act of reading. Hence, the work takes its last shape through the reading act. The reader, on the other hand, does not remain the same after this experience. During her involvement in the text as a co-creator of meaning, her understanding of the world she inhabits is re-figured by the proposed world of the text and this change encourages her to reflect on her disposition on the world.

The reader-response criticism has its roots in the phenomenological investigations of Roman Ingarden along with the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Both Ingardenian ontology and reader-response theories then influence Paul Ricoeur's later investigations on narrativity. In this sense, we can claim that there is a continuity with the theory of reader reader-response and Continental philosophy. However, such continuity cannot be seen between the reader-response criticism and

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<sup>11</sup> For an overview of these discussions, see (Tompkins 2013).

later analytic philosophy of literature. Philosophers of literature mostly neglect this significant paradigm shift in contemporary theory and it seems to me that the reason for this attitude lies in the contention between Anglo-American and Continental traditions as it was put by Eagleton. My aim here is not to discuss the reasons for this neglect among analytical philosophers. However, this attitude has a significant consequence for our question. Disregarding the aforementioned paradigm shift results in a gap in the analytic treatment of the topic since there is, for the most part, no discussion of the role of the reader and the significance of the reading act in revealing the relation between ethics and literature. And, to me, that is the main reason for the dichotomous presentation of the debate, between autonomism and moralism. It will be one of my aims in this thesis to show that autonomism and moralism are not mutually exclusive. And I will achieve this aim by placing the act of reading in the core of this study. In this way, I will show that literary works are ethically significant for us without disregarding their literary character.

#### **4. Overview: Looking for the Self in front of the Fictional Narrative**

Linda Vasquez: I know he made you a promise, but circumstances have  
changed.

Francis Underwood: The nature of promises, Linda, is that they remain immune  
to changing circumstances.

Andrew Davies, *House of Cards*,

“How should one live?” This is the underlying question of ethics that has been occupying the philosophers dwelling on the issue since ancient times. As Martha Nussbaum puts, “from Socrates and Plato straight through to the Hellenistic schools, there was a deep agreement that the point of philosophical inquiry and discourse in the area of ethics was to improve, in some manner, the pupil’s soul, to move the pupil

closer to the leading of the good life” (1990, 16). Although the question has been reformulated in different forms, in accordance with the ever-changing understanding of human life and human reality, it keeps its validity as the basic question of ethics. The “how” question of ethics is strictly related to another fundamental question about human life: the question of “who.” If “the good life” is the aim of the ethical inquiry, and if we agree with the Socratic maxim that an unexamined life is not worth living, we need also to reflect on our lives to achieve our ethical aim. And as we will see in the following chapters of this thesis, the reflexive and self-reflective process of examining our lives finds its most profound formulation in the question of “who am I?”

It is my aim in this project to apply the Socratic maxim of “an unexamined life is not worth living,” to the relation between life and fictional narratives. In other words, I will question the role of fictional narratives in the reader’s search for herself. So, my claim is that the fictional narrative is a medium through which the reader understands herself. The self here is not a stable entity. It is always in the process of becoming. So, the search for the self does not imply a search for something that is already given. It is a search for something that is always in a process of construction, destruction and re-structuring. In this sense, fictional narratives do not merely help us to reflect on ourselves in a retrospective way, but also to re-structure it in a prospective way.

I will try to reach my aim by thinking with three names: Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser and Paul Ricoeur; two philosophers and a literary critic. These names have not been chosen arbitrarily. First of all, the theories these three thinkers construct a tradition of a phenomenological and hermeneutical criticism. So, one of my aims is to read these thinkers’ theories as complementary to each other. Second, revealing the arch from Ingarden to Ricoeur through Iser will show us how fruitful can a dialogue, a continuity between philosophy and literary theory can be. Third, especially my chapter

on Ingarden reveals the phenomenological and ontological roots of current reader-oriented theories. Ingarden is a highly respected but barely studied philosopher and hopefully this thesis will fill this gap at least partially.

In his novel *2666*, Roberto Bolano defines literature as a vast forest: “Literature is a vast forest and the masterpieces are the lakes, the towering trees and strange trees, the lovely, eloquent flowers, the hidden caves . . . ordinary tress, patches of grass, puddles, clinging vines, mushrooms and little flowers” (2009, 785). And, as I mentioned above, the borders of this forest are always subject to change in accordance with the changing literary paradigms. It sometimes welcomes some new types of creatures, while on the other hand some other types that had been in the forest for a long time are exiled to different territories of the textual world. In this project, I restrict myself to focus on a particular type living in this forest; that of fictional narratives. As Paul Ricoeur says, “this large subset of the field of narrative includes everything the theory of literary genres puts under the rubrics of folktale, epic, tragedy, comedy, and the novel” (*TN2*, 3). Although the other genres may find a place to themselves in our project, my main focus will be on the novel among these genres. The reason that lies behind this restriction is my belief that the novel, especially the modern novel, offers us the most profound tools and structures we need in understanding ourselves and our ethical and moral dispositions in our contemporary world.<sup>12</sup> In addition, I also believe that each genre in the forest of literature deserves specific structural, phenomenological and hermeneutical investigations in order to reveal their communicatory relation with the reader. This is because the literary tools and the textual strategies used in these genres in order to communicate with the reader show significant differences among each other. I

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<sup>12</sup> This belief can be based upon Hans Robert Jauss’ theory of “question and answer dialectics”. According to this theory, a new work is indeed an attempt to answer the questions posed by the era it aroused in. In this sense, the novel can be seen as a genre that appeared in face of the new problems brought about by our modern world. I will briefly touch upon Jauss’ theory in the second chapter of this thesis.

do not claim that these differences lead to a fundamental distinction between these genres, and an overall theory that encapsulates all of them cannot be produced.

However, such an effort would exclude the limits of this thesis. In this sense, this project can be seen as part of a larger project.

My project consists of three chapters. Since all of my chapters are quite lengthy, I provide brief introductory and concluding parts for each chapter, for guidance. Yet here I would like to also briefly outline the structure of my project.

The first chapter is on Roman Ingarden and his ontological, structural and phenomenological investigations on the literary work of art. In this chapter, I explain the key ideas and concepts of Ingarden that reveals the complex structure of the literary artwork and the cognition of it by the reader. This chapter mainly constitutes the noematic part of the thesis. Its purpose is to show that the literary artwork structurally and ontologically involves an openness that permits the reader to be involved in the creation of its meaning. Ingarden observes that “the epistemological investigations which have been carried out by phenomenologists since Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* show that between the mode of cognition and the object of cognition there is a special correlation; there is perhaps even an adaptation of the cognition to its object” (*CLWA*, 8). If we are to agree with this phenomenological assumption, we need to show how the literary artwork, as the object of literary cognition, correlates with the kind of reading act we assume. In this sense, I will focus on three main characteristics of the literary artwork laid out by Ingarden: its schematic structure, its stratified structure and its quasi-real character. The investigation of these concepts clarifies some of the problems we have mentioned here. It will also uncover the multilayered structure of the literary artwork which necessitates on the part of reader to carry out a complex web of various acts to concretize the work in an appropriate way.

The second chapter is entitled “Iser’s Negative Aesthetics” and with this chapter we introduce the noetic part of the thesis. Here, the literary artwork will be explored from a functional point of view. This functional investigation, however is mainly built on the outputs of the structural investigations of Ingarden. The openness of the work allows the involvement of the reader in the fiction. Through her involvement, the reader is negated by the textual strategies of the work such that she is forced to reflect on her habitual disposition. That is, the fictional narrative destructs what is familiar to the reader and forces her to reflect on her assumptions, beliefs and prejudices about her own reality. The world of the reader is disentangled by the work, and the reader in this disentangled world is a lost self.

Paul Ricoeur, when discussing about the role of fictional narratives in the search of the reader for her-self in one of his earlier writings, claims that “As reader, I find myself only by losing myself” (*HFD*, 88). Our chapter on Iser, in this regard, demonstrates the first part of the process of the reader’s self-understanding in front of the fictional narrative: “losing myself.” The negativity attributed by Iser to fictional narratives is a partial negativity. It reveals the inconsistencies of our understanding of ourselves, but it does not prescribe us solutions for these inconsistencies. However, this does not mean that fictional narratives leave us in the lurch in our self-reflective attempt. They also help us to re-constitute our lost selves by introducing us into the imaginative variations of the self. This second part of self-understanding and self-constituting will be the main concern of the last chapter of this thesis.

The third and the last chapter of the thesis is on Paul Ricoeur’s poetics and hermeneutics of the self. This section will form the second section of the noetic part of the thesis. Here, I will investigate how the self, lost in the fictional narratives by means of the negational character of literature, is once more constructed with the guidance of

fictional narratives and their refigurative power. Hence, I claim that whilst Iser's negative aesthetics reveal how fictional narratives refigures our world of experience by negating our habitual dispositions, Ricoeur's narrative theory helps us to understand how these narratives function in the formation of our personal identity. Hence, these two theories can be read as complementary. I find myself –with the help of the configurative function of literature– by losing my self –in virtue of the negational character of fiction.

Personal identity becomes problematic when it confronts the question of permanence in time. Ricoeur explains how the fictional narratives help us to render the otherwise unintelligible diversity of human experience and actions intelligible. He achieves this aim by distinguishing between two types of personal identity – *idem*(sameness) and *ipse*(selfhood) identities– and formulating the notion of narrative identity as a mediator between them. The permanence of subject in time, according to Ricoeur, can be established by forming a dialectical relationship between these two kinds of personal identity. And this relationship can be formed in various degrees and various possible ways. Here, literature helps us. What differs Ricoeur from other philosophers of narrative identity is his emphasis on the role of fictional narratives for construing our narrative identity. By means of the configurational function of emplotment (*muthos*) and creative power of mimesis, fictional narratives offers us various possibilities of the dialectical relationship between *idem* and *ipse*. The significance of the personal identity for our purpose lies in the fact that only by announcing a kind of permanence, despite the contingencies, changes, and reversals in our lives, we can designate ourselves as a responsible agent, as one who keeps one's word. Hence, our permanence in time provides us the stability to response the ethical

question “Where are you?” with the ethical answer “Here I am. Despite all the changes and diversities in my life, I am here”.

As a result, the ethical significance of fictional narratives goes much further than transference of information. A narrative fiction may supply us with new ethical knowledge, it may refine our ethical concepts or our capacity to apply these concepts to particular situations. These are all accretionary changes that are brought about by literature. This function of literature has received pretty much attention in the recent debates on ethics of literature. What has received less attention is the function of literature that I shall call “revolutionary changes”. This function is defined by Kenneth Walden as “the arts’ potential to reconfigure the structure of our moral thought – their ability not only to offer new inputs to be schematized by an existing moral framework but to affect a revolution in that framework” (2015, 283). It is this potentiality that I search for in this thesis.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INGARDEN ON THE LITERARY WORK OF ART

#### Introduction

Roman Ingarden, the least well-known pupil of Edmund Husserl from the Gottingen period, started writing his first major work *The Literary Work of Art*<sup>13</sup> with a more general problem in mind: the realism–idealism controversy. In contrast to Husserl’s transcendental idealism, Ingarden wanted to establish the existence of the real world as independent of the consciousness. This goal, which drove his studies to a greater or lesser degree for the rest of his life, led him to be known as a realist phenomenologist. In this sense, the particularly problematic ontological status of works of art provides Ingarden with exceptional subject matter. As he states in the preface to the first edition of *LWA*, in order to take a stance towards Husserl’s theory, “it is necessary, among other things, to indicate the essential structure and mode of existence of the purely intentional object so that subsequently one may see whether real objectivities can, according to their own nature, have the same structure and mode of existence” (lxxi).

For Ingarden there are two crucial questions that should be answered before discussing the proper methodology of literary studies: “(1) How is the object of cognition – the literary work of art – structured? And (2) What is the procedure which will lead to knowledge of the literary work; that is, how does the cognition of the work of art come about and to what can it lead?” (*CLWA*, 4). Ingarden tries to answer the first question in *The Literary Work of Art* and devotes his second book, *The Cognition of the*

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<sup>13</sup> This work was first published in German in 1931 under the title *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft*. The extended German edition appeared in 1965. The English translation appeared much later, in 1973.

*Literary Work of Art*,<sup>14</sup> to the second. These two works are complementary, since Ingarden believes that there is a strong correlation between the object of cognition and the way it is cognized: “The epistemological investigations which have been carried out by phenomenologists since Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* show that between the mode of cognition and the object of cognition there is a special correlation; there is perhaps even an adaptation of the cognition to its object” (*CLWA*, 8). Hence, as complementary works, the first book investigates the noematic side of literature, while the second focuses on the noetic side.

In this chapter, my aim is to lay out the basics of Ingarden’s literary theory and examine some basic elements and concepts he offers which will help us understand the transformative power of literary artworks in terms of their artistic character.

The chapter is composed of four sections. In the first section, I analyse the intentional nature and the schematic structure of the literary artwork. My aim is to show that the literary work of art is both ontologically and semantically incomplete. This incompleteness is important for our project in two ways. First, by virtue of this incompleteness, the work needs the active contribution of the reader in order to be concretized as a whole. Hence, a research into the nature of the literary work of art cannot be accomplished without an investigation of the act of reading. Second, due to its incomplete nature, the work is open to various interpretations, which are equally admissible. Through various possible concretizations the work can be reconstructed in various ways on different readings. Apart from these outcomes of the incomplete nature of the literary artwork, we will also see that as an intentional object, the work can be

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<sup>14</sup> This work was first published in Polish in 1937. In 1968 a greatly extended version of the work appeared in German. This extended version was translated into English in 1973.

reduced neither to the psychic state of the author or the reader nor to the physical medium that carries the work as a fixed and intersubjectively accessible constitution.

In the second section I discuss the stratified structure of the literary work of art. First I examine how the reader apprehends the different strata of the work, and then I examine the nature of aesthetic experience and aesthetic apprehension of the work as a whole. Taken together with the concretization process I laid out in the previous section, we come to see the complex and interrelated processes that are carried out by a reader in order to apprehend a literary work of art.

The third section is about the fictional or, to use Ingarden's terminology, the quasi-real character of the literary artwork. In this section, I will show that sentences composing the literary work of art do not refer to the extra-textual world, as is the case in scientific works. The affirmative sentences in a literary artwork cannot be held responsible for what they represent. This means that we are not supposed to take them seriously and check their identification with the objects or states of affairs in the real world. Hence the impact of the work is not to be found in any kind of propositional knowledge that is supplied by it.

In the fourth section of this chapter I will discuss what Ingarden calls the "idea" of the work. Although what he means by this idea is quite ambiguous and hard to grasp, the important point is Ingarden's stress on the artistic and aesthetic nature of the apprehension of the idea. The idea of a literary artwork can only be understood through an aesthetic cognition of the work. In this sense, general statements that are extracted from the work without regarding its aesthetic nature are not permissible.

## 1. The Literary Work of Art as an Intentional Object with a Schematic Structure

Ingarden starts his investigation into the mode of existence of the literary work of art by asking the question “among what kind of objects is the literary work of art to be included – the real or the ideal?” (*LWA*, 9). Ingarden’s analyses show that literary artworks can be categorized neither as real nor as ideal objects. Literary artworks cannot be real objects, for a literary work is no more than a “determinately ordered manifold of sentences” (*LWA*, 11). And a sentence is not something real; rather it “is supposed to be a specific ideal sense constructed out of a manifold of ideal meanings” (*LWA*, 11). In a similar manner, neither can literary artworks be placed in the category of ideal objects because, unlike ideal objects, they have a temporal character. Every work of art comes into being and may cease at a certain time; it can thus be said to have a lifespan. Moreover, during this lifespan, the work of art may be subject to possible changes and modifications (e.g.: authorial or editorial changes). In addition to these points, if being autonomous and independent of any cognitive act is a peculiar property of real and ideal objects, a literary artwork does not share this property. It is not an autonomous object in this manner. As we will see shortly, it has the source of its being in the conscious creative acts of the author, and in that sense, it is a heteronomous object. As a result, it is problematic to categorize a literary work either as a real or an ideal object. What kind of object is a literary work of art, then? Ingarden tries to solve this problem by defining literary works as purely intentional objects: “The literary work as such is a purely intentional formation which has the source of its being in the creative acts of consciousness of its author and its physical foundation in the text set down in writing or through other physical means of possible reproduction (for instance, the tape recorder)” (*CLWA*, 14).

By characterizing the literary work as a purely intentional object, Ingarden first of all eliminates the difficulties caused by psychologistic and physicalistic ideas of literature. The literary work can neither be reduced to its physical foundation (e.g., signs on the paper, sound recording, etc.) nor to the psychic experience of the author or the reader.<sup>15</sup> It cannot be reduced to its physical foundation because its existence depends on the conscious acts of the author and, as we will see, its realization as an aesthetic object depends on the conscious acts of the reader. However, the dependencies we have just mentioned cannot lead to a reduction of the work into the psychic states of the author or the reader. As soon as the work is constituted as an intentional object, it transcends the projecting consciousness of the author. And the realisation of the work as an aesthetic object by the reader is somewhat limited by the linguistic strata of the work, such that this limitedness and the invariable character of the linguistic strata affords the work an intersubjectively accessible and reproducible quality. As we will investigate in more detail in the proceeding sections, this intersubjective character saves the work from the arbitrariness of subjectivist reduction. The work “is not a psychological phenomenon and is transcendent to all experiences of consciousness, those of the author as well as those of the reader” (*CLWA*, 14).

By distinguishing the literary work from the intentions of the author, Ingarden can be regarded as one of the first to deny the kind of literary criticism that delineates the literary artwork as the exposition of the author’s intentions. This position, which sounds very familiar to contemporary readers whose views have been shaped by the theoretical outputs of formalism, new criticism, and deconstructionist or reader-response theories, was revolutionary for Ingarden’s time. The literary work is constituted as a heteronomous object in the sense that it needs the intentional acts of the

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<sup>15</sup> Psychologism and physicalism were two predominant theories of the time. See (Ingarden *PTL*) and (Ingarden *PPL*) for a detailed discussion of this issue.

author in order to come into existence, while also being separated from her psychic states. In some works, a close relation may be observed between the work and its author. This relation can be exposed by a literary historian with the help of some external supplements (diaries or letters of the author, biographical studies, etc.). Moreover, the individual qualities and the structure of the work may depend on some psychic qualities of its author, her talent, feelings, or her ideological or moral standpoint. And in such a case, the work can be apprehended as an expression of these qualities. Such relations may be important for literary history or cultural studies, but they do not say anything about the literary artwork as a work of art. As we will see much later, a literary work of art is not an artistically designed pretext for expressing the various states, feelings, or thoughts of the author. These qualities are not essential to the literary work as a work of art and they do not contribute to the aesthetic quality of the work. Hence, “the author, with all his vicissitudes, experiences and psychic states, remains completely outside the literary work” (*LWA*, 22). Excluding the psychic states and intentions of the author from the territories of literary interpretation is the first step in Ingarden’s theory, which will be followed by a second step: an examination of the appropriate apprehension of the work by the reader without taking the intention and the psychic state of the author into consideration. In this way, Ingarden displaced the main focus of literary interpretation from the relation between the work and the author to the relation between the work and the reader.

Before proceeding with the work–reader relation, we should return to Ingarden’s understanding of the intentional object and focus on different types of intentionality. This will be illuminating for both the mentioned relation and the forthcoming discussion about literary objects. We may define an intentional object as an object that exists in relation to an act of consciousness. Ingarden develops this Husserlian idea by

differentiating between different types of intentional objects.<sup>16</sup> First of all, one must distinguish between “purely intentional” and “also intentional” objects. A purely intentional object draws the source of its existence from an act of consciousness, whereas an also intentional object exists autonomously and happens to be a target of an intention. In this sense, a flower that I perceive in the garden is an also intentional object: it is the intentional object of my perception, but its existence does not depend on my act of consciousness. Hence its intentionality is accidental, not intrinsic to the flower itself. By contrast, a literary work is a purely intentional object for it is essentially the target of an intentional act. Being the intentional target of the creative acts of the author is not accidental to the work; rather its existence depends on these acts; hence it is intrinsically intentional.<sup>17</sup> Ingarden, then, progresses by claiming that purely intentional objects are furthermore either “originally purely intentional objects” or “derived purely intentional objects.” Ingarden says:

The former draw the source of their existence and their essence from concrete acts of consciousness effected by an ego; the latter owe their existence and essence to formations, in particular to units of meaning of different orders, which contain a “borrowed” intentionality. Since formations of this kind refer back to the original intentionality of acts of consciousness, even the derived purely intentional objects have their *ultimate* source of existence in these acts. (LWA, 118)

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<sup>16</sup> For a criticism of Ingarden’s adaptation of this Husserlian concept, see (Dufrenne 1973, 206–12). Dufrenne claims that Ingarden misunderstands the relation between the intentional and real object in Husserl’s philosophy. Since my aim is not to discuss Ingarden’s challenge to Husserl’s idealism, I shall not deal with Dufrenne’s criticism here. I only want to note that when Dufrenne criticizes Ingarden on this issue, he refers to *The Literary Work of Art* instead of *Controversy over the Existence of the World*, which is Ingarden’s main work on the problem. Most probably he was not aware of this work, since at the time the book was available only in Polish. For references on this problem see the following note.

<sup>17</sup> This distinction between the “purely intentional object” and “also intentional object” lays at the core of Ingarden’s realist phenomenology, which he develops against Husserl’s transcendental idealism. In fact, his works in aesthetics are a part of a much broader project. By characterising artworks as purely intentional objects, his aim was to re-open the realism–idealism controversy and suggest an alternative position, which was conceptualized later by his commentators as a “realist phenomenology.” To what extent this project is successful, or to what extent the literary work of art as a pure intentional object contributes to this broader project, is beyond the scope of this thesis. As will be seen shortly, what interests me here is the contribution of this characterization to a theory of reading that will constitute the main focus of the thesis. For some discussions about the mentioned project, see (Ingarden *Controversy*); (Ingarden *Letter*); (Ingarden *Motives*); (Mitscherling 1996, Chapter 2); (Tymieniecka 1976).

Now, according to this categorization, a literary work of art is an originally purely intentional object; as we have mentioned, it owes its existence to the creative acts of the author. However, literary objects that are presented in a literary work of art are derived purely intentional objects. They owe their existence and essence to the semantic stratum of the work, where this stratum is composed of meaning units of various kinds (words, sentences, sentence complexes etc.) and possesses borrowed intentionality, which it derives from the conscious acts of the author. In Jitendranth Mohanty's words, "they are what they are by virtue of the meanings of the words and the sentences, and the latter again derive their intentionalities from the intentional acts of conscious beings" (1997, 33). The literary work of art, in Ingarden's theory, is then a purely intentional object. The literary artwork projects literary objects by means of various devices and strategies developed by the author in the text. These literary objects are derived purely intentional objects.<sup>18</sup> And, as will be clarified in the following pages, these objects come into appearance through "states of affairs," which also have a derived purely intentional character. The important thing here is that both literary objects and intentional states of affairs need the imaginative conscious acts of the reader in order to come into appearance, or to use Ingarden's words, to be objectified.

At this point, we can focus on the consequence of the intentional character of literary artworks and literary objects on the relation between the work and the reader. Because intentional objects are not fully determined like real objects, the literary work of art contains various points of indeterminacy that need the co-operative acts of the reader in order to be filled in. Thus, for Ingarden the work has a schematic structure. In some works, (e.g. the modern novel) this schematic structure may be more visible and

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<sup>18</sup> In this project, my concern is mainly with original purely intentional objects and derived purely intentional objects. For the sake of simplicity, I will use "purely intentional object" for the former and "derived intentional object" for the latter.

profound, but all literary works essentially have a schematic structure due to the intentional nature of the portrayed objects of the work. What does Ingarden mean when he says that the literary work is essentially schematic? What is the consequence of this schematic structure for the reader? How does it shape the reading act? In order to answer these questions, I will first discuss Ingarden's understanding of schematism in more detail, then I will focus on the role of the reader in the apprehension of the literary artwork in terms of its schematic structure.

Ingarden claims that the objects, states of affairs, and other elements portrayed in a work of art are not fully determined. The work contains gaps that should be filled in by the reader; "at least some of its strata, especially the objective stratum, contain a series of 'places of indeterminacy'" (*CLWA*, 50).<sup>19</sup> This is not an accident, but a necessary and essential characteristic of the literary work which has its roots in its structural limitedness and intentional nature. A literary work, as we know, is composed of finite semantic units of different degree; words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters etc. The objects and state of affairs in a literary work of art, which are determined by infinite and ever-changing properties, are presented as meaning correlates of these semantic units. It is the essential disproportion between the things portrayed and the semantic means of representation in the work that results in the schematic structure of the work: "It is impossible to establish clearly and exhaustively the infinite multiplicity of determinacies of the individual objects portrayed in the work with a finite number of words or sentences" (*CLWA*, 51). Hence, the literary work suffers from an incompleteness, but as we will see shortly, this incompleteness will contribute to the

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<sup>19</sup> Related to this issue, see the discussion by John Fizer in: "Schematism: Aesthetic Device or Psychological Necessity." In this paper, Fizer claims that our perception of objects in the real world is also schematic. Hence, schematism is not peculiar to literary works. However, later, in his reply to a letter written by Ingarden on this article, Fizer states that he agrees with Ingarden that there is a distinction between these two schematisms. See (Ingarden and Fizer 1970, 542).

literary work of art with regard to its aesthetic value. In addition, because this schematic structure gives the reader freedom to concretize the work in various possible ways, it is a productive incompleteness. But before focusing on the contribution of the schematic structure to the aesthetic value of the work, we should once more note the relation between the schematic structure and the intentional character of the work. In a letter written as a reply to John Fizer, Ingarden states that “pure intentional objects projected from language means or from conscious acts have necessarily areas of indeterminateness in their content” (Ingarden and Fizer 1970, 543). As a result, the incompleteness of literary work is not an epistemological, but an ontological incompleteness. The same situation is also applicable to derived intentional objects. That is to say, the objects portrayed in a literary work are also incomplete in an ontological sense.

Barry Smith explains the distinction between epistemological and ontological incompleteness with the help of the term “access” (Smith 1979, 379). He states that we have direct access to contemporary human beings through various kinds of physical contact. To no-longer-existing human beings, on the other hand, we have weaker access. We can access them only through memories, newspaper reports, historical documents, memoirs, etc. And because our knowledge of them depends on a finite quantity of such informative means, it is always incomplete. This incompleteness is epistemological in nature: “if we know only that Henry Nth lost an arm in the Battle of X, but not which arm, then we do not suppose that after the battle Henry himself was ontologically structured in such a way that the missing arm was indeterminately neither right nor left” (Smith 1979, 380). When it comes to fictional characters, we have incomplete access to them as well. We can access them through the determinations given by means of the semantic units of the literary work. Due to the schematic structure of the work, our

knowledge of the characters in a literary work of art is incomplete. This incompleteness, in contrast to the incompleteness of our knowledge of historical characters, is an intrinsic incompleteness. It is an incompleteness suffered by the characters themselves as intentional objects. In other words, the problematic character of our access to literary objects does not originate from any epistemological incompleteness that may arise due to inadequacies in a particular reading; rather it comes up as a result of the ontological character of the work in its intentionality.

In this sense, real objects (either existing objects or objects that existed in the past) cannot be ontologically incomplete. It is clear that when we perceive real objects, our perception is partial and one-sided, hence there is always a possibility of further perceptions of different determinations of the same object, or, as we saw in the discussion about our access to historical characters, a possibility of further supplementary information. In Rene Wellek's words, "every real object is fully determined, and in experiencing it we can always discover new determinations" (Wellek 1981, 60). Hence if we can talk about an incompleteness of real objects it can only be an epistemological incompleteness. "Fictional objects on the other hand," says Barry Smith, "are such that from the very start we can exclude the possibility of supplementary information, information which would be additional to that which is to be found in (or, within certain limits, *read into*) the texts themselves" (Smith 1979, 381). Thus, the incompleteness of fictional objects is an ontological incompleteness that is intrinsic to those objects.

At this point, we should note that although the schematic structure is intrinsic to the literary work and in this sense inevitable, the degree of schematization may differ in different works. This difference may result from stylistic and formal differences between the works. That means we can talk about a deliberate schematism intended by

the author for the sake of artistic composition or as a strategy of a certain literary technique. Although Ingarden accepts deliberate schematism as a technique, he does not think it overly important, for in the period in which he wrote his books, literary ambiguity as a new functional device was becoming popular, as a result of the change of style that emerged with modernist literature, itself a result of the change of paradigm in representing reality. We will see in the following chapters that, especially in the modern works, the deliberate schematism leads to an increase of indeterminacies in the work, and this causes a shift of interpretative paradigm. Through this paradigm shift, the horizontal expectations of the reader are negated and forced to be re-shaped. In other words, the new paradigm demands a new type of reader, which accords with the new horizon suggested by the new work. This phenomenon clearly shows the historical condition of the notion of “reader”. The new work, by virtue of its negational function, creates its new reader.<sup>20</sup>

Laying out the structural and ontological bases of the schematic structure of the literary work of art in this way, we can focus on the role of the reader in apprehending the work as a schematic structure. As a schematic structure containing “points of indeterminacy,” the work calls for the reader to apprehend its portrayed world in its most complete form possible, and hence to remove at least some of the places of indeterminacy. The process of filling in the gaps and removing the points of indeterminacy is what Ingarden calls the “concretization of the work.” As we will see shortly, the same work is open to various concretizations, which are equally admissible. In virtue of the concretization process, the reader, in the act of reading, is not limited to the role of a passive perceiver, but is an active co-creator of the finished product. In addition, the possibility of various concretizations allows the reader a certain degree of

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<sup>20</sup>For a detailed discussion of this issue see the first section of the next chapter, where I discuss the historical aspect of Iser’s “implied reader”.

freedom in the sense that she is not obliged to realize the work in a pre-determined way.

We can now turn to the details of concretization.

Concretization is a process that occurs during the act of reading, when the reader involuntarily “fills out” various places of indeterminacy with her own initiative and imagination by using the elements she has chosen among many possible and permissible ones:

The reader then reads between lines and involuntarily complements many of the sides of the portrayed objectivities not determined in the text itself, through an overexplicit understanding of the sentences and especially of the nouns appearing in them. I call this complementing determination the “concretization” of the portrayed objects. In concretization, the peculiar cocreative activity of the reader comes into play. (*CLWA*, 51)

As mentioned, there may be differences among the concretizations of the same work by different readers, or even by the same reader in different readings. Although these possible concretizations are constrained by the linguistic strata of the work, we can talk about various possible concretizations within these limits. We can talk about two main sources of difference in concretization; the capacity of the reader and the partial nature of cognition. The capacity of the reader is not independent from the state or attitude in which she finds herself at the moment of the reading act. Hence concretizational attitudes may show differences in different epochs of the literary history. At this point, says Ingarden, we can talk about “the ‘life’ of one and the same work in various epochs as a historical process in which the continuity of being and the identity of the work are maintained despite all changes” (*CLWA*, 55).<sup>21</sup> The reader, in

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<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed discussion of “the life of the work,” see (*LWA*, 348–350). Here Ingarden claims that many readers are influenced by the “literary atmosphere” of the era. Thus, we can observe similar concretizations in certain epochs in literary history. What he means by literary atmosphere is a tradition of understanding the work in a certain manner, which is gradually developed by a group of readers who are interrelated. It is noteworthy that what he means by “literary atmosphere” is very similar to Stanley Fish’s notion of the “interpretive community,” which he defines as a group of readers who determine the “interpretive strategies” of a certain era. See (Fish 1980, 167–173). How the identity of the

her concretizing act, activates these potentialities and determines the indeterminacies only partially. “It is impossible, even with the best intentions, to remove all places of indeterminacy” (*CLWA*, 241). Hence, every concretization is in the end schematic to a degree and this situation supports the possibility of different concretizations of the same work too. In every reading of the same work, we may talk about different degrees of concretization of diverse indeterminacies and the actualization of diverse potentialities in the work. This diversity of the possible concretizations leads to various aesthetic objects as the products of the concretization process.<sup>22</sup>

Here, I want to contrast Ingarden’s understanding of schematism with a more recent one in order to make it clearer. The incomplete nature of the literary works has been remarked upon by many theorists and philosophers since Ingarden. Noel Carroll, for example, talks about these incomplete structures as follows:

As is well known, narratives make all sorts of presuppositions, and it is the task of the reader, viewer, or listener to fill these in. It is of the nature of narrative to be essentially incomplete. Every narrative makes an indeterminate number of presuppositions that the audience must bring, so to speak, to the text. All authors must rely upon the audience’s knowledge of certain things that are not explicitly stated. Authors always write in the expectation that the audience will correctly fill in what has been left unsaid. ... No artist can say or depict everything there is to say or to depict about the fictional events she is narrating. She depends upon the audience to fill in a great deal and that filling-in is an indispensable part of what it is to follow and to comprehend a narrative. (Carroll 2001, 280)

Carroll, in the notes to his chapter on the incomplete structure of literary works, gives an example from Doyle’s serial novel *Sherlock Holmes*; “Arthur Conan Doyle need not inform us that Sherlock Holmes has only one liver rather than three because, unless informed otherwise, we will use our standing person schema to form our

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work is maintained despite the variety of subjective concretizations will be dealt with in the following pages.

<sup>22</sup> Ingarden also states that these possible concretizations may differ in value from an aesthetic point of view. I will not dwell upon the difference between these values, since the aesthetic value of the work is not relevant to our problem at this point. See (Ingarden *AAV*)

conception of Sherlock Holmes” (Carroll 2001, 428). For Ingarden, however, Sherlock Holmes’ having only one liver instead of three is not a point of indeterminacy in the text: “not everything that is not stated expressly in the text of the work is ... a ‘place of indeterminacy’ in our sense. What is thus unspoken can be what is said (meant) implicitly and unambiguously, either as presupposition or consequence” (*CLWA*, 242). Hence, Holmes’ having one liver, although not expressed in the text, can easily be deduced from the text as an unambiguous consequence of certain determinations given in the text. For Holmes is presented as a human being and because there is no expression or implication in the text about an anomaly in his anatomical structure, the reader unconsciously supposes that he has only one liver. In Ingarden’s words, “It is so ‘self-evident’ that it does not need to be stated” (*CLWA*, 243). In that sense, not all things that are left unsaid are points of indeterminacy in the text. If we take such self-evident entities in the text as gaps, there would be very little difference between various individual concretizations and it would be difficult to talk about the emancipatory effect of the schematic structure. What are taken as points of indeterminacy in a text by Ingarden are the gaps that are neither expressed nor implied by the determinations that are given in the text. To continue with Carroll’s example, if Holmes’ eye-colour is not expressed in the text, this constitutes a point of indeterminacy that can be filled in by the reader. If the reader concretizes Holmes as a blue-eyed man, and if this is not falsified by any part of the text, it can be counted as a valid concretization. In this sense, it is obvious that Ingarden’s understanding of schematism gives much creative power to the reader and provides a greater openness to the work in contrast to Carroll’s.

One may ask at this point how the identity of the work is maintained in Ingarden’s theory if the concretization of the work is so dependent on the subjective acts of the reader? The answer lies in Ingarden’s differentiation between the literary work of

art itself (which I shall call the “artistic object”) from the concretized work that Ingarden calls the “aesthetic object.” This differentiation has its source in the three interrelated ways of approaching the literary artwork. Ingarden again and again stresses that the appropriate attitude for the reader to take in cognizing a literary work is the aesthetic attitude, which means that she should concretize the literary work of art in an aesthetic manner. However, it is obvious that aesthetic cognition is not the only way of cognizing the literary work of art. We may talk about a variety of other ways. A literary historian can read a literary work of art in order to approach some clues about the life of the author, a philologist can focus on the phonetic or semantic stratum of the work in order to discover its linguistic structure, and an ordinary reader may read a literary piece only to kill time or amuse herself. We may talk about many other possible ways of approaching a literary work of art. Ingarden leaves many of these possible ways out of the scope of his work, saying that these ways of cognizing a literary work of art are inappropriate to the essential function of the work, which is to constitute an aesthetic object. Other functions that can be attributed to a literary work – such as giving information about the period in which the plot takes place or imposing a political view – can only be regarded as secondary functions, and these functions cannot be of interest to literary studies but only to other areas like psychology, sociology, or cultural studies. Ingarden mainly examines two kind of cognitive attitudes that differ according to the intention with which the reading activity is carried out. The first is the “aesthetic” attitude, in which the purpose of the reading act is “bringing the work through a reading to the actualization of an aesthetic concretization in order to enjoy it aesthetically in this concretization and to contemplate it” (*CLWA*, 170). The second is “the purely cognitive ‘investigative attitude,’” which aims at an objective knowledge of the work itself or its aesthetically concretized form. The investigative attitude can be carried out in two

ways: through a pre-aesthetic attitude and through a reflective-aesthetic attitude. The pre-aesthetic way of reading investigates the work in its schematic formation (the work itself/artistic object) while the reflective-aesthetic investigation of the work takes the concretized work actualized in aesthetic experience (aesthetic object) as its research object.<sup>23</sup>

Differentiating three types of literary cognition allows Ingarden to separate the artistic object and the aesthetic object as the outcomes of two different acts. The artistic object is constructed through a pre-aesthetic reconstruction, while the aesthetic object is the product of an aesthetic concretization.<sup>24</sup> This differentiation helps Ingarden to postulate artistic and aesthetic values as different entities. In addition, such a differentiation helps Ingarden to constitute the literary work of art as an intersubjective object. We have seen that literary artworks can be concretized in various ways and the way they are concretized is determined by the competence of the reader or her decisions. Hence, we can say that every particular concretization is to a certain degree subjective. It is a product of a peculiar experience of a specific reading of a specific subject. However, both the pre-aesthetic and reflective-aesthetic cognitions and the interpretations that appear at the end of these cognitions are intersubjective and in that sense, make literary study possible. As Eugene H. Falk tells us, according to Ingarden, “[t]he *purpose* of literary criticism must be the aesthetic concretization of individual works of art. The *task* of criticism must be an account of an aesthetic concretization and

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<sup>23</sup> Here it is important to note that pre-aesthetic investigation of a literary work does not have to be temporally prior to aesthetic cognition of the work. A pre-aesthetic investigation can be carried out after concretizing the work aesthetically. Moreover, different aesthetic concretizations can enhance our understanding of the work itself. Ingarden emphasizes this point by saying that “the individual differences among concretizations enable us to establish what belongs to the work itself and what belongs to the concretizations conditioned by contingencies” (*LWA*, 336–37 n.) We can observe a similar observation between a pre-aesthetic and reflective-aesthetic cognition.

<sup>24</sup> At this point, we should note the difference between “reconstruction” and “concretization” in Ingarden’s theory. Reconstruction is the creative apprehension of the work by the reader in a pre-aesthetic investigation: “it forms the limiting case of the ‘concretization’ of the work, in which all places of indeterminacy and all potentialities remain (as in the work itself); i.e., they are not filled out or actualized” (*LWA*, 337 n.).

an artistic and aesthetic evaluation based on that concretization” (Falk 1981, 204). Such a process is possible only by realizing the differences between these three kinds of interrelated cognitions. While the pre-aesthetic attitude determines the value potentialities and points of indeterminacies in the work, the reflective-aesthetic attitude is mainly concerned with the aesthetic value of various individual concretizations. By means of the investigative attitude we can also examine the validity of these concretizations, either by contrasting the aesthetic object with the artistic object or by contrasting it with other aesthetic objects concretized from the same work through different readings. As Rene Wellek explains, “the problem of falsifying concretizations is regulated by literary criticism which has the task of reconstructing a work in its context, to see to it that it is interpreted correctly” (Wellek 1973, 63). What is important here is the fact that such a distinction between these types of cognition is only possible in virtue of the schematic structure of the work. We can talk about the artistic object differing from the aesthetic object only if we can assume that we can approach the work without filling in the points of indeterminacy and actualizing the potentialities in the work.

In conclusion, by defining the literary work of art as a schematized object which requires the reader’s conscious acts in order to be concretized, many years before the blossoming of reader-oriented theories, Ingarden showed us the indisputable role of the reader in the formation of the literary work of art. In Gerald Prince’s words, “as early as [1931] 1973, he studied the ways in which readers (adequately) realize or concretize a work of art, the ways in which they transform a text or mere series of sentences into an esthetic object by filling gaps or places of indeterminacy in that text” (Prince, paragraph 6). Thanks to the intentional nature of the objects portrayed in the work and the schematized structure of the strata of the work of art, the reader becomes a co-

creator of the aesthetic object as the final product of the aesthetic cognition of the literary work of art. As a result, the literary work of art gains an eventual character. It is not a closed semantic structure with a fixed meaning to be revealed by the reader. On the contrary, it is an open work that finds its concrete form through the event of reading. In addition, rather than a fixed meaning that should be discovered by digging into the text, what Ingarden's theory suggests is a manifold of possible meanings arising through various possible concretizations. In that sense, a literary work of art is a living construction that may change in various different epochs of literary history or in the same era among the concretizations of different readers.<sup>25</sup>

## **2. The Stratified Structure of the Literary Work of Art and Apprehension of it as a Whole**

In the preceding section I laid out the schematic structure of the literary work and the need for a concretizational act on the part of the reader in order for the work to be realized as an aesthetic object. However, concretization is not the only practice that should actively be carried out by the reader. There are various other elements in the work that call for such creative acts. These elements stem from the stratified structure of the literary artwork. Each stratum of the work requests specific operations to be carried out in order for it to be apprehended by the reader. In this section my aim is to show how each of these operations are accomplished by the reader in relation to the stratified structure of the literary artwork. In order to attain this goal, I will introduce Ingarden's understanding of aesthetic experience, since all these operations should be carried out in

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<sup>25</sup> Although it is the most important and most prepotent one, concretization is not the only factor that offers openness to the literary artwork in Ingarden's theory. As we will see in the following section, there are various other subjective acts that the reader should carry out in order to realize the work.

an aesthetic manner if the reader is to be faithful to the work as a work of art. At this point in our investigation, a question about the identity of the work arises. Is it possible to determine the identity of the work if the work is apprehended by the reader through various subjective acts, which are indispensable factors for the constitution of the work of art as an aesthetic object? To answer this question, I return to and investigate in more detail what Ingarden calls the “investigative attitude,” which implies a cognition the aim of which is to translate either the work itself or its aesthetically concretized form into an intersubjectively validatable form.

Ingarden presents the literary work as a complex, stratified object. The literary work is a many layered formation composed of four strata:

(a) The stratum of verbal sounds and phonetic formations and phenomena of a higher order; (b) the stratum of semantic units: of sentence meanings and the meanings of whole groups of sentences; (c) the stratum of schematized aspects, in which objects of various kinds portrayed in the work come to appearance; and (d) the stratum of the objectivities portrayed in the intentional states of affairs projected by the sentences. (*CLWA*, 12)

It is this multi-layered and many-sided structure that gives the literary work its fruitful complexity. Each of these heterogeneous strata have their typical value-qualities, and these qualities contribute to the overall quality of the work as a whole: “if a literary work is a work having positive value, each of its strata contains special qualities . . . which lead to a peculiar polyphony of aesthetically valent qualities which determines the quality of the value constituted in the work” (*CLWA*,13). In other words, this heterogeneity makes the literary work a rewardingly rich polyphonic unity rather than a monotonous uniformity: “The diversity of the material and the roles (or functions) of the individual strata makes the whole work, not a monotonic formation, but one that by its nature has a polyphonic character” (*LWA*, 30).

How then is this rich, complex, and multi-layered structure cognized by the reader? For Ingarden, a literary work of art needs the conscious acts of the reader in order to be realized. Hence as an inscription on paper, it is only a collection of a bunch of potentialities that are waiting for the reader in order to be actualised.<sup>26</sup> The intended meanings, intentional objects, states of affairs, and value potentialities are just some of the constituents of the work that are to be objectified, concretized, or actualized by the reader. In the following pages, I will try to lay out the basic apprehension of the different strata of the work by the reader and show how these strata are gathered together as a whole. In order to achieve this aim I will group the four strata of the work under two headings: the stratum of verbal sounds and the stratum of semantic units constitute the linguistic strata of the work, while the stratum of schematized aspects and the stratum of objectivities constitute the quasi-visual strata. To concretize the work as a whole, the reader should first apprehend the linguistic strata, and form the meanings intended by the semantic units. This is the first step of apprehending the literary work, which I shall call “meaning formation.” This step is followed by a second step, which Ingarden calls “objectification.” Through this process the reader traverses from the linguistic strata to the quasi-visual strata of the work. Here literary objects should be reconstructed through the imaginative acts of the reader so that they can be apprehended by her as intuitive mental images. However, these literary objects are not projected in a single phase. In the complexity of the literary artwork, they appear from different viewpoints and within different aspects. The reader should synthesize all these aspects to apprehend the literary object in its totality. Through various synthesizing

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<sup>26</sup> Ingarden insists that “The print (the printed text) does not belong to the elements of the literary work of art itself . . . but merely constitutes its physical foundation” (*CLWA*, 14). In this regard, see (Shusterman, 1988). In this article, Shusterman rejects Ingarden’s position by claiming that especially in genres like concrete poetry the textual visibility is an indispensable part of the work and has an important role in determining its aesthetic value. However, Shusterman discusses the problem mainly from an aesthetic point of view, whereas Ingarden’s rejection is founded on ontological grounds.

objectifications performed by the reader, a whole world, the world of the text, comes into appearance. To put it in another way, only by way of synthesizing objectifications does the reader traverse from the linguistic strata to the quasi-visual strata, in other words, from the meaning of the text to the portrayed world of the work. However, this world, as I explained in the previous part, is schematically structured and needs the concretizing acts of the reader. By following these steps, the reader realizes the work as a whole. However, if the reader is to be faithful to the work and to cognize it in an aesthetic manner, there is one more step that she should carry out: that is, to actualize the aesthetically valent qualities that are found in various strata of the work as potentialities. In what follows I will lay out how all these acts are carried out by the reader during the act of reading.

The basic process of reading a literary work begins with reader's perception of verbal sounds; however, this is not a purely sensory perception. Rather than perceiving the unique and individual features of the verbal signs, it "goes beyond such a perception by concentrating attention on the typical features in the physical or phonetic form of the words" (*CLWA*, 20). In an ordinary reading process, the reader combines even a silent reading with an imaginary hearing of the corresponding verbal sign and the speech memory. This phonetic form of the word, along with the phonetic form of the sentence, plays an important role in the aesthetic structure of the stratum of verbal sound, and it also contributes to the overall value quality of the work. It forms the tone of the sentence, and with other formations in the text it constitutes the melody of the text. Moreover, because the reader apprehends this phonetic form not as a pure sound pattern, but as something that may express a certain emotional quality, we can also claim that it has an effect on the meaning intended by the semantic unit.

In a living language or in literary works, words almost never appear in isolation. They are part of a higher semantic unit (i.e. sentence or group of sentences). Hence their meanings are apprehended not only through their isolated lexical meanings, which are fixed in a dictionary, but also through that specific word's connection with the other words with which it is connected by various semantic functions or contextual relations (contextual meaning). Here Ingarden distinguishes three basic types of words: (1) nouns, (2) finite verbs, and (3) function words. While the noun determines its object by its form (whether it is a thing, a process, or an event), qualitative constitution (the kind and the qualities of the object), and mode of being (whether it is intended as a real or ideal or a possible object); function words (such as *is/and/or/to/by*, etc.) performs various functions, such as joining nouns or sentences together to construct a higher semantic unit, and play an important role in constituting sentences or groups of sentences. Finite verbs, on the other hand, “determine – although not alone – the states of affairs as purely intentional sentence correlates” (*CLWA*, 31). All these types of words, in conjunction with each other and with other supplementary word types, form a multiplicity of sentence structures. These structures joining in diverse ways construct semantic units of a higher order. And as Ingarden states: “From these structures arise such entities as a story, a novel, a conversation, a drama, a scientific work . . . Finally, a whole world is created with variously determined elements and the changes taking place in them” (*CLWA*, 31).

The words, according to Ingarden, have meaning intentions; and “the successful immediate discovery of the meaning intention is basically an actualization of this intention” (*CLWA*, 32). The meaning intention of a word, as stated above, is not only actualized by examining the word in isolation (lexical meaning). The reader should concentrate on the larger semantic unit of which the word is a part (contextual

meaning). The consciousness of the reader during the act of reading intends to understand the text, thus actualizing a word can also be defined as a “change [of the meaning intention of the word] into the actual intention of [the reader’s] act of understanding” (*CLWA*, 32). In reading a sentence, these actualized words stimulate the reader to produce “the unfolding of a sentence generating operation, a special mental flow in which the sentence unfolds” (*CLWA*, 33). Once the reader is transported into the flow of a sentence she is automatically referred to the next sentence, which is the continuation of the sentence that she reads, a sentence that is connected to the previous sentence. On the other hand, the meaning of the sentence just read is experienced in the form of a reverberation. Hence, any present moment in the reading experience is influenced by a double horizon: towards the past and towards the future.<sup>27</sup> In some cases, there may be some blocks in the flow; the sentence may have no perceptible connection with the former sentence. For the continuation of the flow of reading, these blocks must be overcome by the reader. At the end of this process, the reader understands the content of a work “only when [she] succeeds in making use of, and actualizing, all the constitutive elements the text provides and in constituting the organised, meaningful whole of the work in accordance with the meaning intentions contained in the stratum of the text” (*CLWA*, 35).<sup>28</sup>

The activities described so far show us how the linguistic strata (the stratum of verbal sounds and the stratum of semantic units) of the work are apprehended by the

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<sup>27</sup> This temporal perspective is not limited to the sentence-units of the work. As we will see in the following pages, the apprehension of successive phases (e.g. chapters, parts) of the work is also subject to a similar temporality. Moreover, this temporal perspective is different in the literary aesthetic experience and the aesthetic experience of other kinds of art.

<sup>28</sup> Here Ingarden uses the term “actualization,” which implies a potential that is fixed in the text. This word-choice is related to Ingarden’s philosophy of language and his understanding of meaning. For Ingarden, the essence of meaning is founded in ideal concepts. Hence, the role of the reader in this phase of the reading experience is very limited. Thus, the work itself (the artistic object) is unchangeable. The openness of the work and consequently its historicity are ensured by the quasi-visual strata. That is why concretization, rather than meaning formation, is postulated as the main concept in explaining the role of the reader in the formation of the work. It is also why the concept of meaning has a relatively small role in Ingarden’s theory. See (Riska 1976) for an insightful analysis of Ingarden’s philosophy of language.

reader. This apprehension is an indispensable means for reconstruction and cognition of the portrayed objectivities in the work. So far, only the meaning intentions of the semantic units have been actualized by the reader. Meaning, however, “is only a passageway [*ein Durchgangsobjekt*] which one traverses in order to reach the object meant” (CLWA, 40). The reader should now cognize and reconstruct the quasi-visual strata of the work. Here Ingarden distinguishes two modes of reading: ordinary, purely passive (receptive) reading and active reading. Only the latter way allows the reader to achieve the objectivities portrayed in the work. In active reading, the reader is not a passive perceiver whose role is only to understand the meaning of the work; rather she is an agent, a co-creator of the work. By projecting herself into the realm of the portrayed objectivities of the work and the intentional aspects through which these objectivities appear, she takes an active role in the production of the aesthetic object as the final product of the whole event: the literary work of art. The objectivities portrayed in the work as an intentional projection of sentence meanings are of diverse kinds and forms. And those objectivities, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, are derived intentional objectivities. They are projected in the text by intentional states of affairs and it is the role of the reader to reconstruct them as the intentional correlates of the semantic units. Ingarden calls this process “objectification” and defines it as “the transition from the intentional states of affairs to the objects portrayed in the literary work of art” (CLWA, 41). Objectification may vary in every individual reading and these individual differences may also affect the concretization of the whole work, and may lead to different individual concretizations of the one and the same work.

As I mentioned above, the portrayed objects in a literary work of art are not portrayed in a single temporal phase. During the work, they are projected in different states of affairs, within different aspects; sometimes gaining new attributes, sometimes

losing the attributes they had in a previous state. The various portrayed objects of the work are also connected with each other in various ways. And from these connections the reader in the reading act reveals some latent attributes of the objects in question. All these attributes are apprehended by the reader in the successive parts of the work. These parts are connected with each other: “[The literary work] consists of parts or phases which in various ways influence one another, determine one another more closely, and lead to an internally closed whole or, rather, can be discerned only in this whole” (*CLWA*, 73). Hence, the interconnection of these successive parts and their dependence on each other should also be grasped by the reader in order to reveal the latent attributes of the literary objects.<sup>29</sup> All in all, in order for the portrayed objects to attain their independence, all these attributes should be integrated by the reader. Such an integration can be attained only by a synthesizing objectification, which is defined by Ingarden as an apprehension of the portrayed objectivities in their totality in the portrayed world of the literary artwork. Thus, a literary object appears in various aspects and in various relations with other objects in the work, and this variety discloses the lives of the portrayed objects. This dynamic “life” of the objects in their relation to other units of the work reveals the world of the text to the reader:

From a series of such situations we learn about the fate of several things which stand in various relations to one another. Thus, in the course of reading, a self-sufficient world of things, people, occurrences, and events, a world with its own dynamics and emotional atmosphere, reveals itself. All this by way of objects portrayed in the work. It is precisely the intentional states of affairs which exercise the function of nominal portraying. (*CLWA*, 43)

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<sup>29</sup> Ingarden here seems to presuppose that the relations between successive parts of the work are determined by the work. Hence the task of the reader is to grasp these connections and reveal the attributes of the literary objects in relation to these. However, as we will see in the following chapter, for Iser these relations constitute the main blanks of the text. They are not determined by the text; rather they should be constructed by the reader. In this sense, they are open to different realizations and this openness may result in differences in the affective quality of the work.

Hence, there are two kinds of synthesizing activities that should be carried out by the reader during the act of reading. First, the reader should synthesize the value-qualities projected in the four main strata of the work. Second, she should synthesize the attributions of the projected objectivities presented in various parts of the work. In other words, only by carrying out many synthesizing objectifications can the reader apprehend the portrayed objectivities in their unified form, and these unified objectivities together constitute the portrayed world of the work. And, as we saw above, the objectified world apprehended in this sense is schematic in structure, and calls for concretizing acts on the part of the reader. Up to now we have examined how in Ingarden's theory different strata of the work are apprehended by the reader and how the projected objectivities are realized in their wholeness through various synthesizing objectifications. The phenomenologically important point here is that all these different operations are closely interconnected and are carried out not sequentially but simultaneously:

The strata of the work with which we become acquainted in this way are not isolated formations but appear together from the start in various more or less close connections. Despite the variety and quantity of operations, their simultaneous performance constitutes the first, indispensable step in apprehending the whole work, especially where its aesthetic apprehension is concerned. (*CLWA*, 72)

The strata of the work, despite their heterogeneity, are not completely independent of each other either in their being or in their determinations: "In the literary work there is an interconnection of strata in structure and function which is analogous to the mutual influence of various organs in an organism" (*CLWA*, 72). Hence, like an organism, the heterogeneous but interconnected strata of the work should be apprehended by the reader simultaneously in order to grasp them as an organic unity.

As we will see in the next section, the process we have summarized above is peculiar to literary artworks. In that sense another important point that should be mentioned is Ingarden's insistence on the aesthetic character of the appropriate cognition of the literary artwork. In order to cognize the work in an aesthetic manner, there is one more performance that should be carried out by the reader in the act of reading: actualizing the value potentialities of the work.<sup>30</sup>

Aesthetic qualities are found as potentials in the work itself (artistic object) and may exist in every stratum of the work. During cognition, these potential qualities – which Ingarden calls “aesthetically valent qualities” – are actualized by the reader. However, all actualizing effort is doomed to be partial. As Ingarden states, “every concretization of a literary work of art is also schematic to some degree” (*CLWA*, 300). It may not be possible for a reader to realize all these possibilities and concretize all of them aesthetically. Hence, in every individual reading different manifolds of aesthetically valent qualities may be actualized by the reader, which will result in different realizations of the same work. In this sense, we can talk about different aesthetic objects as the products of various possible actualizations and the overall aesthetic value of these aesthetic objects may differ from one another.

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<sup>30</sup> Here Ingarden only talks about the actualization of aesthetic values. And this attitude is understandable, since for him the appropriate way of cognizing a literary work is to cognize it in an aesthetic manner. One can ask here if we can talk about other kinds of value-qualities present in the work in potentiality (e.g.: ethically valent qualities). However, because the aim of an aesthetic cognition is to apprehend the overall aesthetic value of the work by concretizing it in an aesthetic manner, other kinds of value potentialities and their being actualized by the reader would be an indispensable part of the literary cognition only if we presuppose that these actualizations contribute to the overall aesthetic value of the work. But one can again ask if, e.g., an ethically valent quality in a work contributes to the overall aesthetic value of the work, why don't we take it as an aesthetically valent value instead of compartmentalizing it under another headline? Ingarden remains silent on this issue. But it seems to me that in such a situation he would characterize the questioned value as an aesthetically valent value that can also be actualised as an ethically valent value. But in the latter case, such an actualization would contribute to the overall ethical value of the work, which serves our ethical cognition. And such cognition is inappropriate, for it does not say anything to us about the work as a work of art.

Taken all together, by carrying out the four processes (meaning formation, objectification, actualization of value potentialities, and concretization) we have laid out so far, the reader cognizes the work as an aesthetic object. According to Ingarden, such a cognition is possible only through an aesthetic experience and only through such an experience can the reader apprehend the overall idea of the work. Hence, in the following, I will lay out the basics of aesthetic experience as it is presented by Ingarden. This will help us in two ways. First, it will help us grasp what Ingarden means by aesthetic cognition of the work more clearly. Second, it will illuminate a question we will ask in the following chapters about the idea of the work.

Ingarden defines aesthetic experience not as a momentary experience, but as a “process which unfolds in a multiplicity of successive experiences and modes of behaviour of the aesthetic beholder and which must, so to speak, fulfil particular functions in its individual phases” (*CLWA*, 186). It starts with a peculiar quality, or a multiplicity of qualities. This specific quality produces a quite peculiar emotion in the perceiver, which Ingarden calls “original emotion.” The original emotion produces a “check” in the preceding normal course of experience and mode of the perceiver. The perceiver is separated from what was occupying her a moment ago, this becomes something uninterested, a matter of indifference. The actual present moment, which is always framed by an echo of the immediate past and indications of an unfolding future, is deadened by the original emotion. The present moment of the perceiver is filled with original emotion and she is led to the further phases of aesthetic experience. This is a transition from the daily life to the active life of aesthetic experience: “[O]ne passes from the attitude which focuses on facts in the real world, which are either in existence or are to be realized, to an attitude which focuses on intuitive qualitative formations and the achievement of a direct contact with them” (*CLWA*, 194–95).

The perception of the peculiar quality that stirs an original emotion in the perceiver gives her an aesthetic attitude, prompts her to behold other aesthetically valent qualities in the work, and reconstruct the work of art as a particular aesthetic object. The perceiver, with the help of the possibilities provided by the work of art, looks for the details and facets of these possibilities to apprehend new aesthetically relevant qualities that are in harmony with the first peculiar quality, and at the end constructs a qualitative harmony that is a proportionate synthetization of the aesthetic qualities of the work. As a result, the aesthetic experience for Ingarden is a process of multiple successive experiences and modes of behaviour that begins with an original emotion, and which emerges with a certain quality in the work, aiming at constituting a structured, qualitative harmony.

Here, we can ask whether there is a specifically “literary” experience or whether such experience belongs to aesthetic experience in general? Ingarden answers this question by stating that aesthetic experiences in literary cognitions differ in many ways from aesthetic experiences that take place in the apprehension of a sculpture, a picture, an architectural work, etc. However, these distinctions are not so important as to allow a compartmentalization of aesthetics and to deny a general type of aesthetic experience. They apply only to some secondary elements that are specific elements within one genus of aesthetic experience: “All these are only differences of degree among the variations of the aesthetic experience. They should be neither overlooked nor underestimated, but they do not entitle us to limit the concept of the aesthetic experience” (*CLWA*, 221).

So, what are these specific elements of the literary aesthetic experience? First of all, except for the qualities in the phonetic stratum, no other qualities of the literary work of art are accessible through sense perception, but only through “intuitive mental

images which are guided by the signitive acts of understanding of the meaning of the sentence units” (*CLWA*, 226). These mental images, namely the objects portrayed in the work, are given to the reader in the aspects. “The aspects,” says Ingarden, “are that which a perceiving subject experiences of a given object, and as such they demand a concrete perception or at least a vivid act of representation on the part of the subject if they are to be actually, concretely experienced. Only when they are concretely experienced do they exercise their proper function, that of bringing to appearance an object which has just been perceived” (*CLWA*, 56). The aspects, which are “held in readiness” in the work, display a schematic structure and need to be concretized by the reader just like the object stratum of the work. Accordingly, it is the fullest possible concretization of the aspects that makes possible the intuitive quasi-perceptibility or quasi-presence of portrayed objectivities and the aesthetically valent qualities that appear within them.

The second distinguishing element of literary aesthetic experience is related to the first. As we have seen, we can access the portrayed world of a literary work only on the basis of intuitive mental images. And these images can be apprehended by the reader only if she can grasp the meaning manifested by the linguistic strata. Hence, the objectivities portrayed in the objective stratum are accessible only through an intellectual understanding: “we must first objectify these objects and ‘clothe’ them in an intuitive garb by the aid of aspects held in readiness” (*CLWA*, 230). Therefore, an intellectual understanding of the semantic units is a necessary condition for entering the world of the literary work of art. We cannot apprehend the objects portrayed in this world in their intuitively accessible properties directly. In this sense, says Ingarden, “the literary aesthetic experience cannot be so irrational and purely emotional as is possible with at least some musical works” (*CLWA*, 230).

The third essential distinguishing element of literary experience lays in the quasi-temporal character of the literary artwork. A literary work of art cannot be apprehended in a moment, but in several phases. All these phases (e.g. chapters of a novel) should be apprehended one by one, and in every phase only one part of the work is cognized. Every new phase gives us new details about the work, joining the echo of experienced phases and unfolding the following ones. We are always supplied new material in different phases, and transform all our projections sometimes partially, sometimes completely, according to these. At the end, all these phases should be grasped as a whole by the reader through a synthesizing activity. This synthesizing activity should be carried on not only on the consequent phases of a work but also for the various strata of the work apprehended by the reader in the way explained above.<sup>31</sup>

Laying out the aesthetic cognition of literary artwork in this way, we should now deal with two questions arising from such a characterization. The first is about the identity of the work. We have seen above that the literary artwork is cognized by the reader through many complex and subjective operations. And through these operations the aesthetic object is reconstructed by the reader. The question raised here is whether such subjective operations lead to an anarchy of interpretations or to total relativity with regard to the identity of the work. The second question is about the impact of the reading act. What is the effect of this complex process on the reader? It is obvious from the analyses above that the overall formation of the work is to a large extent shaped by the help of the creative acts of the reader. Hence the reader has an indispensable effect on the concretized work. Does the work have a parallel effect on the reader's disposition in his daily life? Does this experience shape the world-view of the reader? I will leave the answer of the second question to the last section of this chapter where I discuss what

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<sup>31</sup> We will see the importance of this temporal characterization when we discuss the concept of the "Wandering Viewpoint" in Wolfgang Iser's theory in the following chapter.

Ingarden calls “the idea of the work.” To answer the first question, I will now return to the kind of cognition that is nominated by Ingarden as “investigative cognition of the literary work of art” and investigate it from the point of view of cognition.

The analyses we have carried out so far have shown that the work is an open structure that may lead to different cognitions of the same work and different aesthetic objects appearing as the conclusion of these cognitions. Still, the diversity of aesthetic objects as the products of various possible aesthetic concretizations does not lead to an anarchic subjectivity or relativity, for all possible concretizations must be faithful to the linguistic strata and consequently the meaning-units of the work. How, then, can the faithfulness mentioned be checked for various possible concretizations of the work? For Ingarden such a process is possible only through an investigative cognition of the work.

The faithfulness of the aesthetic object to the work itself can be checked in two ways. It can either be checked against the work in its un-concretized form or it can be checked against other aesthetic objects concretized in different readings of the same work. In order for these operations to work both the work itself and its aesthetic concretization should be intersubjectively accessible. Hence both the work itself (artistic object) and its aesthetic concretization (aesthetic object) should be translated by the critic into an intersubjectively accessible language. This translation is only possible through an investigative cognition of the work. I partly analysed the basic elements of this attitude in the previous section. Here I will try to extend the analysis by approaching it from the point of view of cognition. Ingarden mentions two kinds of investigative cognition: the pre-aesthetic and the aesthetic-reflective. Only the results of

the pre-aesthetic investigative attitude can, at least in principle, provide us with an objective knowledge of the individual work.<sup>32</sup>

Pre-aesthetic investigation deals with the work of art itself, independent from any possible concretization. For Ingarden, the possibility of such a pure investigation is highly important for the possibility of literary study as the study of the literary work of art itself. Preaesthetic investigation suppresses the original emotion, if it arises during reading, and takes places of indeterminacy into account without filling them in:

This investigative preaesthetic cognition of the literary work is above all a matter of discovering those properties and elements in it which make it a work of art, that is, which form the basis for the constitution of the aesthetically relevant qualities in the aesthetic concretizations . . . it is more than mere reading, insofar as special deliberations, comparisons, and analytic and synthetic reflections are carried out. (*CLWA*, 234)

The knowledge gained from preaesthetic investigation is intersubjectively validatable, for its aim is to discover the structural characteristic of the literary work of art along with the value potentialities and places of indeterminacy it contains. Hence, reconstruction of the work in a pre-aesthetic attitude is independent of “the modifications which the cognitive procedure undergoes under various circumstances, depending on who carries out this cognition and under which external conditions it occurs” (*CLWA*, 235).

The second investigative attitude, which is important in order to understand the literary experience, is the reflective cognition of the aesthetic concretization of the literary work of art. The difference between this investigative attitude and the former is that this investigation is applied “no longer to the literary work of art as a schematic structure but to one of the concretizations which is constituted in aesthetic attitude”

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<sup>32</sup> Here Ingarden stresses the problematic nature of the concept of objective knowledge. He defines objectivity in the following way: “the knowledge we are attempting to characterize is ‘objective’ when it is successful in discovering the properties and structural characteristics appertaining to the literary work itself” (*CLWA*, 235).

(*CLWA*, 300). In other words, instead of the work itself, aesthetic-reflective cognition tries to establish knowledge of the aesthetic object. There are two ways of attaining this attitude: either after the completion of an aesthetic experience, or by interrupting it during the reading and reflectively investigating the parts already concretized. In the former method, the investigator should face the problem that results from the temporal nature of the reading act. As soon as it is read, the work ceases to be actual; it can be reviewed only in the active memory of the investigator or by means of recollection. However, the process is very problematic since the attitude of the reader has already changed from aesthetic to reflective, and she faces the dangers of deception in remembering. Of course, these dangers are especially great when it comes to works of art whose cognition takes longer than others (e.g. novels) and cannot be re-apprehended in a momentary experience – as is the case with drawings, etc. The second method also has its specific problems, especially because it disrupts the aesthetic experience and this reflective attitude in the middle of the experience may affect the continuation of the concretization. Hence the reader may end up with a different aesthetic object. Despite these difficulties, aesthetic-reflective cognition is essential to Ingarden's system as it is the only way of investigating the aesthetic object in an intersubjective manner and of evaluating the aesthetic value of the work of art.

To summarize, while the preaesthetic reflective attitude is the study of the work itself, aesthetic-reflective cognition is the study of an aesthetic concretization of the work, namely the aesthetic object. Here, Ingarden makes important distinctions; he distinguishes the "work of art" from the "aesthetic object," and consequently "artistic value" from the "aesthetic value" of the work of art. An aesthetic object is a certain kind of concretization of the work of art. If a concretization of a work of art occurs within the aesthetic attitude, what emerges is an aesthetic object. Aesthetic value emerges from the

investigation of the aesthetic object, whereas artistic value is a result of investigating the artistic object; it is the value of the artwork as a potential aesthetic object. More important than these distinctions is the fact that by means of the investigative cognitions, the literary artwork and its concretizations can be studied as intersubjectively validatable objects. Thus, although the work appears in Ingarden's theory as a structure open to different concretizations, this openness does not lead to total anarchy in terms of endless possible interpretations. The concretizations of a specific work are conceptualized through the reflective aesthetic concretization; hence it becomes intersubjective and this intersubjective interpretation can become the object of a discussion between various readers. In such a discussion, a specific concretization can be compared with other concretizations and all the concretizations can be checked by means of the work itself, which is reconstructed through a pre-aesthetic concretization. In this sense, literary scholarship as the study of the work itself and the study of concretizations of the work becomes possible.

The concept of intersubjectivity saves the concretizational act from the restrictiveness of a single authorial meaning. It makes various concretizations possible and equally plausible, while also saving the work from the dangers of anarchy and pure relativity of interpretations. As we will see in the following chapters this concept will be one of the core building blocks of both the reading response and hermeneutical theories.

Until now, I have tried to show the importance of the role of the reader, in Ingarden's theory, in concretizing the literary work of art as an aesthetic object. Ingarden's theory, through a deep investigation of the structural properties of the literary artwork and a phenomenological examination of the act of reading that is coherent with this peculiar structure, clearly shows us that the reader has an indispensable role in the constitution of the literary artwork. Hence the work appears as

a co-creation of the author and the reader rather than a closed product composed by the author, waiting for the reader in order to be appreciated. Having established the active role of the reader in the formation of the literary artwork, we should now investigate the other facet of the relation. What is the impact of such an experience on the disposition of the reader? If as Ingarden claims, the literary work of art “enriches our lives to an extraordinary degree, it gives us hours of delight, and it allows us to descend into the very depths of existence” (*LWA*, 373), how does it accomplish this?

We have seen in the discussion of aesthetic experience that this experience has a distancing effect on the reader. The original emotion that appears in the aesthetic experience separates the reader from her daily life and leads her to the active life of aesthetic experience. The question is, does this distancing effect lead the reader to a reflective position, or is it merely a type of escapism? To answer this question, we need to better understand what Ingarden means when he talks about the “idea” of the work. But before doing this, we should concentrate on another important aspect of Ingarden’s theory, which will help us avoid the ambiguities that may appear in discussion of the idea of the work. As I have touched upon above, the portrayed world of the work that appears in aesthetic cognition is a self-sufficient world that is autonomous from the extra-textual world. In the following chapter I will analyse the nature of this autonomy and the specific relation of the literary artwork with the extra-textual world in Ingarden’s theory. As a result of this investigation we will see that the literary artwork does not contain genuine judgements about the extra-textual world; hence it cannot support the reader with propositional knowledge. The judgements in the work should be seen as having a quasi-character. Hence the idea of the work cannot be reduced to these judgements. In the last section, I will present Ingarden’s understanding of the idea of the work in light of this quasi-character, and once more pose the aforementioned question

about the impact of the literary work of art on the reader in relation to the results we shall obtain in these investigations.

### 3. The Quasi-Real Character of the Literary Work of Art

When using the term “literary work,” Ingarden has in mind all linguistic works, including scientific works.<sup>33</sup> In order to distinguish works of literary art (poetic works) from other kinds of linguistic discourse, he uses the term “literary work of art,” saying that these works “lay claim, by virtue of their characteristic basic structure and particular attainments, to being ‘works of art’ and enabling the reader to apprehend an aesthetic object of a particular kind” (*CLWA*, 7). In this section my aim is to lay out the quasi-real nature of various kinds of sentences in a literary work of art. I will start my investigation by presenting the functional and structural differences between the literary work of art and factual work. Later, with the help of this distinction, we will be able to consider the structure of the literary work of art more clearly as a quasi-real construction.

For Ingarden, there are two major areas of difference between the literary work of art and the scientific work. The first difference is in the function of the two kinds of work. Scientific work mainly aims to transmit knowledge of objects and states of affairs that exist independently from the work or the conscious activities of the author or reader. “An essential feature of the scientific work is that it is intended to fix, contain, and transmit to others the result of the scientific investigation in some area in order to enable scientific research to be continued and developed by its readers” (*CLWA*, 146).

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<sup>33</sup> Jeff Mittscherling notes that “the Polish term *naukowym*, which Ingarden employs here, does not bear the same connotation as the English ‘scientific.’ In Polish, any serious research is regarded as ‘scientific,’ including sorts of research that English speakers would not refer to as such – e.g., the present study of Ingarden” (Mittscherling 1996, 158).

Whereas “the literary work of art does not serve to further scientific knowledge but to embody in its concretization certain values of a very specific kind, which we usually call ‘aesthetic’ values” (CLWA, 147).

Hence, expressing scientific or historical truths, philosophical or psychological insights are not an essential function of literary works of art. That does not mean that such functions are prohibited in these works, rather, if they occur in a literary work of art, they can only be counted as secondary functions and do not contribute to the work as a work of art. Hence the aspects of a literary work of art that do not directly contribute to the aesthetic cognition of the work (constitution of an aesthetic object) are either irrelevant to the work as a work of art or, if they are too prominent, constitute a flaw in the work. Restricting the function of literary works of art in such a way may seem problematic, especially when we consider many works in the history of literature that are mixed in the sense that they claim to be both works of art and instructive for the reader, or works which were once treated as scientific works but later as literary works. Gregory G. Colomb defines the problem in the following words:

Thus polemic, instruction, panegyric, satire, and all information-bearing elements are in this view out of place in the work of art. Many objections to this conclusion can be raised on purely empirical grounds. There are, for example, works such as Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* whose literary status has changed through time, from science to art. There are also the many *ars poetica*'s – Horace's, Vida's, Scaliger's, Boileau's, Pope's – which are intentionally and in fact both art and science. Or there are the innumerable didactic works throughout all of literary history, whose instructional aspect, usually central to the author's own view of his purpose, Ingarden would have to consider irrelevant to art. And what of works such as Thoreau's *Walden*, Henry Adams's *Education*, or Mailer's *Armies of the Night*? Ingarden must have a work be one or the other, and literary history presents too many works that seem somehow mixed. (Colomb 1976, 9)

Before focusing on these problems, I believe that it is necessary to scrutinize the second area of difference between the literary work of art and the scientific work. These

are the structural differences between the two kinds of works that appear as the correlative of the functional difference mentioned above. The first difference appears in the stratified structure of both kinds of works. Like a literary work of art, a scientific work also has a stratified structure. However, there are some significant differences between the stratified structures of the two. The first difference can be observed in the stratum of schematized aspects. As mentioned above, this stratum is essential for literary works of art in order for the objects presented in the work to be apprehended by the reader intuitively. Whereas for the scientific work, the presence of such aspects is not essential, “they need not be present in it at all” (*CLWA*, 151). Their appearance in a scientific work depends on the object on which the work focuses. If the work is about the objects that are perceivable by the senses (e.g. a scholarly work on a specific work of art), the aspects can perform an auxiliary role by helping the reader bringing the work in question into appearance. Whereas if the object of the work is not perceivable (e.g. in some areas of mathematical investigation), the stratum of aspects does not usually appear in the work. Even in the former case, these aspects are dispensable and can cease to exist without damaging the work. In some cases, they can even disturb the reader in gaining knowledge about the problem of the work and in such a case they are to be removed or at least not actualised by the reader. As a result, scientific works are stratified structures that are essentially composed of three strata. These are the strata of verbal sounds, semantic units, and portrayed objectivities.

Another important structural difference can be observed in the relation between the linguistic strata and the quasi-visual strata. As I previously touched upon, the stratum of portrayed objectivities is aesthetically the most important of the literary work of art. All other strata are organised around this stratum; hence the linguistic strata are only a passage for the apprehension of portrayed objectivities on the part of the reader.

However, in the scientific work the stratum of portrayed objectivities is almost transparent, leaving the central role to the linguistic strata, especially to the stratum of semantic units – for the aim of a scientific work is not to direct the attention of the reader to the world of portrayed objectivities, but “directing the reader’s intention, realized in the understanding of the sentences (judgements), to the objects which are transcendent to the work” (*CLWA*, 148). In such a situation, the portrayed objectivities are immediately identified with the ontically autonomous objects they represent. Hence, in a scientific work portrayed objects are only bi-products through which the sentence intentions only pass, as if they were transparent.

Another difference lays in the aesthetic value of the work and aesthetically relevant qualities that may appear in the various strata of the work. It is obvious that the aim of a scientific paper is not to lead the reader to an aesthetic concretization of the work that results in the constitution of an aesthetic object. As a consequence, the aesthetically relevant qualities need not be present in the scientific work. Even if they are present, they represent a dispensable luxury and do not contribute to the main function of the work. “In a literary work of art, on the other hand, these qualities constitute not only an essential element but in fact the most important element in the work of art as brought to aesthetic concretization” (*CLWA*, 151). A very similar distinction holds for the metaphysical qualities.<sup>34</sup> Although they play a significant role in the aesthetic concretization of a literary work of art, in a scientific work they are dispensable and might be distracting if they do occasionally reveal themselves.

All these differences are necessary consequences of the main structural difference between the literary work of art and the scientific work; the qualitative

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<sup>34</sup> I will explain what Ingarden understands by “metaphysical qualities” in the following section of this chapter.

difference between judicative sentences in the work: “All assertions in a scientific work are *judgements*. They may not all be true, they need not all be true, but all claim to be true. . . . By contrast, literary works of art (or at least works that claim to be works of art) contain no genuine judgements, . . . they contain only quasi-judgements, which make no claim to being true, not even if their content out of context could be judged with regard to its truth value” (*CLWA*, 147). Not only judicative sentences, but also all other types of sentences (e.g. interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences) undergo a similar modification in literary works of art (quasi-interrogative, quasi-imperative, quasi-exclamatory).<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the intentional objects projected in literary artworks are quasi-objects too.

Now, we can focus on this quasi-nature of the sentences in literary artworks. In so doing, I will follow Ingarden and mainly focus on predicative sentences as a paradigm of the quasi-nature of the literary work of art. According to Ingarden, declarative sentences (especially predicative sentences) in a literary work of art are neither pure assumptions nor genuine judgements (serious judgements).<sup>36</sup> In order to understand the nature of quasi-judgements, I will first focus on the nature of genuine judgements and pure assumptions.

Ingarden defines genuine judgements as judgements “in which something is seriously asserted and which not only lay claim to truth but *are* true or false” (*LWA*, 160). Hence, the “directional factor” of these judgements, which are directed at first to

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<sup>35</sup> Ingarden writes: “Thus when we are dealing, for example with an interrogatory sentence, it is no longer a genuine question, but only a quasi-question; sentences which express a wish or a command are not genuine wishing or commanding sentences but are only quasi-commands, etc. Likewise, the value judgements appearing in the representing text, regardless of whether they pronounce an ethical, or a social or, for that matter, an aesthetic valuation are not genuine value judgements but are only quasi-evaluations even though, in their purely external form, they do not differ from genuine valuations. Their function consists solely in the intentional projection of certain ontically heteronomous objectivities, which can at most give themselves an appearance of reality but can never attain it” (*LWA*, 181).

<sup>36</sup> Ingarden’s concept of pure assumption is equivalent to Alexius Meinong’s *Annahmen*, in which belief in the reality of the sentence is deprived of all force.

the corresponding purely intentional object, refers beyond this object to a real or ideal object (or one intended as real or ideal). Through this reference, the purely intentional state of affairs, in which the given object is portrayed, is applied to that real or ideal object: “it is intentionally transposed into the real ontic sphere in which [the given object] finds itself and in which . . . it is rooted” (*LWA*, 161). Moreover, the state of affairs developed by the meaning-content of the sentence is set in the given ontic sphere (real or ideal) as truly existing. “In both these functions – in the *transposition* into the given (real, ideal, etc.) ontic sphere and in the *existential setting* – there is based what one usually calls the ‘claim to truth’ of the judgement” (*LWA*, 161–62). That is to say, the judgement makes the claim that the state of affairs developed by the meaning units and the object referred does in fact exist, not as a purely intentional state of affairs or purely intentional object, but as an object portrayed by the state of affairs that is, in turn, rooted in an ontic sphere, which is independent from the judgement itself. This transposing is bound to the “identification” function in the judgement: “the intention that the *content* of the purely intentional sentence correlate should be so precisely *adjusted* . . . to the state of affairs existing in the ontic sphere that is ontically independent of the judgement, that, in this respect, the two can be *identified*” (*LWA*, 162). Due to this identification function – which arises from the “matching intention” of genuine judgements – the purely intentional states of affairs are passed over and the intentions of the judicative proposition points directly to the ontically independent states of affairs; thus, “the purely intentional states of affairs, as a purely intentional one, disappears from our field of vision” (*LWA*, 163).

Pure affirmative propositions, on the other hand, lack the aforementioned functions characteristic of genuine judgements: transposition, existential setting, matching intention, and identification. The intentional directional factor in these

propositions refers directly to the purely intentional objects or purely intentional states of affairs, not to objects or states of affairs that are independent of the sentence correlate: “the intentional directional factor of the subject of the sentence does not point, by way of appertaining intentional object, at an ontically independently existing object but precisely at the purely intentional object itself” (*LWA*, 166). In this sense, we can talk neither about an ontic sphere that is independent from the judgement, nor about a transposition into that ontic sphere. Under these circumstances, an intention of identification with an autonomous object is beside the point. As a result, pure affirmative propositions do not hold any claim to truth.

The sentences that appear in the literary work of art are conceptualized by Ingarden as “Quasi-Judgements.” These lay between the two extreme types explained above: genuine judgements and pure affirmative propositions. It is understandable that Ingarden tries to stress the difference between literary sentences and genuine judgements, but why does he take the trouble to distinguish these sentences from pure affirmative sentences? The answer lies in the special relation between the literary work and its claim to truth. Although literary sentences “have the external *habitus* of judicative propositions . . . they neither are nor are meant to be genuine judicative propositions” (*LWA*, 167). Hence, they don’t have a claim to truth in the sense that genuine judgements have. However, they are not completely deprived of truth, like pure affirmative sentences: “Yet something is undoubtedly asserted in a particular manner [in literary sentences]; we are therefore not dealing with pure affirmative propositions” (*LWA*, 167). Now my aim is to show the specific manner in which literary sentences as quasi-judgements assert something.

I first want to lay out an important point of difference between the genuine judgements and quasi-judgements: the state of “seriousness.” Genuine judgements

(which Ingarden sometimes also calls “serious judgements”) carry a character of seriousness. Ingarden defines this serious character by looking at the position of a subject who judges seriously:

When I judge seriously I do so in good faith and take full responsibility. I am prepared to defend the rightness of the assertion either by producing suitable argument or by actions conforming to the content of the judgement, and I am also prepared to abandon such an assertion if either I myself or someone else with the help of suitable and seriously proposed arguments to convince me that this assertion is false. When I judge I engage myself personally: that act of judgement issuing from the center of my consciousness constrains me to accept responsibility for the given assertion, for contending that things are as the assertion proclaims. This is not a game from which I can always withdraw simply declaring that the assertion in question was expressed as a joke without an act of judgement entering into it and without that specific solidarity with one’s own judging which is so characteristic of judgements. (*OST* 1985, 135)

As seen from the above quotation, the serious character of genuine judgements imposes a responsibility on the utterer. She has the obligation to stand behind her judgement. Such a serious character and responsibility cannot be seen in a literary work of art. Neither the author nor the reader feels such a responsibility and a need to take the judgements in a literary work of art seriously in this sense. The below quotation, which defines the position of the reader in front of a literary work of art, demonstrate the difference – when read with the above quotation – very clearly:

By coming to understand [literary sentences] I perform the sentence-forming act, but at the same time I behave as though I were judging that I was not doing this seriously. As a result, I do not engage myself openly, I take no responsibility, I do not intend to submit what I am reading to an examination, I do not look for arguments for and against the assumption that what the sentences say is or was true. I do not for a moment assume that they claim a right to truth or even that they designate a certain state of affairs in the real world. . . . On the contrary, I know that these sentences, because of their assertive apparel, designate and set up an object in some quasi-real world. (*OST*, 136)

Hence, the quasi-real world of the literary work of art has a very special relation to the extra-textual world. The quasi-real world is undoubtedly an intentional world.

The objects designating this world are not merely picked up from the real world but are the result of the artistic creational acts of the author. In other words, they are the products of “poetic fantasy.” In this sense, they do not merely represent objects in the given world, but aim to “progress beyond the world already given, and sometimes even liberation from it and the creation of an apparently new world” (*OST*, 137).<sup>37</sup> Hence, what is at stake here is not a naïve mimetic attempt to represent the world as it is, but a creative act that tries to go beyond this world. However, going beyond the given world does not mean that the work does not have a sense of reality. It does. As we saw in the quote above, the judgemental sentences of this new product in the end “assert something in a particular manner.” This refers to the sense of reality that the literary work of art tries to establish, the reality of “as-if” which is skilfully created by poetic fantasy according to the following formula: “be such and such, have those particular properties, exist as though you were real” (*OST*, 137). If a novel contains objects whose type of existence is real existence, they appear in the work with the character of reality. However, this character of reality should not be confused with the ontic character of truly existing objects. What is at stake here is only an “external habitus” of reality. In consequence, the reader of such a work experiences the work as if it were real, although she knows, in the back of her mind, that she is experiencing a fictive world.<sup>38</sup> This is what Ingarden means by “the assertive power” of quasi-judgements that are lacking in pure assumptions. And it is for this reason that Ingarden defines the judgement in the literary work of art as a quasi-judgement rather than a pure assumption. “For, if they were ‘assumptions,’ objects presented in literature would have been deprived of all

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<sup>37</sup> The relation of the literary work with the extra-textual world and the ways in which the elements of the extra-textual world are comprehended by literary artworks are discussed by Wolfgang Iser under the title “Repertoire.” For a detailed discussion of repertoire see the 2<sup>nd</sup> section of the next chapter.

<sup>38</sup> Ingarden writes: “when the work is read, it can often happen that the reader takes quasi judgemental propositions for genuine judgements and thus considers to be real intentional objects which only simulate reality. But the transformation connected with this does not belong to the work itself but rather to one of its possible concretizations” (*LWA*, 221).

character of real existence . . . and would not have imposed themselves as real. All artistic illusion would be impossible” (*OST*, 161). Thus, the lack of serious attitude in quasi-judgements does not lead to a frivolous attitude, but to an attitude that simulates the seriousness of genuine judgements.

We can, then, claim, with Ingarden, that the judicative sentences in a literary work of art are modified assertive sentences. They are modified in such a way that they apparently keep their assertive nature while they don’t have any claim to truth. Ingarden is undoubtedly aware of the fact that not all kinds of literary works undergo this modification to the same degree; it diverges in various types of literary works. For his purposes Ingarden distinguishes three types of work according to the criterion of being faithful to historical facts. The first type of works is those that do not have any intention of being faithful to historical facts. The second type is that which Ingarden calls “contemporary or period novels,” which are not “historical” in the proper sense, but in which “the represented objectivities refer in a totally different and, at the same time, if one may put it so, narrower manner to the real world” (*LWA*, 169). The third type contains works that claim to be historical and as faithful as possible to the facts and objectivities known from history. I will now briefly focus on these three types of works. This will help us to better understand the relation between the quasi-real world of the text and the extra-textual world in different types of literary artworks.

The first type includes works that in no sense claim to be historical (Ingarden mentions symbolist drama as representative of this type). In these works, “there is a total absence of the intention of an exact matching . . . of the projected states of affairs to corresponding states of affairs that is objectively existing and that is to be found in an ontically autonomous sphere” (*LWA*, 168). The sentence correlates are transposed and existentially set in the real world, but with neither a matching intention nor an intention

of identification. The intentional directional factor does not point to objects existing in an objective sphere. The transposition of the sentence correlates into reality in these works is never to be taken as “fully serious,” but “simulatedly serious,” which means they are only regarded as really existing: “the sentence correlates are transposed, in accordance with their content, into the real world. But here this goes hand in hand only with the ontic setting and not – as is the case with genuine judicative propositions – simultaneously with the matching intention and with identification” (*LWA*, 168). Thus, in reading these kinds of works, the reader does not apprehend the sentence correlates without noticing their intentional character. The correlates themselves are transposed into reality “without any diminution of our awareness that they have their origin in the intentionality of the meaning of the sentence” (*LWA*, 168). Consequently, they are not transposed into an independent sphere of existence, but into the world of the text, the world of “as-if” – an illusory reality into which they are set as purely intentional.

In works that are categorized under the second degree of quasi-modification, namely what Ingarden calls “contemporary or period novels,” the transposition and setting functions are also only “simulatedly serious,” but at this stage there is a matching intention. “The individual assertive propositions are given in such a way that the states of affairs projected by them are to be matched, not with *any* entirely *determinate individual* state of affairs truly existing in a given epoch, but only with a *general type* of states of affairs and objects that would be ‘possible’ in a given time and milieu” (*LWA*, 169). What is at stake in this kind of novel is a kind of adaptation to typical features of a specific period. Individual details, such as names of places, persons, etc. can be seen in these works. However, the intention here is not to match these intentionally projected objects with what is real, nor are characters projected in this way to be “literary representations” of determinate persons existing in the real world.

Instead, the matching intention proper to these sentences refers to the “type” that is manifested in this represented character. The aim in using these individual details in the work is to lend verisimilitude to this transposition into illusory reality.

The third degree of quasi-modification is found in works that purport to be historical and claim to be as faithful as possible to objectivities and facts known from the history. In this kind of work, the transposition and setting functions are serious, and the matching intention is extended from the general types to the individual objects and states of affairs. But there is still no intention of identification between the intentional objects or states of affairs and the extra-textual ones; the intention of identification is replaced by an intention of substitution. What the intentional states of affairs or objects tries to achieve in these works is to substitute for the states of affairs or objects existing independently of the judgement itself, instead of identifying with them:

On the strength of the far reaching similarity between them, they should only duplicate the objects which at one time have really existed; they should indeed attempt to *substitute* for them, as if they themselves were these objects. . . . By dint of their far reaching similarity – in accordance with the intention- and their matching with objectively existing states of affairs, they make the latter quasi-incarnate, quasi-present. Thus, the past, long gone and turned into nothingness again arises before our eyes in the merely intentional states of affairs incorporating it. (*LWA*, 171)

But the past itself is not ascertained here. Although the intentional states of affairs and objects very much converge with states of affairs and objects of the past, although the matching intention is intended for determinate individuals, the last point that divides quasi-judgements and genuine judgements, the identification function is still missing in these works. Although we are one step closer to them, the sentence correlates of a historical literary work of art are still not literal representations of independent objects or states of affairs. Hence the semantic units composing these works should be apprehended in their quasi-character. The reader can neither take them

seriously nor attribute them responsibility with regard to the objects and states of affairs they claim to depict.

The analysis laid out above shows us the comprehensiveness of Ingarden's theory of quasi-reality. A similar analysis can be carried out for different genres in literary history according to their claim to correspondence with extra-textual reality. In that sense an analysis of realist novel and fantastic novels will reveal the differences between these two genres with regard to the basic points indicating the quasi-character of the work (intentional factor, matching intention, identification, existential setting). Despite these differences and by extension despite differences in their degree of their faithfulness to extra-textual reality, all literary artworks share this quasi-character. In this regard, all affirmative sentences constituting a literary artwork should be apprehended by the reader in their quasi-character. That means that they cannot be held responsible for what they utter in the way that scientific works can. The intentional directional factor of literary artworks does not transpose from the intentional objectivities appearing as the correlatives of semantic meanings to the extra-textual objectivities. Thus, as a reader I do not attribute to these works the seriousness that I expect to find in a factual text. When I read a sentence like "Last night, a man found stabbed to death close to Goldhawk Road Station, in the city of London" in a novel, I do not check the news agencies to see if there really was such a murder or refer to a city map to see if there is really a Goldhawk Road Station in the city of London. I am aware of the fact that the state of affairs depicted here refers to the quasi-world of the novel and does not have the intention of identifying with an extra-textual incident. Even if I know that there is a Goldhawk Road Station in London and there has been a murder close to that station in recent years, this does not lead me to take the sentence as a genuine judgement. What is at stake here is that, to use Ingarden's terminology, the

existential setting of the story is constructed such that it has a matching intention with the extra-textual world, but not an identification. The aim of laying out the existential setting in this way is, we might think, to strengthen the visual aspects of the sentence, or its “suggestive power.” The literary judgement, with its “suggestive power,” absorbs me into the simulated world. It is this suggestive power that differentiates quasi-modified sentences from pure affirmations. “By virtue of their described properties, they are capable of evoking, to a greater or lesser degree, the illusion of reality; this pure affirmative sentences cannot do. They carry with them, in other words, a suggestive power which, as we read, allows us to plunge into the simulated world and live in it as in a world peculiarly unreal and yet having the appearance of reality” (*LWA*, 172). Hence, considering the quasi-nature of the literary work of art, the existential setting of this sentence can be interpreted as a textual tool used to strengthen the “as-if” function of the work, but not as an indicative of an intention of identification.

Hitherto I have laid out the quasi-nature of the world portrayed by the literary work of art, and the nature of judicative sentences in the work as quasi-judgements. We can now come back to Colomb’s question, which we quoted in the beginning of this section. Does Ingarden’s theory prohibit the existence of genuine judgements in the literary artwork in the strictest sense? And does he thus over-restrict the function of literature and disregard the works in literary history that are somehow mixed in the sense that they both claim to be works of art and identify with extra-textual reality? First of all, as we will see in the following passages, Ingarden is aware of the fact that not all works that are classified under the category “literary work of art” belong to that category to the same degree. In some works, we can observe genuine judgements coming directly from the author. But these works cannot be categorized as “pure literature”; rather they should be placed on the periphery of the genre. Second, Ingarden

does not disregard other functions that can be attributed to literary artworks (instructive, documentative etc.). However, attributing such functions to the work and interpreting the work in accordance with these functions does not say anything about the work's being a work of art. They can only be regarded as secondary functions.

Let's start with the first point. I stated that Ingarden is aware of the fact that some works that claim to be literary artworks do contain genuine judgements. He differentiates these works from pure literary artworks by placing them on the periphery:

There are some that are *par excellence* pure works of art and others that have a dual, mixed character and form borderline cases. . . . Some are on the borderline between literature and sculpture, others on the borderline between literature and music, while others stand on the borderline between literary art proper and writings whose purpose is science, popularization, politics, propaganda, factual reporting and so on. (*OST*, 139)

It is natural to observe genuine judgements in these kinds of borderline works. In propaganda and various types of persuasive literature, we come across many genuine judgements that obviously come directly from the author. In some examples this phenomenon goes so far that the artistic elements of the work are used only as a pretext for introducing these opinions. These genuine judgements, however, do not help the work to achieve its essential function; rather they tend to distract from the experience, and hence from the aesthetic value of the work and its character as a work of art. Ingarden does not totally exclude these works from the premises of literary art; he places them on the periphery of literature, but only on condition that the genuine judgements that appear in these works contribute to, or at least do not destroy the aesthetic character of the work: "Only an instance where the appearance of a judgement in a literary work does not constitute a blemish and is not a clear deviation from the character of the work as a work of art would be evidence forcing us to accept the thesis about the existence and artistic role of judgements in this type of work" (*OST*, 139).

Ingarden identifies two types of borderline works that “despite their marginality, are excellent examples of artistic excellence and power” (*OST*, 157). The first type are works that can be treated either as a literary work of art or as a factual text. The second type are works that contain both poetic and factual parts. Ingarden offers Plato’s *Symposium* as a representative example of the first type of work. The *Symposium* can be read either as a literary work of art or as a learned treatise. Hence, two possible concretizations can be derived from the same work:

When we read the “Symposium” as a work of literary art, the singular and general statements become quoted statements uttered by characters presented in the work and are expressions of these character’s views. They are then quasi-judgements . . . When, however, we read the “Symposium” as a special type of learned treatise, then the various views become contributions to the problem under discussion. (*OST*, 157)

In this case, the quality of the judgements is determined by the attribution of the reader. They can be read as quasi-judgements the aim of which is to contribute to the aesthetic quality of the work and to perform the functions they have in the wholeness of the literary work of art. And as judgements uttered by the characters in the work, they refer to the world of the work, not to the extra-textual world. When they are read as genuine judgements, on the other hand, they refer directly to the extra-textual work and should be supported by appropriate arguments. The artistic and aesthetic qualities do not help the work as a philosophical treatise, although they can attract the reader to a beautifully constructed text.

The second type of marginal works are those which, unlike the *Symposium*, do not allow diverse interpretations. These works contain both poetic and factual parts (composed of genuine judgements) and force the reader to switch her attitude while reading specific phases of the work. The reason why these works are regarded as works of art is because the factual parts in the work are also presented in a strictly artistic

form, and they do not destroy the wholeness of the work; rather they contribute to it. Still, in these works it is the presence of quasi-judgments that makes them work a work of art. If these works were composed of only genuine judgements constructed in a strictly artistic form, the work would not be a work of art but a factual work that would shock us for being peculiar in style. Hence, what makes these works a work of literary art is not the existence of genuine judgements but the arrangement of these judgements in the work in such a way that they do not detract from the aesthetic wholeness of the work, but contribute to it. In other words, not because it contains genuine judgements, but despite the occurrence of these genuine judgements, the work can be categorized as a poetical work.

As a result, for Ingarden pure literary works of art do not contain any genuine judgements: “if such judgements occur, such works ought to be placed on the periphery of the area, with various other considerations playing a part in the decision as to which borderline type the given work is allocated” (*OST*, 160). Under these circumstances, we can say that Ingarden’s attempts are directed towards establishing the essential properties of a literary work, and genuine judgements do not belong to this essential structure. Although in some borderline cases they may appear in some literary works of art, they do not play any role in determining the artistic character of the work in question. Hence, in reply to Colomb’s objection, we can say that, yes, literary history contains “many works that seem somehow mixed,” and some of these works can be placed on the periphery of literature, but what makes them a literary work of art is the existence of literary judgements at the core of the work – while the genuine judgements may only be supplementary elements as long as they do not destruct the main function of literary work, namely to lead the reader to concretize the work as an aesthetic object through an aesthetic experience.

The second point about Colomb's objection to the restrictedness of the function of literary artworks is not unrelated to the first point we analysed above. Colomb says that "there are innumerable didactic works throughout all literary history, whose instructional aspect, usually central to the author's own view of his purpose, Ingarden would have to consider irrelevant to art" (Colomb 1976, 9). The above analysis has shown us that Ingarden does not totally exclude these works from the realm of literature as long as they can be cognized in an aesthetic manner despite their inclusion of didactic parts. However, he is also on guard against the reduction of literature to such a function. In such a situation, the artistic properties in a literary artwork becomes a mere pretext for instruction in certain ideas. It seems to me that Ingarden troubles himself with clarifying the limits and boundaries of genuine judgements allowed in the work precisely to prevent such an instrumentalisation and to preserve the autonomy of the literary artwork as a work of art. In this sense, Ingarden does not totally disregard these secondary functions in literary artworks as long as they do not destroy the aesthetic wholeness of the work. But, again, they can exist in the work only as secondary functions and their functional (instructional, ethical etc.) value does not say anything to us about the work as a work of art. In this sense, the didactic or instructive parts, as Colomb claims, would be considered irrelevant to art by Ingarden. But that does not necessarily mean that works containing such genuine judgements are regarded as non-literary works. As I have already stated, they are positioned by Ingarden on the periphery of literature.

Works positioned by Ingarden on the periphery of literature are beyond the scope of this thesis. I am not interested in works that may have an impact on the reader through their instructive or deductive functioning. What concerns me here are pure literary works that can only be apprehended in terms of their quasi-nature and the

impact of this kind of work on the reader. In this regard, there is another problem that requires clarification. This problem is not about the intentions of the author but about the approach of the interpreter. We have seen in previous sections that a literary work of art can be cognized in various ways. One of the sources of these differences is “the reader’s adopting very different attitudes with regard to one and the same work and consequently conducting himself in different ways with respect to it” (CLWA, 169).<sup>39</sup> In the history of reading there exists a not-uncommon practice of extracting some sentences from the work, treating them as if they were genuine judgements, and drawing interpretative conclusions from the extracted sentence or sentences. At first sight, such a practice may seem applicable here, since these extracted sentences have the external appearance of genuine judgements. Hence, when they are extracted from the wholeness of the work, and consequently from the quasi-real world in which they function, they may easily be stripped of their quasi-character. A very popular example of this practice can be observed in Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and The Steel*. In the ninth chapter of this book, entitled “Zebras, Unhappy Marriages, And the Anna Karenina Principle,” Diamond refers to the well-known gnomic first sentence of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” In this work, Diamond interprets the sentence as follows: “By that sentence, Tolstoy meant that, in order to be happy, a marriage must succeed in

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<sup>39</sup> On the problems related to the role of the attitude of the reader in deciding about the nature of the judgement in the work (if they are quasi-judgements or genuine-judgements), see (Hamburger 1993). In this work, Hamburger claims that the concept of quasi-judgement “describes nothing other than a vague psychological attitude of the author and likewise of the reader” (22). In the extended edition of LWA, Ingarden replies to Hamburger’s criticism, stating that the nature of the judgements in a text are not determined solely by the attitude of the reader. There are some stylistic elements in the work (style of language, composition, the presence of aesthetically valent qualities, appearance of metaphysical qualities, etc.) that will inform the reader that she is dealing with a literary artwork. Moreover, most works include external elements that will clue the reader that she is face to face with an artwork – like a subtitle (a novel) and a blurb. When Ingarden talks about attitude of the reader he does not refer to an attitude that determines the nature of judgements, but an attitude that is determined by the type of work that is being dealt with. As soon as the reader realizes that she is dealing with a literary work of art, she should take the right attitude and read the judgements in the work in their quasi-nature.

many different respects: sexual attraction, agreement about money, child discipline, religion, in-laws, and other vital issues. Failure in any one of those essential respects can doom a marriage even if it has all the other ingredients needed for happiness” (Diamond 1998, 157). He then extracts the sentence from its context, conceptualizes it as the “Anna Karenina Principle,” and claims that “this principle can be extended to understanding much else about life besides marriage” (Diamond 1998, 157). And in the aforementioned chapter he applies this principle to the problem of the domestication of wild animals (Diamond 1998, 158f.). Later this principle becomes popular and is used by many scholars to illustrate different problems in various areas.

It is obvious that such an extraction is inappropriate to the essential function of the literary work of art. A literary work may contain many gnomic sentences like the one above. It may even contain larger semantic units of this kind (e.g. paragraphs, chapters etc.). A reader may extract different ideas or philosophical or historical results by interpreting these sentences or parts of the work. But these practices say nothing about the work as a work of art. We cannot aesthetically evaluate this kind of sentences or parts in order to clarify problems external to the world of the work nor the work itself for containing such peculiar sentences. In Diamond’s example, the Anna Karenina principle helps us to better understand some issues about the world we live in; hence it enhances our understanding of life. In this sense, we can attribute a cognitive or a moral value to Tolstoy’s sentence for inspiring such a principle. But that has nothing to do with the literariness of Tolstoy’s work. The sentence could have been used by Tolstoy in a philosophical treatise, and in that case, nothing would have changed. It would be valuable for the above reasons to the same degree. A similar practice can also be observed in literary studies. Some interpreters extract some semantic units from the text in the same fashion, and consider it as a judgement, the truth value of which can be

determined in relation to the real world; they debate whether this judgement would be acceptable to the author of the work, and construct a new system of assertions upon the judgement that would be philosophically acceptable to the author. Such an investigation may also be supported by external documents like the letters or the diaries of the author. Ingarden's theory does not reject such practices completely. He only emphasizes that these interpretations are inappropriate to the aesthetic character of the work: "such reflection may be quite interesting and even quite significant for the study of history of ideas. But we must remember that doing this we cease to study the [work] as a work of art and move beyond it. Doing this we use the work as a spring board for reflections that have little to do with the interpretation of a literary work" (*OST*, 147).

Moreover, such an extraction also diminishes the effect of the sentence. We saw in the previous section that the literary work of art is composed of four strata and all of these strata have some specific factors that contribute the overall value of the work. We have also seen that these factors sometimes enrich the meaning intended by the sentences of the work. Hence, when we separate the sentence from the wholeness of the work, we also cause its poetic effectiveness to vanish:

If we uproot the sentence from the totality of the work, if we remove it from the presented web of facts, if we deprive it of melody, rhythm, tone, and other contextual factors, if we deprive it of what this sentence expresses in the psyche of the lyrical subject, we shall be left with a sentence that, naturally enough, we would be able to regard as a judgement in the strict sense of the word, but then the whole dynamism of poetic charm would be vanished, leaving only, as Charles Lalo remarks: "...la valeur prosaïque de vérité, et non lyrique de beauté." (*OST*, 153)

As a result, both the instructive parts of a literary artwork and the parts extracted from the wholeness of the work and treated as genuine judgements are irrelevant to the work as a work of literary art. The literary artwork should be cognized in an aesthetic manner if it is to be treated as a work of art. Does Ingarden's theory suggest an idea-free

aestheticism, in this sense? We have seen above that one of the peculiar properties of quasi-judgements, which differentiates them from pure assumptions, is the fact that they have an “assertive power,” that is, they “assert something in a particular manner.” The discussions so far have tried to unpick what Ingarden means by a “particular manner.” If the work asserts something, what it asserts cannot be revealed by extracting peculiar semantic units and treating them as genuine judgements. It should be revealed through an appropriate cognition of the work: cognizing it in an aesthetic manner. Through an appropriate cognition, which can be carried on through an aesthetic experience, the work reveals its “idea.” I will examine what Ingarden means by the idea of the work in the next section. Here, I only want to indicate that he does not deny that we learn from literary artworks. He only emphasizes that literature does not teach us about the world in a straightforward way by referring directly to the extra-textual world. The sentences and other higher semantic units in the work refer never beyond the world of the text. It is through the quasi-real world of the text that we learn something about the world and our disposition towards it. In that sense, what Ingarden’s theory implies is not an idea-free aestheticism. Rather, it states that the idea of the work is revealed through an aesthetic experience in an unstraightforward way. This unstraightforward way of revealing the idea of the work will be the theme of the next section.

#### **4. The Idea of the Work and Metaphysical Qualities**

We have seen in the preceding sections that the main function of a literary art work is neither to express the psychic state of the author (her thoughts, individual worldview, etc.), nor to express an idea in a straightforward way. In this part I will first focus on these two views, which have always been more or less effective in literary

criticism. Then I will try to explicate how Ingarden defines the idea of the work. Third, I will discuss what Ingarden calls “metaphysical qualities” which may sometimes appear in the work as its idea. At this point I will once more raise the question of impact, for the appearance of metaphysical qualities in a literary artwork seems to promise an account of such an affect. However, at the end of our investigations we will see that although it does not necessarily deny the possibility of such an impact, Ingarden’s theory does not offer us a clear account of it. This lacuna will provide a passage into Wolfgang Iser’s reader-response theory.

Before starting my investigations, I want to state once more that Ingarden does not totally reject approaches to the literary artwork that are, for him, inappropriate to the main function of the work. A literary work of art is open to various possible readings. It can be read as a historical document that gives us clues about the era in which it was written, or as an anthropological document that teaches us about the story-telling activities of a community in a specific time in history. It can even be read as a psychological document that expresses the psychic state of its author. We may also ignore the technical problems that such readings may bring about, and claim that at least some literary artworks fulfil these functions seamlessly. Even in these cases, such readings do not say anything about the work as a work of art. In other words, these functions that can be attributed to the literary artwork are not specific to it. They can also be accomplished by non-literary texts; such texts can even accomplish these functions in a more fluent, clearer way. In addition, a literary work that does not accomplish such functions cannot be regarded as a non-literary work. These functions have no determinant effect on the literary character of the work. Hence such functions are not essential to the literary work of art, and consequently cannot be the subject of a literary interpretation. That is what Ingarden means by “inappropriate readings.” He

does not say that such readings are invalid, but claims that they are inappropriate to the essence of the literary work of art.

In the first section of this chapter I mentioned that one of Ingarden's main aims in defining the literary work of art as an intentional object was to prevent it from being reduced to the psychic experience of the author. He does not deny that a literary artwork, like all other products of human activity, displays some properties or elements that are dependent on the psychophysical makeup of its creator or her individual psychological life. In such a case, is it legitimate to use these features of the work in order to unwrap this or that about its author? As I mentioned above, for Ingarden, a reading that aims to discover the psychic state of the author by means of the text is one possible readings of a work. In such a reading, the work is taken not as a work of art but as a psychological document. Such a reading is permissible for Ingarden as long as it is not categorized as literary criticism:

Every scholar may, of course, occupy himself with whatever happens to interest him and seems important enough to him for him to share the results of investigations. My reproach is not directed against this at all. I am only concerned that the scholars I have in mind believe that they are investigating a literary work of art, whereas they are actually doing individual psychology. . . . They treat literary works of art as diaries of their authors, as letters of a particular kind to the reader, in which the author wants to inform us about his fate in a way that is more artificial than artistic. (*CLWA*, 80–81)

Even when a work is written deliberately by its author in order to express her feelings to a specific reader, this intended function loses its effect as soon as it is read as a work of art by possible readers: “And even when a love poem was first composed as a special letter to the beloved and also was read as such by her, it loses this function as soon as it is read only as a poem, as a particular work of art for its own sake” (*CLWA*, 81). As a result, the main function of a literary work of art is independent from what its

author intended it to be, in that sense we can talk about a distancing of the work from its author as soon as it is cognized as a work of art.<sup>40</sup>

The second function that is attributed to the literary work of art by many scholars is the expression of a certain idea. Most frequently this idea is understood as an expression of an assertion, a “truth.” “This assertion is usually understood as a thesis about something which is present in the real world or which, for some reason or other, should be present or take place” (*CLWA*, 81). We have seen in the previous section that, for Ingarden, it is not permissible to extract any sentence from the wholeness of the work and interpret it as a genuine judgement. Here, he claims that neither is it permissible to extract an overall idea from the work in the form of an assertion by citing some sentences uttered by some characters of the work or the narrator. When saying this, Ingarden is aware of the fact that there are many works in literature that have such a purpose, of imposing or expressing a certain idea. Especially in some political or didactic works, one may encounter certain statements that aim to persuade the reader that this or that fact exists or ought to exist in the real world. Such works are particularly seen in the developmental periods of various national literatures and the circumstances under which these works contribute to making this conception of literature, namely an instrument undertaking various social functions, predominant. However, Ingarden says, “from the fact that many literary works have a ‘purpose’ even when they are otherwise genuine works of art, it does not follow that all genuine literary works of art have such a purpose and that we should conceive of them in this light” (*CLWA*, 82). Such social functions attributed to the work may cease at a later time. If we continue with the

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<sup>40</sup> We will see a similar distancing between the work and its author both in Wolfgang Iser’s reader-response theory and Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics. However, Iser and Ricoeur will apprehend the problem from different angles. For Iser, the distancing occurs as a result of the lack of a situation that is a necessary part of communication, whereas for Ricoeur it is a result of cultural estrangement. I will discuss these issues in detail in the following chapters.

example of national literatures, we can claim that the social functions attributed to these works at a certain time may be totally irrelevant in a later epoch. In such a case, the purpose of these works may disturb the aesthetic apprehension of the work rather than promoting it. These functions, whether positive or negative in value, cannot be the chief element for determining whether the work in question is a work of art or not. Saying this, Ingarden does not totally exclude these values from the realm of literature. He merely claims that these are only secondary functions that should be subordinated to the primary function of a literary work of art, namely “enabling the reader who has the correct attitude toward the work to constitute an aesthetic object which belongs to the aesthetic objects permitted by the work and to bring to appearance an aesthetic value which is appropriate to the work” (*CLWA*, 83-84).

From the above analyses, we can see that, for Ingarden, the literary work is not a medium for expressing the psychic states or intentions of the author, nor it is an instrument for expressing a specific idea in an assertive way. Is Ingarden’s theory an “idea-free aestheticism” in this sense? Does this mean that “one is recognizing nothing but ‘mere technique’ in a work of art whenever one regards all moral, social, or political tendencies of the literary work of art as indispensable, as having nothing in common with the work of art” (*CLWA*, 84)? Ingarden strongly rejects this view. In Rene Wellek’s words, “[Ingarden] merely asserts that a work of art has aesthetic value and would cease to be a work of art if it were reduced to other values. But he rejects formalism in the sense of the Russian formalists: the work is not a sum of its devices. It is not merely language: rather it projects a world of represented objects” (Wellek 1981, 66). We stated in the previous section that a literary work of art projects a quasi-visual world. And this world is intuitively given to the reader through an aesthetic experience. This world says something to the reader, but what it says can only be grasped through

an aesthetic cognition of the work. I laid out in the third section of this chapter how the work as a stratified structure is cognized by the reader in an aesthetic attitude and mentioned that, for Ingarden, only through such an attitude can the idea of the work be grasped. What is this idea then? How it is apprehended by the reader in the act of reading?

Ingarden defines the idea of the work as “a ‘demonstrated,’ synthetic, essential complex of mutually modulated, aesthetically valent qualities which is brought to concrete experience either in the work or by means of it” (*CLWA*, 85). As we stated in the third section, the work is cognized by the reader by way of various synthesizing activities. During this cognition, the aesthetically valent qualities that are actualized by the reader lead to the intuitive constitution of a certain aesthetic value. This value forms a whole with the literary work of art itself. The qualitative complex revealed through the synthesizing activities and concretizations held by the reader endows the literary artwork an organic unity of structure. Like the organs of an organism, different elements in various strata of the work contribute to the overall wholeness of the work, and the reader by way of her synthesizing acts apprehends this wholeness. The aesthetically valent qualities that contribute to this complex vary in the work. However, only one single quality among them serves as a kind of centre of crystallization for the qualitative whole, and the others augment it to some extent. The idea of the work is nothing other than this value-bearing, qualitatively determined core of the whole work.

As he also states in the preface to the *Literary Work of Art*, one of the shortcomings of Ingarden’s two works on literary work of art is the lack of concrete analysis of individual works of art, or in other words, concrete examples that will clarify his theoretical analyses. It seems to me that it is in his analyses about the idea of the work that we feel the effect of this shortcoming most. From the discussion so far, it is

clear what the idea of the work is not. But without concrete examples, it is difficult to grasp what Ingarden means by the aesthetic idea of the work. The literary work of art is a complex formation with various strata, various potentialities, and a manifold of textual devices and linguistic tools. Where should we look for the idea of the work, then?

Ingarden claims in *LWA* that the idea of the work is manifested in the objective stratum of the work. Through the objective stratum, the literary work of art projects a world, a quasi-real, quasi-temporal world in which many characters, various states of affairs, and a manifold of relations between these characters are projected. Should we look for the idea of the work in this world of the work, then? It seems so. However, the extract from *CLWA* below shows us that the value-bearing core of the work can also be given to us through aesthetically valent qualities found in the linguistic strata of the work:

There are, however, various types of literary art; and, among the really great masterpieces, every work forms – if we may put it so – a particular, unrepeatable “type” of its own. Thus we cannot say in general and in advance which particularly valuable qualities of this “crystallization center” form the value bearing core of the individual work of art. There are works, for instance, in which peculiar kinds of aesthetically valuable emotional qualities form the value-bearing core of the qualitative synthetic whole, qualities which come to appearance in certain interpersonal situations in the portrayed world or characterize a person involved in a tragic situation or, finally, appear in the form of a metaphysical quality. Then they can be made immediately intuitable to the reader, but not only through the portrayal of certain interpersonal situations; for they can also be forced on the reader by the method of portrayal, by the choice of appropriate qualities in the verbal sounds and phonetic phenomena of a higher order, by the dynamics of the sentence structure and the sequences of the sentences, by a characteristically selected manifold of aspects in the portrayed objectivities are brought to appearance. But there are also works in which the peculiar factors of the dynamics of temporal perspective of the time portrayed in the work, or of the temporal structure of the work itself in the sequence of its parts, constitute this aesthetically valuable core; and there are others, again, in which the aesthetically valuable core is founded above all in the particular qualities of the melody of the verse etc. (*CLWA*, 86)

Hence, in order to apprehend the idea of the work, the reader should not only realize the aesthetically valent qualities that appear in the portrayed world of the work,

but also the peculiar qualitative values that are found in the linguistic structure. This necessity once more shows us the importance of grasping the four strata of the work in their organic unity. In more common terms, the form and the content of the work are both important elements for revealing the idea of the work. However, this is not an easy task to accomplish. It requires the reader to perform quite extensive acts in a simultaneous or closely successive way. “It is thus extraordinarily difficult to carry out all these acts and experiences in such a way that there are no distortions or imperfections anywhere, in any phase of reading, and so that the harmony of the strata and the polyphony of the aesthetically relevant qualities appearing in them are nowhere affected or changed” (*CLWA*, 89). This difficulty also indicates the highly active role of the reader in revealing the aesthetic idea of the work. This idea can only be grasped by the manifold of acts carried out by the reader, which I have tried to lay out in this chapter. What is the impact of such an intense experience on the reader? We have seen so far that the reader has an indispensable effect on the formation of the work. Does this process of formation have a similar effect on her?

Ingarden, in his analyses of the cognition of the literary artwork, mostly remains silent about such an effect. Only in the last pages of *LWA* does he make the following statement:

The literary work is a true wonder. It exists and lives and works on us, it enriches our lives to an extraordinary degree, it gives us hours of delight, and it allows us to descend into the very depths of existence, and yet it is only an ontically heteronomous formation which in terms of ontic autonomy is a nothing. If we wish to apprehend it theoretically, it shows a complexity and many-sidedness that can hardly be taken in; and yet it stands before us in aesthetic experience as a unity which allows this complex structure to shine through. It has an ontically heteronomous existence that seems to be completely passive and to suffer defenselessly all our operations; and yet by its concretizations it evokes deep changes in our life; it broadens it, raises it above the flatness of everyday existence, and gives it a lovely radiance. It is a “nothing” and yet a

wonderful world in itself – even though it comes into being and exists only by our grace. (*LWA*, 373)

How do these deep changes occur? How does the literary artwork give our lives a “lovely radiance”? How does it broaden it? Ingarden’s theory does not contain a systematic and overall analyses of such impact. Only in the parts where he discusses metaphysical qualities can we find a glimpse of a possible answer to the question posed. We have seen above that the idea of the work can sometimes appear in a form of metaphysical quality. Metaphysical qualities such as “the sublime, the tragic, the dreadful, the shocking, the inexplicable, the demonic, the holy, the sinful, the sorrowful, the indescribable brightness of good fortune, as well as the grotesque, the charming, the light, the peaceful, etc.” are very rarely realized in actual life (*LWA*, 290–91). But, when they are realized they have a striking effect on our lives. Ingarden defines this effect with the following words:

Life goes by – if one may say so – senselessly, gray and meaningless. . . . And then comes a day – like a grace – when perhaps for reasons that are unremarkable and unnoticed, and usually also concealed, an “event” occurs which envelops us and our surroundings in just such an indescribably atmosphere. Whatever the particular quality of this atmosphere, whether it is frightening or enchanting to distraction, it distinguishes itself like a shining, colorful splendour from the everyday grayness of the days, and it makes of the given event life’s culmination point, regardless of whether the basis for it is the shock of a brutal and wicked murder or the spiritual ecstasy of union with God. These “metaphysical” qualities – as we would like to call them – which reveal themselves from time to time are what make life worth living, and, whether we wish it or not, a secret longing for their concrete revelation lives in us and drives us in all our affairs and days. Their revelation constitutes the summit and the very depths of existence. . . . When we see them, the depths and primal sources of existence, to which we are usually blind and which we hardly sense in our daily lives, are “revealed,” as Heidegger would say, to our mind’s eye. But they not only reveal themselves to us; in looking at and in realizing them, we enter into primal existence. We do not merely see manifested in them that which is otherwise mysterious; instead, they are the primal [element] itself in one of its forms. But they can be fully shown to us only when they become reality . . . They are high points which throw a shadow on the rest of our lives; that is, they evoke radical transformation in the existence which is

immersed in them, regardless of whether they bring with them deliverance or damnation. (*LWA*, 291–92)

The metaphysical qualities, as we said, can also appear in literary works of art as the idea of the work. They are exhibited and manifested in the work by the represented objective situations. The metaphysical qualities in a literary work, in contrast to the metaphysical qualities revealed in actual life, are heteronomous and purely intentional formations. In other words, they share the same mode of existence with represented objectivities. Hence, the metaphysical properties that are realized in real-life situations are not realized but concretized in a literary artwork. And in this way, they simulate their own realization. The distance that appears due to their ontic heteronomy enables the reader to contemplate them calmly, contrary to her contemplation of them in actual situations. The effects of the realization of metaphysical qualities in real-life situations are so powerful that they grip and overpower us. In such a situation, we do not have the power to contemplate these qualities. It is only through the distance that is provided by the literary artwork that we can calmly contemplate them. However, this distance also weakens the power and the richness they attain in actual realization; our encounter with these qualities in a literary artwork does not evoke such powerful changes in us. In reading a tragedy, we are enraptured by such qualities, we enjoy what they offer without being depressed or afflicted. In Ingarden's words:

After a truly tragic situation or after an experience of true happiness, we cannot in our essence remain entirely as before and accordingly we cannot subsequently behave entirely as we choose. In contrast, after seeing a play that moved us 'to the very bottom of our heart,' we can calmly go home and occupy ourselves with inconsequential or vital or altogether different matters. Undoubtedly, an echo of the shock experienced during the play is discernible for a while; but real life is much stronger, and it demands its rights. (*LWA*, 295)

In a reading act in which the metaphysical qualities appear as the idea of the work, the distance we have from the represented situations saves us from the deep

effects of these metaphysical qualities and helps us to savour them while we intuit their revealed appearance with an aesthetic stance. Our distance cushions us from the shock and pain of actual life and by virtue of this safe position we can contemplate these qualities calmly, taking an aesthetic attitude; then later they can be objects of our reflective-aesthetic attitude. For Ingarden, it was this calm relief that Aristotle meant by catharsis: “In close connection with the aesthetic manner of observing metaphysical qualities is what Aristotle had in mind when he spoke of ‘catharsis’” (*LWA*, 295 n.12).

Clearly, this is not a satisfying account of the impact of the reading act on the reader. The literary work of art helps us to contemplate the metaphysical qualities calmly. But what is the result of this contemplation? Does it have a transformative power on the reader? What does Ingarden mean when he refers to Aristotle’s catharsis? Does he mean that the experience of metaphysical qualities in a literary work of art provides the reader with a purgation or a purification? We cannot find a response to these questions in Ingarden’s theory, or a profound account of the impact on the reader of all the complex and intense acts he discusses in his works. impact. However, we can clearly see from the above discussion that the effect of experiencing metaphysical qualities in her act of reading does not affect the reader in a long-haul sense; whatever the intellectual and emotional influence the reader experienced, the flatness of everyday experience wins out. In other words, the impact is a temporary one which is shortly suppressed by the uproar of the daily life. This is clearly not a satisfactory account of the impact of reading act. However, it seems to me that the importance of Ingarden’s approach lays in his emphasis that in examining the possible impact of the act of reading literary artworks on the reader, we should be sensitive to the artistic character of the work. If such an impact, peculiar to the literary work of art, is to be found, we should look for it in a cognition of the work that is appropriate to its essential function.

We do not have to agree with Ingarden about the nature of the aesthetic structure of the work or the way we contemplate it aesthetically. However, in our search, we should always bear in mind that we are dealing with a work of art.

## **Conclusion**

Ingarden's analysis of the literary work of art clearly shows the indispensable role of the reader in the creation of a literary work of art as an aesthetic object. By defining the objectivities projected by the literary artwork as intentional objects, which owe their existence to the conscious acts of the author, Ingarden supplies the schematic foundation of their being. Along with the potentialities in the work, which are actualized and synthesized by the reader by way of this schematic formulation, the reader is no longer defined as a passive perceiver of a finished work, but as the co-creator of an open formation (*Gebilde*). This openness also enables various possible interpretations of the same work through different concretizations and actualizations. In this sense, the historicity of the individual work, that is, its being interpreted in various ways in different epochs of history, can also be explained. This notion of literary work of art is highly acceptable today to scholars and literary critics. The importance of Ingarden, I think, lays in the fact that, by demonstrating the source of this openness in the intentional character of the work, he shows us that the incompleteness of the work – which calls for the active participation of the reader – is an intrinsic incompleteness rooted in the ontological character of the work.

The second point in Ingarden's theory that is significant for our purposes is the emphasis on the quasi-real character of the literary work of art. The intentional

directional factor of the sentences in a literary work of art does not point to anything beyond the world of the work. In this sense, the objectivities presented in a literary artwork, and the world of the work composed of these objectivities, should be apprehended by the reader as fictional entities that are constructed by the creative acts of the author and re-constructed by the acts of reader. Consequently, we cannot attribute them the seriousness that we attribute to factual works. The assertions they make are not obliged to coincide with any external fact. Hence the impact of the work on the reader should not be sought in the propositional capacity of the work, but in the transformative power of the world projected by the work.

The third point that concerns us is related to the second point mentioned above. For Ingarden, the overall idea of the work cannot be an assertion derived from the work. Although his notion of the “idea of the work” is to a certain degree ambiguous and difficult to grasp, his analysis on the issue shows us that if we are to look for an overall idea of a literary artwork, we cannot grasp it without taking into consideration the aesthetic nature of the work. In the end, what we are dealing with is a work of art and as a work of art the aesthetic potentialities in the work contribute to the formation of this idea.

All in all, despite the contributions of his theory that I have laid out above, Ingarden remains mostly silent about an aspect of reading process that is crucial for our purpose. He supplies us with a one-way traffic idea of the process of reading. The literary artwork is in the end shaped by the conscious acts of the reader through a very complex web of various acts that she carries out on the work. However, Ingarden’s theory does not supply us with a clear account of the impact of this intense process on the reader herself. However, his theory does not necessarily exclude the possibility of such an account. In the next chapter, I will read Wolfgang Iser’s reader response theory

as a compilation of Ingarden's points on the phenomenology of reading. By defying ontology and asserting that fiction is most tangible in its impact on the reader, Iser seems to fill in the gap left open by Ingarden.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ISER'S NEGATIVE AESTHETICS

#### Introduction

In this chapter my aim is to analyze Wolfgang Iser's "theory of aesthetic response" as an extension of Ingarden's approach. My focus is mainly on Iser's pre-anthropological period, and I will deal primarily with *The Act of Reading* (1978). As previously discussed, Ingarden's theory reveals the importance of the role of the reader in the constitution of the literary artwork by exposing its essentially schematic structure. However, his theory does not establish a clear and complete account of the impact of the reading experience in the mind of the reader himself. I argue in this chapter that Iser fills this lacuna left open by Ingarden. He achieves this by shifting the focus point from the ontological exploration of the literary artwork to a functional one, wherein his approach is indebted to the outcomes of Ingarden's earlier work. In this sense, these two studies complement each other and reveal a richer understanding of the relation between the ontological and functional explanations in the broader context of reader-response theory.

In the first section of this chapter, I lay out the scope of Iser's theory. In contradistinction to Ingarden, Iser is interested in a specific group of literary works. His chief object of study is the novel as the paradigm of modern narrative literature, explaining in the preface to *Act* that "[narrative texts] provide the most variegated facets pertinent to an analysis of the act of reading" (xii). Moreover, he is interested in innovative novels which negate the social and literary conventions of their day. Resulting from this contemporary focus, his theory is identified by many critics as being

essentially modernist. Here, I argue that his theory is in fact not “modernist,” per se, but rather a modern theory. In this sense, Iser’s scope cannot be limited to the works of a specific period, namely the works of 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism. Rather, it reveals the transformative power of modern works that emerge (and re-emerge) in different epochs of literary history.

The second section explores the paradigmatic axis of the reading act in Iser’s theory. To begin, I first recount his understanding of reading act as a fundamentally communicative process between the work and the reader. Then, I outline his concept of “repertoire” as the designation of the unique relation between fiction and reality. Iser defines repertoire as the “territory of all familiar elements in fiction” (*Act*, 69). These elements are selected from the empirical world but are “de-pragmatized” while being embodied by the work. Through this process of de-pragmatization, they are taken out of their original context and revealed to the reader as themes in themselves and consequently put into reflective questioning.

In the third section, I scrutinize the syntagmatic axis of the act of reading, explaining how the text is presented to the reader through various interrelated segments and perspectives. As my analysis shows, the relation between these segments are not formulated by the text, but are rather left as blanks to be placed into meaningful “gestalt groups” by the reader. This grouping activity of the reader, which functions in large part as a gesture towards coherency, is always disturbed and negated by what Iser calls “alien associations.” Using this phrase, he encapsulates how such links emerge from the reader’s perspective during the initial gestalt formation, emphasizing that their integration into this outlook is not an instantaneous phenomenon. Instead, as a manner of offsetting the incoherency caused by this negation, the reader is forced to re-formulate the gestalten she has already constructed. Consequently, due to the

indispensable role of the reader's habitual disposition in the formation of this negation, she is lead to reflect on this disposition and re-imagine it. As a result, according to Iser's theory, such blanks and negations reveal an important aspect of fictional narratives from a functionalist viewpoint. That is, by de-pragmatizing the familiar norms of the reader in its paradigmatic axes, and by negating the gestalt formations, the fictional narratives prompt the reader to a self-reflective position. In this sense, Iser's theory fills the lacuna left over by Ingarden by attributing a transformative power to the interpretation of fictional narratives.

### 1. The Scope of Iser's Theory: Modern Works

In his preface to *The Act of Reading*, Iser distinguishes his effort from the other members of the Konstanz School (especially Hans Robert Jauss) by stating that his theory is to be regarded as a one of "aesthetic response" (*Wirkungstheorie*) and not as a theory of the "aesthetic reception" (*Rezeptionstheorie*). This distinction in methodology is important to understand both the structure of the *Act* and the aim of Iser in constructing his theory of response.<sup>41</sup> He defines the difference of these two approaches as in the following:

A theory of aesthetic response is confronted with the problem of how a hitherto unformulated situation can be processed and, indeed, understood. A theory of reception, on the other hand, always deals with existing readers, whose reactions testify to certain historically conditioned experiences of literature. A theory of response has its roots in the text; a theory of reception arises from the history of judgements. (*Act*, x)

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<sup>41</sup> The following quotation from *Act* reveals that Iser is not totally satisfied with the term "response": "The German term '*Wirkung*' comprises both effect and response without the psychological connotations of the English word 'response'. 'Effect' is at times too weak a term to convey what is meant by '*Wirkung*', and 'response' is a little confusing . . . I have finally opted for 'response'" (ix)

This method has been met with critical commentary. In a question directed to Iser, Norman Holland accuses him of not giving a single reference to an actual reader in *Act*, although the main aim of the book is to analyze what actually happens when one is reading a text. “Instead,” he says, “you arrive at your model of reading by building on Husserl, Ingarden, and other philosophical (as opposed to empirical) evidence” (Iser et al. 1980, 58). Iser replies to Holland’s criticism by stating that his aim is to construct a heuristic model of the activities basic to the act of reading which can provide a framework for the evaluation of the actual readers’ responses to a literary text. Hence, Iser’s aim in *Act* can be summarized as an examination of potential response-inviting structures in the text and offering a phenomenological account of reading experience in accordance with these structures.

In a broader understanding, the reader with which Iser is concerned is an ideal one. He conceptualizes this under the rubric of “implied reader,” which he defines as “a transcendental model which makes it possible for the structured effects of literary texts to be described. It denotes the role of the reader, which is definable in terms of *textual structure* and *structured acts*” (*Act*, 38; emphasis mine). Hence, the implied reader refers neither to the actual reader nor to the dramatized, fictitious reader, but to a conceptual model which not only designates the response inviting structures in the text but also the imaginative activities of the actual reader in responding these invitations. Thus, the concept of implied reader refers to a role that is offered by the text to the actual reader and the response of the actual reader to that role. As soon as the actual reader accepts the invitation and takes a part in the play between her and the text, she finds herself in a tension between the role offered and her own disposition, which I shall call “aesthetic tension.” This category of readerly tension can be more clearly understood by turning to Wayne Booth and his observations on the difference

between myself as reader and the often very different self who goes about paying bills, repairing leaky faucets, and failing in generosity and wisdom. It is only as I read that I become the self whose beliefs must coincide with the author's. Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement. (Booth 1961, 137-38)

Although this quotation makes the tension clear, it includes a strong claim with which Iser disagrees: namely, the claim that the reader should be in complete agreement with the implied author. In other words, she should suspend all her beliefs and submit herself to the role offered by the text in order to achieve a successful reading. Iser rejects this understanding by insisting on the impossibility of such a total submission. The reader's own disposition never disappears completely, he claims, it always remains in the background functioning as a frame of reference for the comprehension of the text: "If it were to disappear totally, we should simply forget all the experiences that we are constantly bringing into play as we read – experiences which are responsible for the many different ways in which people fulfill the reader's role set out by the text" (*Act*, 37). The aesthetic tension between the disposition of the reader and the role offered to her by the text never disappears during the act of reading. Moreover, this tension does not reduce the quality of the reading experience as is suggested by Booth. Rather, it is a fruitful tension which enriches not only the work through different possible realizations, but also the reader by virtue of the transmutation of textual perspectives into her personal experiences.

The aesthetic tension also signifies the historical aspect of Iser's theory, insofar as the notion of implied reader signifies a dialectical relationship between the role offered by the text and the reader responding to this offer. From the discussion above, we can see that the two factors of the relationship (the role and the reader) mutually

influence each other. Thus, the role actualized by the reader is shaped by her social disposition. In turn, this disposition is re-shaped by the reader's experience, now linked to this role which she agrees to perform. Therefore, we can claim that Iser's notion of "implied reader" does not suggest a determinate role fixed by the text. Instead, the offered role is given to the reader as a schematic structure which can be actualized in various ways. The possible actualizations of the offered role are strictly related to the selective acts of the individual reader, and they represent how the implied reader is realized through these actualizations. As a result, the concept of implied reader does not restrain the text's openness to different realizations which are shaped by the cultural and historical dispositions of the actual reader. Rather, it allows the apprehension of work in different ways by different readers in specific cultural and historical eras. In that sense, Iser's theory attributes a personal history to the work—namely, the history of its cognitions by different readers across varying historical and cultural epochs.

As I have discussed in Chapter 1, Ingarden outlines the variety of concretizations of the one and the same work in different historical and cultural eras through what he calls "the life of the work". Through the use of this phrase, Ingarden's theory attributes to the literary work a historicity in the sense that a work can be cognized in different ways in different epochs of history. This variety can be accounted by virtue of the openness of the potentialities and points of indeterminacy in the work to various possible actualizations and concretizations. However, although Ingarden's theory, by virtue of this openness, can explain the historicity of an individual work, it does not supply us with an account of the always changing paradigms that determine that work's position in literary history. In other words, although Ingarden's theory gives us an account of the life of an individual work in different historical and cultural epochs, it fails to explain "the unequivocal fact of the work's 'death', to show how it is

possible for countless literary works to fall back into that nameless territory of genres, literature, culture and even, perhaps, ‘culturlessness’ even if the physical basis of its existence does not cease” (Bojtar 1985, 97). In the same manner, it also fails to demonstrate the birth of a work in a specific moment of literary history. The reason of this failure lies in the silence of Ingarden on the historicity of the reader and literature as a phenomenon which is always subject to change through successive paradigms. Ingarden’s reader is an ahistorical reader in contrast to the modern reader of Iser.

At this point, it is important to investigate another aspect of Iser’s notion of the implied reader. As I explain in the following sections, the aesthetic tension between the work and the reader stems from a negational function that is not embodied by all innovative literary works. In order for an aesthetic tension to arise, the role offered by the work in question should be inconsistent with the reader’s disposition and consequently negate the norms and conventions in which she has been entangled (either consciously or unconsciously) in her life praxis. Hence, the works which Iser is drawn to are those which possess such negational potential. Accordingly, the implied reader refers to a reader in a specific moment of the literary history—a moment wherein both the prevailing social and literary norms and conventions are negated by a new work. In order to clarify the position of the reader at that moment, I will now turn to Hans Robert Jauss, the other pioneer of Konstanz school, and his concept of “horizontal change”.

According to Jauss a new work is born into a “horizon of expectations” prescribed by a ruling standard of taste, and as such, it either fulfills these expectations or negates them. If the new work negates the prevailing expectations, this will result in an occurrence of aesthetic distance, which Jauss defines as a “disparity between the given horizon of expectations and the appearance of a new work, whose reception can result in a ‘change of horizons’ through negation of familiar experiences or through

raising newly articulated experiences to the level of consciousness” (1982, 25). If the new work is congruent with these prevailing expectations, however, the aesthetic distance will decrease and the work comes closer to the “culinary” or entertainment art: “it satisfies the desire for the reproduction of familiarly beautiful; confirms familiar sentiments; sanctions wishful notions; or even raises moral problems, but only to ‘solve’ them in an edifying manner” (1982, 25). The horizontal change supplied by innovative works puts the reader at a critical distance with contemporary norms. The new work does not totally negate the contemporary horizon of expectations. Rather, the prevailing rules and norms always remain in the background and function as a frame of reference for the new horizon which the new work has brought about. This partial negation, consequently, uncovers and discloses the problems and deficiencies of the current norms of literature. It fulfills this function by evoking for the reader the horizon of expectations, as well as the rules and norms familiar from early works. These are revealed by the new work in their problematic character, and consequently the new work supplies the reader with a critical distance with the works that are familiar to her: “The ideal cases of the objective capability of such literary-historical frames of reference are works that evoke the reader’s horizon of expectations formed by a convention of genre, style, or form” (1982, 23-24). By virtue of this revealing and negating function, the new work demands a change—namely, a change in the horizon of expectations which is conceptualized by Jauss as “horizontal change”, and consequently a change in the attitude of the reader. The reader who finds herself in a reoriented, varied and enlarged horizon of expectations cannot remain unchanged. The new work demands a new type of reader who can accord with the new paradigms of the literary horizon.

Jauss' concept of horizontal change gives us an account of paradigm shifts that happen in specific moments of literary history. In so doing, his aim is to argue for the importance of aesthetic apprehension of literary works by the reader in the formation of the history of literature. He suggests a new methodology for literary history in contrast to the classical and philological view which assumes "the 'objective' description of a series of events in an isolated past" (1982, 21). The underlying logic of this classical view is the claim that the meaning of a literary work is objective: here, in the sense that it is once and for all determined, as well as being immediately accessible to the reader at all times. This clearly shows the philological view's negligence of the artistic impact of the work on the reader which is crucial in the attempt to understand the specific place of that work in the history:

A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless essence. It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers and that frees the text from the material of the words and brings it to a contemporary existence: 'words that must, at the same time that they speak to him, create an interlocutor capable of understanding them. (1982, 21)<sup>42</sup>

The methodology presented by Jauss suggests a new outlook on the history of literature from the point of a question and answer dialectic.<sup>43</sup> The new work is an attempt to give an answer (solution) to the questions (problems) left behind by the older ones. However, the new work does not only handle the questions left behind by the older works in literary history. Literary history should be seen as a "special history" which has a unique relationship to "general history". The relationship lies in the social function of literature which "manifests itself in its genuine possibility only where the literary experience of the reader enters into the horizon of expectations of his lived

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<sup>42</sup> This quotation sheds a light on Iser's concept of "implied reader". Like Jauss' reader, Iser's implied reader refers to a new type of reader which is shaped by the demands of the new work.

<sup>43</sup> Here, Jauss follows Gadamer's use of Collingwood. See (Collingwood 1970, 27ff., 107ff); (Gadamer 2002, 370ff).

praxis, performs on his understanding of the world, and thereby also has an effect on his social behavior” (1982, 39). This “socially formative function” of literature has its roots in the negating potential of the medium. The new work (with the suggestion of a new form) does not only relieve the old form, but it also makes possible a new perception by virtue of the productive function of negative experience. Through the falsification of our assumptions, such negativity leads us to make tangible contact with reality. In that regard, “the experience of reading can liberate one from adaptations, prejudices, and predicaments of a lived praxis in that it compels one to a new perception of things” (1982, 41), by virtue of the productive meaning of the negative experience. The social impact of literature through its negating capacity, then, stems from its potential to expand the reader’s horizon of lived praxis. The literary work does not only preserve actual experiences, but by virtue of a negation of these experiences, it also anticipates unrealized possibilities, and consequently “broadens the limited space of social behavior for new desires, claims, and goals, and thereby opens paths for future experiences” (Jauss 1982, 41).

Wolfgang Iser’s implied reader refers to the position of the very reader who encounters the literary works that lead to a horizontal change in Jauss’ terms. As I remarked in the beginning of this section, Iser differentiates his effort from Jauss’. He is, admittedly, not interested in Jauss’ type of historical research. What he tries to achieve, comparatively, is to reveal the textual structure of the innovative work which makes such a negational function possible, along with the mental structure of the reader encountering this work. This also reveals one of the main differences between Ingarden’s and Iser’s attempts. As Menachem Brinker states:

Ingarden’s theory ensures its validity by confining itself to the most universal traits of the literary work. Usually, it abstains from basing its detailed descriptions on peculiar literary potencies connected with particular groups of literary works. ... Iser, however, develops a whole

phenomenology of reading which fits a specific group of fictional works. (1980, 209)

This specific group of fictional works, however, are improperly identified with works of specific periods of literary history, especially that of modernist works by critics of Iser such as Winfried Fluck and Gabriele Schwab.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, looking at his oeuvre, we can see that Iser's work is not limited in scope to modernist literature. Even the subtitle of his *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication from Bunyan to Beckett* explicates that his interest is not limited to modernist literature. As Ben De Bryun states:

Whilst Iser certainly devoted much attention to Renaissance, Enlightenment, aestheticist and modernist literatures, it is clear that he did not focus on any of these periods to the exclusion of the others, but tried, rather, to comprehend the experience of modernity from the various viewpoints provided by these historical epochs. Iser's work is not rooted in one specific century, but in a modern condition that manifests itself in various ways throughout these periods. He is not a modernist but a modern thinker. In the end perhaps his view of the modern age is a modernist one, but this does not mean that his work only deals with or is only relevant to the literature of the twentieth century. (2012, 46-47)

In a conversation with Wayne Booth and Norman Holland, Iser complains about the perception of *Act* as a modernist aesthetics: "I have dealt extensively with modern non-mimetic fiction from Joyce to Beckett-a fact which, in turn, has given rise to another charge occasionally levelled against me: that *The Act of Reading* is basically a modernistic aesthetics" (Iser et al. 1980, 65). It is true that in *Act*, Iser mainly deals with modernist fiction, like that belonging to Joyce, Beckett and Faulkner. However, he also deals extensively with Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Winfried Fluck claims that Iser's interest in modernist literature stems from his search for "distance," a term which, for Fluck, "refers not to a wish for disengagement but to the opening up of a space for self-determination" (2000, 178). "Modernist literature,"

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<sup>44</sup> See (Fluck 2000, 191); and (Schwab 2000, 74).

continues Fluck, “interested him as ‘*Reflexionskunst*,’ as an ‘art of reflexivity.’

Reflexivity is needed because it can secure and increase the distance. In the traditional modernist argument, it does this by breaking up an illusion of representation” (183).

Thus, Modernist literature supplies Iser with a type of distance that not only invalidates the classical idea of literature as representation, but also negates the classical form of literary interpretation. As Iser states, “Modern art and literature are themselves beginning to react against the traditional form of interpretation: to uncover a hidden meaning” (*Act*, 11). In this manner, modernist art, for Iser, demands a change in the horizon of expectations of the reader and the prevailing norms of current theory. His concentration on modernist art simply arises from its being an emblematic of a paradigm shift in the modern condition.

It may be said that the paradigm shift brought about by the modernist literature was more apparent and more influential than the earlier shifts in literary history. Iser claims that the roots of modern literature date back to the romantic era, marking “a break with the Aristotelian tradition of perspective poetics; instead of laying down the rules according to which literature had to be produced, it set out to explore what literature was able to achieve” (*Prospecting*, 131). Since then, literature self-reflectively searches for the validity of interpretational conventions and norms like authorial intention, the message or the meaning of the work, its aesthetic value, and its mimetic function. This self-reflexive effort, one may say, reaches its zenith in the era of modernist literature, a moment in literary history in which a vast array of novelists begin to privilege an increased sense of narrative indeterminacy as a hallmark of their craftsmanship.

As we will see in the following sections, these indeterminacies are mostly found in the connection between the multiple perspectives presented by the work in question.

The interconnections between these different perspectives are no more formulated by the text as it was in the nineteenth century novel, being left merely as blanks in the text. In this respect, the work does not offer a consistent structure to the reader; rather, it appears as a work full of breaks which gives it a veneer of inconsistency: “modern literary works are full of apparent inconsistencies – not because they are badly constructed, but because such breaks act as hindrances to comprehension, and so force us to reject our habitual orientations as inadequate” (*Act*, 18). We have seen in Ingarden’s ontological analysis of the literary artwork that all such artworks are ontologically schematic. That is to say, they all contain points of indeterminacy that must be filled in by the reader. Iser, here, attributes a historical aspect to the schematic structure of the work introduced by Ingarden. He emphasizes “the striking fact that since the eighteenth century, indeterminacy in literature – or at least an awareness of it – has tended to increase” (*Prospecting*, 15). As the following sections illustrate, this increase in the indeterminacies of the work demands a more active reader:

The reader of modern novels is deprived of the assistance that the eighteenth-century writer gave in a variety of devices, ranging from exhortation to satire and irony. Instead, today’s reader is expected to strive for himself to unravel the mysteries of a sometimes strikingly enigmatic composition. This development reflects the transformation of the very idea of literature, which seems to have ceased to be a means of relaxation and even luxury, making demands now on the capacity for understanding because the world presented seems to have no bearing on what the reader is familiar with. (*Prospecting*, 17)

Hence, the shift in literary paradigm consequently demands a parallel shift in the definition of the reader and the ways that the act of reading has been constituted to that particular historical point. It requires an adaptation in criticism and theory such that contemporary readers can fulfill the demands of the new paradigm.<sup>45</sup> In this sense,

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<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that for Iser, a literary critic is no more than a cultured reader due to the work’s openness to various realizations: “The moment the critic offers his interpretation he is himself open to criticism, because the structure of the work can be assembled in many different ways” (*Act*, 17). Hence, the critic loses the authoritative position she had in the nineteenth century.

Iser's *Act* can be characterized as a response to the modernist paradigm shift. However, that does not mean that the theory it presents—the theory of aesthetic response—can be applied only to the modernist works. After stating the necessity of shifting from a referential mode of interpretation to a functional model in *Act*, Iser states that

“The moment a work of art needs to be examined in terms of its individuality or its functions, the referential model must be replaced by an operational one. This is more appropriate anyway in the study of modern art, but it also enables us to gain access to the works of the past by laying bare their functions and the conditions governing their reception” (*Act*, 14 fn.).

Hence, the new theory supplies us with new tools that will help us to interpret the works of the past from a different point of view. Through this alternative interpretation, new aspects of a past work that have not been realized up to that time may come into being, and the work can be concretized in a different overall way. Alternatively, these tools can help us to understand the value of a work thought to be “ahead of its time,” and ignored by its contemporary readers. In fact, this is what Iser accomplishes in his work prior to *The Implied Reader* and *Act*. As Ben de Bruyn observes:

Many of his writings – the early studies on Fielding and Pater are good examples – also draw attention to the innovative or ‘modern’ qualities of pre-modernist works. Even medieval literature acquires a surprisingly modern quality in his writing. . . . By unearthing the innovative qualities of these medieval writings, Iser explicitly casts them in the role of the precursors of modernity. Medieval texts are even shown to disrupt ‘clarity [Eindeutigkeit]’, to display a ‘mosaic’ of conventions not unlike a montage, and to engage in the ‘restructuring [Umstrukturierung]’ of older narrative materials. (2012, 65-66)

The discussion above reveals two important aspects of Iser's theory and the scope of his studies. First, as I highlight at the outset of this discussion, Iser is not a modernist theorist as some of his critics claim, but a modern one. Accordingly, the scope of his theory is not limited to modernist works, but the modern ones. He is intrigued by fictions that have the potential to negate the prevailing conventions and

norms of their time—works that might be thought of as critical of extant social and literary norms. The second aspect is related to the first one. It is clear that Iser's theory pre-supposes a historicity for literature as a social phenomenon. The historical aspect Iser attributes to literature is coherent to Jauss' understanding of literary history; a history of literature understood as a dialectic of conventions and negations. The norms that delimit literature through conventional processes are negated by innovative works. But, as Ingarden shows, a literary work does not offer the same view to each reader in each period, it has its own life, and a work that was innovational for readers of a specific period may become canonized later. Hence, the distance supplied by the new work is not permanent; in Jauss' words, "this distance, at first experienced as a pleasing or alienating new perspective, can disappear for the later readers, to the extent that the original negativity of the work has become self-evident and has itself entered into the horizon of future aesthetic experience, as a henceforth familiar expectation" (1982, 25). These works that entered into the horizon of future aesthetic experience will also be negated by future innovative works in due course. Therefore, if we are to understand the historical aspect of Iser's theory, we should understand it in regard to such a dialectical understanding of literary history. In Rudolf E. Kuenzlis's words, Iser's theory "identifies the social function of literature in any historical period as its capacity to convey 'something new', thereby suggesting that at any moment in the history of literature there is a literary 'avant-garde'" (1980, 48). Although fascinated by modernist works, Iser's theory of aesthetic response is not a theory that deals specifically with modernist works, but with the emergence and re-emergence of the modern at different epochs in literary history.

## 2. Fiction and Reality: Repertoire as the Basic Element of the Paradigmatic Axis of Reading

The literary work is essentially paradoxical. It represents history and at the same time resists it.

—Roland Barthes, *On Racine*

Iser claims that the act of reading should be understood as a communication between the fictional narrative and the reader. Because “communication would be unnecessary if that which is to be communicated were not to some extent unfamiliar” (*Act*, 229), the fictional narrative must reveal something that is not familiar to the reader. This understanding shows the deviation in Iser’s theory from a classical understanding of mimesis (understood as a mere replica of extra-textual reality) to a conceptualization of mimesis as a creative and performative representation.<sup>46</sup> It is creative in the sense that it reveals something that the reader does not realize in her entanglement with the empirical world, and its performative character denotes a potential to lead the reader to reflect on her habitual disposition by laying bare the prevailing thought systems that regulate her disposition. However, this does not mean that the fictional text is deprived of a familiar reality. In such a case, communication would again be impossible. For communication to occur, there must be some meeting point between the text and the reader; and this meeting point is constituted by the familiar elements that are involved in the text. Hence, fictional texts accommodate familiar elements, but when they represent these elements, they do this through putting into question their meaning and validity by presenting them to the reader as themes in themselves by means of de-pragmatization. This unique way of presenting familiar elements also denotes the relation between the fiction and the extratextual reality.

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<sup>46</sup> Understanding of mimesis as a creative and performative representation will be discussed once more in the next chapter when we lay out Ricoeur’s understanding of threefold mimesis.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Ingarden tries to solve the problematic relation between the literary artwork and the extratextual reality by attributing a specific character to literary artworks—that of quasi-reality. Iser mostly agrees with Ingarden about the quasi-real character of fictional narratives and consequently with his idea that there is a peculiar relation between fiction and reality.<sup>47</sup> For him, fiction and reality are not pure opposites as assumed by some critical schools. Although fiction does not represent reality as it is, it says something to us about it of which we are unaware in our daily routine. This something leads us to reflect on the norms and conventions that regulate our habitual disposition, holding a potential to urge us to reformulate them. In order to understand this peculiar relation, one must approach it in terms of communication, not opposition. “Now if the reader and the literary text are partners in a process of communication,” says Iser, “and if what is communicated is to be of any value, our prime concern will no longer be the *meaning* of that text (the hobbyhorse ridden by critics of yore) but its *effect*. . . . Our interest, then, is directed toward the pragmatics of literature— ‘pragmatic’ in . . . sense of relating the signs of the text to the ‘interpretant’” (*Act*, 54). Here, Iser claims that through the communication between the work and the reader, the latter undergoes a type of transformation, and if we are to understand the relation between fiction and reality, we should focus our attention on this effect. The major difference between Iser’s and Ingarden’s analysis on the relation between fiction and reality comes to light at this point. Whereas Ingarden tries to

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<sup>47</sup> Only in *Theory*, he blames Ingarden for being silent on the ability of readers to distinguish between quasi-judgements and real judgements: “How do we know whether the text in front of us consist either of assertive propositions or quasi-judgmental sentences? . . . At this juncture of the argument Ingarden keeps conspicuously silent” (2006, 18). However, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, Ingarden replies to a very similar criticism from Kate Hamburger in his extended edition of *LWA* and claims that the literary artwork contains stylistic elements that inform the reader that he is dealing with a literary work of art, hence a quasi-real work. Iser should have missed this reply, since in his work, he refers to the English translation of this extended edition which includes Ingarden’s extensive reply to Hamburger.

explain the relation by focusing on the ontological character and structural construction of the text, Iser approaches the issue from a functionalist point.

In trying to describe the communicative interaction between the fictional narrative and the reader, Iser turns to the school of speech-act theory spearheaded by John L. Austin and John R. Searle. He takes their theoretical framework as a “heuristic guideline in considering the fact that the written utterance continually transcends the margins of the printed page, in order to bring the addressee into contact with nontextual realities” (*Act*, 55). Examining different types of utterances, speech act theory introduces a distinction between “constative” utterances which describe or report some state of affairs, and “performative” utterances which produce a state of affairs which did not exist before the time utterance is made. Later, Austin differentiates three kinds of performative utterances:

We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a *locutionary act*, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to “meaning” in the traditional sense. Second, we said that we also perform *illocutionary acts* such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform *perlocutionary acts*: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading. (Austin 1962 ,108)

As Iser notes, the success of a linguistic act depends on three conditions that must be fulfilled: “The utterance must invoke a convention that is as valid for the recipient as for the speaker. The application of the convention must tie in with the situation—in other words, it must be governed by accepted procedures. And, finally, the willingness of the participants to engage in a linguistic action must be proportionate to the degree in which the situation or context of the action is defined” (*Act*, 56). Through the fulfillment of these three conditions, the indeterminacies of linguistic action are resolved. Hence, these conditions form the frame of reference for the communicative

act. Iser claims that the language of literature resembles illocutionary acts, however, insofar as it lacks such a given frame of reference. In order to communicate with the text, the frame of reference must be discovered by the reader under the guidance of the text. Extending the speech act theory to the realm of literature, Iser explicates how situation, conventions, and procedures are involved in fictional narratives.

To begin, speech-act theory claims that in ordinary language, all communication happens in a given “situation” and the meaning of an utterance is conditioned by the determinate situation that is common to the utterer and the listener: “Speech devoid of situation is practically inconceivable, except perhaps as a symptom of some sort of mental disturbance—though even this is in itself a situation” (*Act*, 62). What is more, an utterance is always directed at an addressee, and the quality of the relation between the utterer and the addressee stabilizes various factors left open by the actual situation. The choice of vocabulary, syntax, intonation and other linguistic tools, in the attempt to reach the specific addressee, is to some extent shaped by this quality. Consequently, these factors constitute the attendant circumstances of the situational context. In this regard, Iser observes that, although the verbal structure of fictional narratives very much resembles to that of ordinary speech, such narratives lack a real situational context with attendant circumstances. This lack of situation does not mean that the communication between the fictional narrative and the reader must fail. Rather, it denotes the fact that literary communication involves a unique type of situation in which the situational context of literary communication is underscored by the co-creative acts of the reader. Fictional narratives contain instructions for the building of a situation, and the reader (guided by these instructions) builds the situation as an imaginary context. Thus, the fictional situation differs from the actual situation of ordinary communication in character and consequence. The situation-building process has a dynamic character

insofar as during the ongoing process of reading, the situation constructed by the reader may be negated through the new information supplied by the work, and she may be compelled to revise her construction such that it will remove the indeterminacies brought about by the text in different phases of the reading act. Thus, the situational context of literary communication is constructed and re-constructed by the reader in an event-like way: “In literature, where the reader is constantly feeding back reactions as he obtains new information, there is just such a continual process of realization, and so reading itself 'happens' like an event, in the sense that what we read takes on the character of an open-ended situation, at one and the same time concrete and yet fluid” (*Act*, 68).

Now we can turn to the second condition of communication; that of “convention.” Whereas Austin and Searle exclude literary language from their analysis on the grounds of being void because of its inability to invoke a convention, Iser claims that this is not the case: “fictional language is not in fact without conventions at all—it merely deals with conventions in a different way from ordinary performative utterances” (*Act*, 60). The conventions and accepted procedures are understood by speech act theory as a “normative stability”. Iser assigns the term “vertical structure” to this stability, in the sense that values of the past also apply to the present. What literary language does is to call the validity of this vertical structure into question by reorganizing the conventions and accepted procedures horizontally: “The fictional text makes a selection from a variety of conventions to be found in the real world and it puts them together as if they are interrelated” (*Act*, 61). By virtue of this alternative organization, the selected conventions are brought before the reader in an unexpected way. They are pulled out of their social context, deprived of their regulating function, and they begin to be stripped of their validity. In this way, they become objects of

scrutiny in themselves. According to Iser, this is where fictional language begins to take effect: “it de pragmatizes the conventions it has selected, and herein lies its pragmatic function. We call upon a vertical structure when we want to act; but a horizontal combination of different conventions enables us to see precisely what it is that guides us when we do act” (*Act*, 61).

This selective function also reveals the “performative” character of literary language. The conventions selected and represented by the text are not selected arbitrarily. However, the motivation governing this selection is not formulated in the text; it should be discerned by the reader, and this process of discovery is in the nature of a performative action. The reader is not left on her own in this process; rather she is guided by various narrative techniques which Iser calls “strategies” of the text, which correspond to the accepted procedures of speech acts in the sense that they regulate the search for the motivation underlying the selection. “But,” says Iser, “they differ from the *accepted procedures* in that they combine to thwart stabilized expectations or expectations which they themselves has initially stabilized” (*Act*, 61).

Through his effort in explaining the communicative character of the act of reading by extending speech act theory to the realm of literature, Iser shows us how fictional narratives meet the necessary conditions of a successful communication by showing the equivalences of these conditions in literary communication. As he states, “The conventions necessary for the establishment of a situation might more fittingly be called the *repertoire* of the text. The accepted procedures we shall call the *strategies*, and the reader's participation will henceforth be referred to as the *realization*” (*Act*, 69; emphasize mine). The rest of this chapter expounds on Iser’s idea of the repertoire of the text as the correlate of conventions.

All the familiar territory within the text is called “repertoire” by Iser:

“[Repertoire] may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged – in brief, . . . [to] the ‘extratextual’ reality” (*Act*, 69). Hence, repertoire appears as the main concept in Iser’s theory, revealing the unique relation between the fictional narrative and the reality. At this point we need to focus on the character of reality in this relation in order to understand more clearly how repertoire functions in fictional narratives.

In the chapter on the aesthetics of live television broadcasts in his *The Open Work*, Umberto Eco observes that

Live TV broadcasts are determined, in their unfolding, by the expectations and demands of their public, a public that not only wants to know what is happening in the world but also expects to hear or see it in the shape of a well-constructed novel, since this is the way it chooses to perceive “real” life—stripped of all chance elements and reconstructed as plot. We shouldn’t forget that. After all, the traditional narrative plot corresponds to the habitual, mechanical, yet reasonable and functional way in which we are used to perceiving the events of the world, attributing to them a univocal meaning. . . . Naturally, life resembles *Ulysses* more than *The Three Musketeers*, but we prefer to think of it as the other way around. (1989, 118)

Here, Eco shows the discrepancy between the freedom of events and determinism of the habit. In like manner, Iser claims that fictional narratives relate to this habitual understanding of reality understood as a concordant structure. He calls these structures “world systems,” and states that every epoch has had its unique world system. Each world system organizes contingent reality into a definite order by means of regulative structures: “[These regulators] provide a framework for social action; they serve as a protection against insecurities arising out of the contingent world; they supply an operational set of norms that claim universal validity and so offer a reliable basis for our expectations; they must also be flexible enough to adapt to changes in their respective environments” (*Act*, 71). In order to fulfill these functions, each world

system reduces the contingent reality into a comprehensible and definite structure. In this regard, they single out some possibilities while neutralizing or excluding some others. Hence, a world system is constructed by virtue of a selective process that gives stability to the dominant possibilities. However, the possibilities that have been neutralized or excluded for the sake of stability do not disappear totally; they remain on the fringes of the dominant system in a deactivated state. Fictional narratives operate in relation to these ordered systems. What they intend is, however, not to reproduce these systems but to activate those possibilities that were deactivated by the dominant system. By virtue of triggering the possibilities negated by the dominant system, fictional narrative denotes the system's limited ability to cope with the complexity of reality, and consequently reveals its deficiencies.<sup>48</sup> "The fact that literature supplies those possibilities which have been excluded by the prevalent system, may be the reason why many people regard 'fiction' as the opposite of 'reality'," Iser explains, "it is, in fact, not the opposite, but the complement" (*Act*, 73).

How do fictional narratives reveal these possibilities that are excluded by the dominant systems? According to Iser, they do not fulfill this function by directly presenting these negated possibilities. In other words, these negated possibilities are not formulated in the text. They are referred implicitly by the text through implying the deficiencies of the system, resulting from the very act of negation or neutralization of these possibilities. Narrative fiction represents the regulative structures of the dominant system in a specific way. Regulative structures represented in the work such as norms, conventions, and traditions are not intended to be mere replica. As we saw above, these

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<sup>48</sup> We mentioned in the previous section that Iser is interested in a specific group of fictional narratives—specifically, those critical of dominant systems of their time, and consequently innovative or avant-garde. Hence, he is aware of the fact that there are many works in literary history that do not share these properties. These works mostly confirm the dominant systems of their time, rather than negating them: "History, however is full of situations in which the balancing powers of literature have been used to support prevailing systems. Often such works tend to be of a more trivial nature, as they affirm specific norms with a view to training the reader according to the moral or social code of the day" (*Act*, 77)

elements found in a vertical structure of the extra-textual world, are re-organized by fictional narrative horizontally. The fictional narrative makes a selection from the prevailing norms, conventions, and traditions, and represents them in the text in a modified way. Thus, while these elements are represented by fiction, they are “depragmatized”, meaning they are deprived of their original context and function. For our purposes, the important consequence of the depragmatization process is the fact that, the depragmatized regulators appear to the reader as themes in themselves. In this way, they are removed from their entanglement in daily life and become objects for readerly reflection. The reader at this stage regards these elements, which she could not clearly see in her entanglement with them in the daily life, as objects of scrutiny. And, according to Iser, this moves the reader to a position where she can reflect on the system in which she is entangled, and from this position she may continue to consider new alternatives that emerge as a possible resolution to the deficiencies of the current system:

This is what happens to the norms of the repertoire, and the reader's own position cannot remain unaffected by the process: if the norms of his society are exposed in this way, he has the chance to perceive consciously a system in which he had hitherto been unconsciously caught up, and his awareness will be all the greater if the validity of these norms is negated. Then the familiar appears to him to be obsolescent—it belongs to the 'past', and he is suddenly moved into a position beyond it, without having command of this new situation. (*Act*, 212)

At this point, I want to clarify a few additional points that arise in Iser’s understanding of repertoire prior to discussing the impact of this view on our main question. We have seen that depragmatization makes the social regulators become capable of new connections. However, that does not mean that their old connections are removed totally. Rather, the old connection must remain implicitly in the text to act as a background to offset the new significance. Hence the old connection is not wiped off

from the horizon of the work in a comprehensive way, but it is instead regulated to the background. Iser explains this matter with the “background-foreground relation”:

Once the norm is lifted from its original context and transplanted in the literary text, new meaning come to fore, but at the same time it drags its original context in its wake, so to speak, because it is only against the background of that context that it can take on its new form. The selections that underlie all literary texts will always give rise to this foreground-background relationship. The chosen element evokes its original setting, but is to take on a new and as yet unknown function. (*Act*, 93)

The background-foreground relation makes the regulative elements of the system available to the reader such that their deficiencies are revealed, and consequently unmasks new possibilities that may resolve these deficiencies indicated to her.

However, neither the deficiencies of the system nor the possibilities that may be a solution to them are directly formulated or manifested in the work.<sup>49</sup> The background-foreground relation creates a tension in the work that may only be resolved by the reader through realizing the work as an aesthetic object. Hence, this tension appears in Iser’s theory as the main blank in the paradigmatic axis of reading which calls for the creative participation of the reader in realization of the work.<sup>50</sup> As a result, through the background-foreground relation, the repertoire reproduces the familiar, but strips it off its current validity. However, it does not formulate alternative values in response to the ones invalidated by means of textual strategies as one might expect after a negational

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<sup>49</sup> For a detailed investigation of Iser’s resistance to attribute a manifestative function to literature, see (Schwab, 2000). Schwab observes that Iser locates the functionalist aspect of literature not from a demonstrative, but from a negational point of view. “Such commitment to negativity, however,” she says, “creates a certain predicament—one Samuel Beckett voiced most succinctly in *The Unnamable*: ‘If only I were not obliged to manifest.’ This ‘resistance to manifestation’ marks a distinct cultural sensibility typical of the historical moment in which Iser develops his theories. Derived from a profound philosophical and epistemological scepticism, the pervasive suspicion against manifestation requires Iser to search for a radically new form of thinking and writing” (74).

<sup>50</sup> Iser, here, is clearly indebted to Ingarden’s understanding of the literary artwork as a schematic structure. Although we will discuss it in detail in the next section, here we can shortly note that Iser agrees with Ingarden that the literary artwork is schematically structured. The differences between their understanding of schematism will be analysed later.

act. Hence, what appears through the foreground-background relation is a partial negation.<sup>51</sup>

A hermeneutically significant question can be posed at this point. Iser's theory of repertoire clearly shows how fictional narratives negate prevailing norms and consequently indicates other alternatives to the reader. What if, then, the world system that the narrative fiction triggers has now faded into past history? Is the application of this function limited to contemporary systems that dominate the habitual world of the reader? To put the question another way, will a contemporary narrative fiction, which is innovative in the way mentioned, lose its innovative character when it is read by the readers of a later epoch in which the norms it negates had faded into history? Iser claims that "a historical gap between text and reader does not necessarily lead to the text losing its innovative character; the difference will lie in the nature of the innovation" (*Act*, 78). The contemporary reader is affected by the work as a participant, then, whereas a later reader is affected as an observer. In order to grasp the innovative nature of a non-contemporary work, the reader must re-construct the social and literal systems against which the work in question is constructed. But how can she reconstruct this system if, as Iser claims, the fictional narrative represents the regulators of this system in a modified way? The answer lies in Jauss' understanding of history as a question and answer logic.

We mentioned in the previous section that for Jauss a new work is constructed as an answer (solution) to the questions (problems) left by the older works or prevailing social systems. If that is the case, the reader should reconstruct the questions against

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<sup>51</sup> In this sense, Iser classifies utopian narratives as affirmative literature. To him, they represent the deficiencies of the current system by proposing an alternative system as a counterbalance of the current one. The world they represent is a "completed, perfected world" (*Act*, 229). Hence, as in the case of world systems, utopian narratives are also subject to negating activities, since the totalities represented in these narratives are constructed in the same way as the world systems that they resemble. Thus, the significance of fictional narratives lies in their representation of the world as *curable* through partial negativity, not as a *cured* one, as is the case with utopian narratives.

which the new work is constructed. Of course, re-constructing the questions and re-constructing the system leading to these questions are distinct matters. As we have seen, these questions arise from the possibilities pushed to the fringes of the system. Thus, by discovering these questions, the reader discovers the boundaries of the system; in other words, he discovers whatever was hidden or ignored by the prevailing system of the day. Hence, in Iser's words, "the literary work implicitly draws the outline of the prevailing system by shading in the areas all around that system" (*Act*, 73).<sup>52</sup> Here, fictional narratives represent history by virtue of resisting it, a process wherein the reader must reconstruct the historical system to which the old work answers—namely, by recognizing negations in the work which perform as the basic means of resistance.

What is the impact of such a process on the reader? We have already mentioned that through re-constructing the social norms against which the work is constructed, and discovering the problematic sides of these norms, the reader of a later epoch will be affected by the work as an observer. In this way, the reader will observe something that she would not be equipped to observe in her everyday life. And through her involvement in the fiction, she will grasp something which has never been real for her up to that time. That does not mean that the fiction of a past time gives her propositional knowledge about its time, but it broadens her own reality by supplying an experience of a possible reality different than the one she knows. As a result, the narrative fiction loses neither its effective power nor its innovative character when it is read by a reader of a later time. It still preserves its communicative nature, in the sense that it reveals something that has hitherto been unknown to the reader.<sup>53</sup>

All in all, repertoire appears in Iser's theory as a negative structure. But, by virtue of its negative character, it reveals what the reader has not hitherto been made

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<sup>52</sup> This condition reveals the Barthesian paradox mentioned in the epigraph of this section.

aware. In that sense, it is a creative negativity that contributes to the communicative function of literature. As is, Iser's concept of repertoire as the determining element of the specific relationship between the fiction and reality compromises Ingarden's understanding of quasi-reality. To clarify, Iser's theory does not contradict with Ingarden's basic claim that fictional narratives contain not genuine but quasi-judgements. Consequently, they do not affect the habitual dispositions of their readers by prescribing to them what the world they live in is like or how it should be, but rather by revealing the deficiencies of which the reader is not fully aware in her daily routine. In Iser's words, their function is not "training the reader according to the moral or social code of the day" (Act, 77). Moreover, by approaching the issue from a functionalist point, he directly contributes to Ingarden's theory. Although Ingarden clearly shows, through his understanding of quasi-reality, that literary works do not enhance our lives by way of supplying us with propositional knowledge, his attempt to reveal the effect of these works on our disposition through his understanding of the aesthetic idea of the work and metaphysical qualities remains obscure. It seems to me that Iser fills this lacuna left by Ingarden and gives a clear account of the transformative power of literary artworks.

In this chapter I introduced an important aspect of Iser's theory of reading; the pragmatic axis of the reading act. But, as I mentioned previously, pragmatics is not independent of syntax and semantics. Hence, in the next section, I will investigate the other aspect, the syntagmatic axis of the act of reading so that we can more clearly understand how the act of the reader are guided by the strategies of the text and how this guidance contributes to the communication between the fiction and the reader.

### 3. Negation and Negativity: The Reading Act

We saw in the previous section that by organizing the conventions, norms and traditions of the dominant social system of its day horizontally, fictional narrative calls them into question, and consequently reveals what was hitherto hidden to the reader. It achieves this aim by de-pragmatizing the elements selected from the empirical world; taking them out of their pragmatic context and shattering their original frame of reference. In addition, the fictional narrative, by triggering the possibilities that were pushed to the fringes by the system to which it refers, explicates the deficiencies of that system as a model of reality. Both of these activities have a selective character to a degree. The work, in its limited capacity, can neither depragmatize all the regulations of a system, nor can it trigger all the possibilities negated or neutralized by the system. Thus, it includes a certain number of these elements selected by the author from the empirical world. However, the selection criteria are not formulated in the text and should be discovered by the reader, who is able to identify and reckon with the significance of these selected elements for the overall meaning of the work. The elements of repertoire are not selected arbitrarily. Rather, they are associated with particular narrative perspectives in the fiction (that of the implied author, narrator, characters, fictitious reader etc.), and through this association they are ascribed a certain significance. By formulating the relation between these elements and revealing their significance, the reader can realize the overall meaning of the work. Hence, as Iser states, “textual repertoires and strategies simply offer a frame within which the reader must construct for himself the aesthetic object” (*Act*, 107).

We recall from the first section that Iser defines the implied reader in terms of textual structure and structured acts of comprehension. The repertoire and the strategies

of the text constitute that structure, and they invite the reader's responsive acts in order for the work to be realized as an aesthetic object. Structured acts of comprehension, on the other hand, are set in motion by the text, but they are not totally beholden to it. It is this lack of total control that gains the act of reading its creative aspect. In this section, my focus will be on this second pole of the communicative process between the fictional narrative and the reader; namely the structured comprehensive acts of the reader.

The fictional world is presented by the text in different segments and through different perspectives. These segments are certainly interrelated with each other. However, the relation between them is not formulated in the text, but left as blanks to be filled in by the creative acts of the reader. The segments of the work (along with the blanks between them) constitute the syntagmatic axis of the fiction. Hence, like Ingarden, Iser also defines the narrative fiction as a schematic structure which needs the creative acts of the reader in order to be realized as an aesthetic object.<sup>54</sup> It is the task of the reader to formulate the relations between various segments of the text and group them as a consistent whole through a synthesizing process. But, as we will see, this is an open-ended effort. Whenever the reader tries to group these segments as a meaningful pattern, the narrative fiction resists and reacts this grouping effort. Especially, in front of modernist works like Joyce's *Ulysses* or Becket's *Waiting for Godot*, in his effort to construct meaning, "the reader is driven to a cyclic repetition of failed meanings, the Sisyphus syndrome highlights an underlying pattern of the modern world, which realizes itself by continually invalidating any kind of reality" (Iser 2001, 266).

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<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, Iser agrees with Ingarden's distinction between the artistic and aesthetic object: "the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the aesthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader" (*IR*, 279)

Let's now look at this Sisyphus syndrome in the reading act in more detail. The segmented structure of the work denotes the fact that fictional objects cannot be grasped immediately, as in the case of empirical objects. It requires the active memory and synthesizing acts of the reader to group interrelated manifestations of the object distributed across the work. In other words, the reader, during the time flow of reading tries to combine these elements, which are manifested in different segments from different textual perspectives into a meaningful pattern. This synthesis reveals that the act of reading occurs in a temporal span. Consequently, the reader's position in front of a text differs from the position of an observer in front of an empirical object: "Instead of a subject-object relationship, there is a moving viewpoint which travels along *inside* that which it has to apprehend" (*Act*, 109). Hence, the reader is not positioned outside the text as an observer, rather he is like a traveler moving temporally inside the text. Iser defines this unique position of the reader with the term "the wandering viewpoint".

Drawing on Ingarden, Iser claims that reader does not apprehend linguistic signs independently, but rather focuses on group of signs like sentences and their "intentional correlates". This phrase, as Ben de Bruyn observes, "denotes that sentences are not self-contained utterances, but entities that are intertwined; each individual sentence hints at the text's further developments and hence establishes certain expectations in the reader's mind, which can then be satisfied or frustrated by the subsequent sentences" (Bruyn 2012, 129). Here, de Bruyn proposes that sentences or sentence groups retrospectively and anticipatively manipulate each other. Accordingly, each reading moment leads the reader to re-construct his interpretation of earlier sentences in accordance with the information supplied by the new sentence, and re-structure his expectations about the forthcoming sections. Hence the present reading moment is always characterized in a dialectic of "transformed memories" and "modified

expectations". In that sense, the linear organization of the text does not give rise to a strictly linear organization in the reader's mind.

Not only does the wandering viewpoint of the reader connect the sentences or sentence groups, it also reveals the relation between the different narrative perspectives. We mentioned that the fictional world is presented by the work within different interrelated perspectives. Consequently, the wandering viewpoint of the reader is also situated in a particular perspective during every moment of the reading act. What makes the position of wandering viewpoint unique is the fact that during the flow of reading, it continuously switches between these different perspectives presented by the fiction. As mentioned, the relation between these perspectives are not formulated in the schematic structure of the text, but are rather left as blanks. In order to apprehend the significance of these segments, the reader should group these perspectives into a meaningful pattern by supplying the blanks between them with his own imagination. Drawing on Gombrich's use of gestalt psychology, Iser nominates these meaningful patterns as "Gestalt". Due to the switching perspectives of the wandering viewpoint, the gestalt grouping activity of the reader occurs in a foreground-background dialectics:

The switch of viewpoints brings about a spotlighting of textual perspectives, and these in turn become reciprocally influenced backgrounds which endow each new foreground with a specific shape and form. As the viewpoint changes again, this foreground merges into the background, which it has modified and which is now to exert its influence on yet another new foreground. Every articulate reading moment entails a switch of perspective, and this constitutes an inseparable combination of differentiated perspectives, foreshortened memories, present modifications, and future expectations. Thus, in the time-flow of the reading process, past and future continually converge in the present moment, and the synthesizing operations of the wandering view-point enable the text to pass through the reader's mind as an ever-expanding network of connections. (*Act*, 112)

During her synthesizing effort, the reader faces another problem arising from the blanks between different perspectives. Namely, the perspectives represented in a work

of fiction may sometimes be incompatible with each other. Moreover, they may even contradict or negate one another. In such a case, there occurs an inconsistency in the narrative integrity of the work. In other words, such contradictions damage the coherence of the plot. This inconsistency can only be resolved by the balancing operations of the reader. In other words, the reader should build the relation between the contradicting perspectives such that there appears a consistent gestalt which can counterbalance the contradiction. Iser defines the gestalt coherency as the “perceptual noema” of the text:

This means that as each linguistic sign conveys more than just itself to the mind of the reader, it must be joined together into a single unit with all its referential contexts. The unit of perceptual *noema* comes about by way of the reader’s acts of apprehension: he identifies the connections between the linguistic signs and thus concretizes the references not explicitly manifested in those signs. The perceptual *noema* therefore link up the signs, their implications, their reciprocal influences, and the reader’s act of identification and through it the text begins to exist as a gestalt in the reader’s consciousness. (*Act*, 121)

The gestalt formed by the reader in order to counterbalance the indeterminacies and contradictions in the fiction is an open gestalt, Iser claims. It merely counterbalances the inconsistencies on the plot level. However, as Iser proceeds to describe, “the plot is not an end in itself—it always serves a meaning, for stories are not told for their own sake but for the demonstration of something that extends beyond themselves. And so, a gestalt that represents a plot development is still not completely closed. The closing can only come about when the *significance* of the action can be represented by a further gestalt” (*Act*, 123). Hence, two stages are observable in the consistency building process: first, the formation of the plot gestalt; second, the selection of a significance gestalt to close the first. The closing of the primary gestalt by a second gestalt represents the distinction between meaning and significance. By forming the plot level gestalt, the reader reveals the meaning of the textual segment.

This meaning has significance for the reader—a figure that is formulated by the closing gestalt. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur, Iser defines significance as taking over of the meaning by the reader, or the meaning taking effect in the existential setting of the reader.<sup>55</sup> In this respect, the primary gestalt is characterized with a higher degree of intersubjectivity, while the secondary gestalt is formed in a more subjective way. However, the subjective character of the second gestalt is not constructed arbitrarily. Here also, the reader is guided by selective textual strategies. When the reader closes the open gestalt with a closing gestalt, then, she makes a decision. She selects one possible gestalt among many other possibilities, and this choice depends on her individual disposition and past experiences.

Selection automatically involves exclusion. Hence, while constructing the significance gestalt, the reader excludes various other possibilities. However, these exclusions do not disappear entirely. Rather, they remain on the fringes as a potential range of connections, remaining virtual as opposed to actual. These virtual possibilities on the fringes form what Iser calls “alien associations,” which begin to accumulate on the fringes and so bombard the closed gestalten in the later phases of the reading act. The closed gestalten, bombarded by the alien associations, in turn become undermined and bring about a reorientation in the reader’s acts of comprehension. Hence the earlier gestalten may need to be re-modified in order to solve the tension caused by alien associations. This situation may be manipulated further by the strategies of the text. On the one pole, the strategies may eclipse these associations—as a result of which the text becomes a didactic one. On the other pole, they increase the pressure exerted by alien associations such that the original implications of the signs themselves become the object of critical interest. The consistency-building process always remains under the

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<sup>55</sup> “Meaning,” says Iser, “is the referential totality which is implied by the aspects contained in the text and which must be assembled in the course of the reading. Significance is the reader’s absorption of the meaning into his own existence” (*Act*, 151).

disturbance and hindrance of these alien associations during the entire reading experience. This results in textual ambiguities that are different from the ambiguities in daily life, in the sense that they are brought about by the reader's own activity of gestalt formation. The reader is forced to react what she has produced:

What all these techniques of inversion have in common is the fact that the discrepancies produced by the reader make him dispute his own gestalten. He tries to balance out these discrepancies, but the questionable gestalt which was the starting-point for this operation remains as a challenge in the face of which the newly attempted integration has to prove itself. This whole process takes place within the reader's imagination, so that he cannot escape from it. This involvement, or entanglement, is what places us in the 'presentness' of the text and what makes the text into a presence for us. "In so far as there is entanglement, there is also presence." (*Act*, 131)

We mentioned that the significance gestalt depends on the individual disposition of the reader. Hence, through this entanglement something happens to her. Her habitual disposition, which is relegated into past by the text, turns into an object of reflection: "The literary text relegates our own prevailing views into the past by itself becoming a present experience, for what is now happening or may happen was not possible so long as our characteristic views formed our present" (*Act*, 131). In this sense, the entanglement of the reader with the text conjures an illusion. In order to reform the significance gestalt that was negated by the alien associations, the reader is forced to assign the plot level gestalt a significance that may contradict with her own habitual disposition. In order to build the consistency, the reader brackets her own disposition and adapts an alternative one, and this leads her to experience the illusion of living another life. During this illusionary experience, the disposition of the reader is not suspended completely. It remains on the background against the adapted disposition so that whenever the reader is entangled with this new disposition, this entanglement is disturbed by her native disposition waiting in the background, and the illusion is broken. This break allows her to observe herself involved in the text and her creations always

being bombarded and negated either by alien associations, or her suspended self. The result is a dialectic of illusion-forming and illusion-breaking which denotes the position of the reader in the text as one oscillating between involvement and observation. The dialectic denotes Iser's distinguishing between two levels in reading: "the alien me" and "the real me" which he explicates as in follows:

As we read, there occurs an artificial division of our personality, because we take as a theme for ourselves something that we are not. Consequently, when reading we operate on different levels. For although we may be thinking the thoughts of someone else, what we are will never disappear completely—it will merely remain a more or less powerful virtual force. Thus, in reading, there are these two levels—the alien "me" and the real, virtual "me"—which are never cut off from each other. . . . Every text we read draws a different boundary within our personality, so that the virtual background (the real me) will take on a different form, according to the theme of the text concerned. (*IR*, 293)

Since every work is understood through its relation to the reader's old experiences, the work has a retroactive effect on the reader. By virtue of its negating structure, the work leads the reader to reflect on her background experiences and her disposition. In other words, the alien experience assimilated by the reader generates a tension between her old self and this unfamiliar new self. This tension cannot be resolved simply by returning to her former disposition, as Ingarden suggests, but only by modifying her disposition during the reading act.<sup>56</sup>

To put it in a Gadamer-like fashion, the literary text extends the horizon of the reader. It brackets her own gestalten in real life, defamiliarizes what is familiar to her and forces her to a self-reflective activity. In this sense, the reading act is an experience unto itself, as for Iser "experiences arise only when the familiar is transcended or undermined; they grow out of the alteration or falsification of that which is already

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<sup>56</sup> In the previous chapter, we saw how Ingarden discusses the effect of reading on the reader most explicitly in his discussion of the metaphysical qualities represented in the literary artwork. There, he attributes only a contemporary effect to the reading act which is shortly suppressed by the uproar of daily life. Hence, the reading experience, as theorized by Ingarden, does not suggest a permanent change in the disposition of the reader, but only a temporal tension that can be counterbalanced by simply returning to her former position.

ours” (*Act*, 132). Moreover, it is a transformative experience which denotes the transformative power of fictional narratives.

#### **4. Image and Ideation: Shift of Focus from Points of Indeterminacy to Blanks Between Textual Segments**

The involvement of the reader in the work is a prerequisite for Iser’s theory for the experience of the fictional narrative to function as an event. This involvement is possible by virtue of the schematic structure of the work, inviting the reader to participate in the realization of the text and consequently supplying her with a unique experience. In this manner, Iser is clearly indebted to Ingarden’s ontological and phenomenological investigations, although his understanding of schematism shows significant differences. Before discussing the overall contribution of Iser’s theory to the main question of this thesis, I want to explicate, in this section, these differences. Such an investigation will help us to clarify Iser’s shift of focus from the quasi-visual world portrayed by the work to the overall meaning of the work and the significance of this meaning.

We recall from the previous chapter that Ingarden introduces the term “points of indeterminacy” to distinguish the indeterminate character of intentional objects portrayed by the literary work of art from the determinacy of empirical objects that we perceive. Due to their incomplete structure, the fictional objects need the co-operative acts of the reader in order to be determined. In addition, the reader must also concretize the schematized aspects in which these objects appear. At the end of this process, the literary object appears to the reader in a quasi-visual way. Hence, one aim of the reader, in Ingarden’s theory of reading, can be thought of as concretizing the schematic objects

presented by the text, thereby bringing into appearance the fictional world of the text by linking its points of indeterminacy. This aim of bringing into appearance an illusionary world is also evident in Ingarden's assigning a higher value to the quasi-visual strata of the work, specifically in his claim that the linguistic strata "is only a passageway [*ein Durchgangsobjekt*] which one traverses in order to reach the object meant" (*CLWA*, 40). For Ingarden, to concretize a work means to construct a vivid vision of the textual world as it is constituted in the reader's phantasy.

This tendency can clearly be seen in the examples Ingarden offers in order to concretize the reading experience. In one such case, he defines the reading experience using a scene from the first chapter of Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, stating: "If we walk with the hero from his room along a corridor, down the staircase, and into the dining hall, we see almost continuously before our eyes the pertinent objects in appropriate aspects: first the room, then the corridor. As we pass by, we see everything as it would appear sequentially in reality" (*LWA*, 283). In another example concerned with filling in the indeterminacies during the reading act, he says:

If a story talks about the fate of a very old man but does not say what color hair he has, then, theoretically, he can be given any color hair in the concretization; but it is more probable that he has gray hair. If he had very black hair despite his age, that would be something worth mentioning, something important about the old man who had aged so little; as such, it would be fixed in the text. Thus, if it is advisable for any aesthetic reasons, it is more probable and desirable to concretize the man as having gray hair rather than black hair. Such a way of concretizing this detail makes this concretization closer to the work than other concretizations which offer other hair colors. (*CLWA*, 392)

The implication in these two examples is that the work should be concretized in such a way that it supplies the reader with a quasi-visual appearance of the world. One can ask here if all the readers visualize the portrayed objectivities of a fictional narrative as is suggested by Ingarden. In other words, do we really need to concretize the objectivities in a work such that the portrayed world of the work appears to us in a

quasi-visual way? The quotation below from Stanislaw Lem, the Polish writer of science-fiction, shows that this is not the case for every reader:

As far as visualization (schematized aspects) is concerned as a reader of literature I know nothing about it, even if I read Simpson's work on the development of the horse I still do not see any horse and I shall still not have seen one if I read Sienkiewicz's Trilogy with all its Spanish and Kirgizian horses. I enjoy the descriptions from the linguistic point of view which is enough for me so that I neither want to nor can make anything graphic. Neither do I picture anything if I write a novel. The ideas are born non-pictorially in the mind though it is true that they are not in the form of words because they cannot be immediately divided into sentences, but they form something like a fog of meaning. (1968, cited in Bojtar 1985, 107)

The emphasis on the visual aspect of the reading act denotes that Ingarden has a type of reader in his mind when discussing the reading experience of the literary artwork; a sensitive, graphic one. The above quote from Lem shows us that not all readers refashion literary objects defined in a work into vivid visionary images in the way that Ingarden envisions. Hence, these readers of whom Lem implies may pass over the undetermined hair color of the old man without concretizing it.<sup>57</sup> The question that arises here is whether or not omitting the detail concerning the hair color of the old man destructs the man's concreteness in the work as an imaginary object. Moreover, even if it does, does it affect the overall quality of the reading experience of the whole work or the overall meaning of the work? That is to say, does the work "lose" something if we do not concretize the hair color of the old man? For Iser this is not the case. Discussing on the same example, he claims that "the mental image of the old man can be just as concrete without our giving him grey hair. As a rule, the presentation of facts in literary texts is of interest only in relation to their function" (*Act*, 177). Hence, if the hair color

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<sup>57</sup> For a detailed discussion of the problem in relation to the visual arts; see (Arnheim 1960). He says: "It is often asserted that when objects are partly hidden, 'imagination completes' them. Such a statement seems easily acceptable until we try to understand concretely what is meant by it and we compare it with what happens in experience. No one is likely to assert that imagination makes him actually see the whole thing. This is not true; if it were, it would destroy the effect the artist tried to achieve. (268)

of the old man does not have any significance for other facts or situations in the work, its being left as a point of indeterminacy does not destruct our overall comprehension of the work. It could be important, if we were adapting the work into a movie where the visual aspect has an indispensable role in the overall aesthetic value. However, in a reading experience, it seems doubtful.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, Ingarden also accepts that it is not a requirement of the reader to fill in all the points of indeterminacy of a given text. Furthermore, he claims that the reader should “avoid” filling in certain indeterminacies in the work:

The sensitive reader, possessed of sufficient artistic culture, passes silently over such places of indeterminacy . . . The less cultivated reader, the artistic dilettante . . . who is interested only in the fortunes of portrayed persons, does not pay attention to the prohibition against removing such places of indeterminacy and turns well-formed artworks into cheap, aesthetically irritating gossip about the persons by garrulous expansion of what does not need to be expanded. (*CLWA*, 293).

Hence, the places of indeterminacy in a text are sometimes to be filled in, sometimes to be skipped over, and sometimes to be left open. At this point, one is prompted to ask with what criteria must the reader determine whether to fill in or leave open the indeterminacies in the work. Ingarden does not give an explicit answer to this question. Moreover, this principle seems to contradict with his emphasis on the quasi-visual aspect of reading act. This uncertainty leads to a broader set of concerns about Ingarden’s perspective. For instance, if the world of the text should come into the reader’s imagination in a vivid way, and if, while achieving this aim, the reader should also avoid to fill in certain points of indeterminacy in order to preserve the aesthetic quality of the work, should she renounce one of these criterion when she faces a

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<sup>58</sup> In *Act*, when he discusses the differences between imagining a character in a novel and perceiving that character in a film adaptation of the same novel, Iser says: “If, for instance, I see the film of Tom Jones, and try to summon up my past images of the character, they will seem strangely diffuse, but this impression will not necessarily make me prefer the optical picture. If I ask whether my imaginary Tom Jones was big or small, blue-eyed or dark-haired, the optical poverty of my image will become all too evident, but it is precisely this openness that will make me resent the determinacy of the film version” (138).

situation during her reading act where filling in a certain point of indeterminacy destructs the aesthetic quality of the work and where, at the same time, leaving it open destructs its quasi-visual quality?

Iser is aware of these problems in Ingarden's work, and bypasses them by shifting the focus from the quasi-visual aspect to the meaning-formation process. He agrees with Ingarden that the reader reconciles an object portrayed by the fictional narrative by synthesizing different facets of the object in different segments of the work and by filling in some gaps left by the work. He calls this process "ideation" (*vorstellen*)<sup>59</sup>, and claims that the reader carries out these ideations during the reading act subconsciously. Thus, following Husserl, he calls the process "passive syntheses." However, he disagrees with Ingarden about the visual quality of this realization, stating, "our mental images do not serve to make character physically visible; their optical poverty is an indication of the fact that they illuminate the character, not as an object, but as a bearer of meaning" (*Act*, 138). Consequently, the importance of images realized by the reader during the reading act depends on their functional role in the work. Here, we can say that the properties attributed to the literary objects are important if they reveal a meaning which is essential for the reader in order to grasp in terms of its helping her to form a gestalt. One such example of this process can be found in a recent book entitled *What We See When We Read* (2004), by Peter Mendelsund:

Take Karenin's ears...  
(Karenin is the cuckolded husband of Anna Karenina.)  
Are his ears large or small?

*At Petersburg, so soon as the train stopped and she got out, the first person that attracted her attention was her husband. 'Oh, mercy! Why do his ears look like that?' she thought, looking at his frigid and imposing*

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<sup>59</sup> Iser says: "I use the word 'ideate' as the nearest English equivalent to the German '*vorstellen*', which means to evoke the process of something which is not given" (*Act*, 137 fn.)

*figure, and especially the ears that struck her at the moment as propping up the brim of his round hat...*

Karenin's ears grow in proportion to his wife's disaffection with him. In this way, these ears tell us nothing about how Karenin looks, and a great deal about how Anna feels. (36)

Here, Mandelsund shows us that the size of Karenin's ears is mentioned in the work as a direct bearer of meaning. Why is Anna irritated by her husband's ears just at this point? She is coming back from Moscow and Karenin's ears, which Anna saw many times before, had not merely enlarged when she was away. However, she met Vronsky in this journey, and this encounter made her another person. Thus, the ears signify a reversal in Anna's life. From this point on, Karenin's huge ears symbolize Anna's search for this new person, as well as the tension between this new Anna (who does not love her husband) and the old Anna (who at least believed that she loved him). This tension is depicted more clearly again a few pages later through the image of Karenin's ears: "'He really is a fine man, truthful, good, and remarkable in his own sphere,' Anna told herself when she had returned to her room, as if defending him to someone who had accused him and said that he could not be loved. 'But why do his ears stick out so oddly? Or did he have his hair cut?'" (Tolstoy 2014, 104). For the new Anna, Karenin ceases to be a familiar person, and the tension felt in the above quotation is the tension between the old and new Anna and the set of combined feelings about Karenin.<sup>60</sup>

Many readers of Anna Karenina will remember the big size of Karenin's ears if they are prompted. But how many of them can answer if they are asked his hair color? Do we really need to concretize this detail about Karenin which is left as a point of

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<sup>60</sup> Martin Price comments: "The ludicrous sight of Karenin's ears seems to precipitate a new way of looking at him. He ceases to be a familiar presence, someone seen as all but part of herself. Instead, he has become a distinct figure, seen from a distance and very much from the outside. The observation of his ears is not, of course, the cause of what follows; it is simply the first detail registered by a new analytic view made possible through the withdrawal or absence of the usual feelings" (Price 1983, 185).

indeterminacy in the text, as Ingarden seems to suggest we do? Does leaving this indeterminate point destruct our mental image of Karenin? More importantly, if we fill in this indeterminacy in the text, what will be its significance for us as the readers?

As we mentioned before, Iser mainly agrees with Ingarden about the schematic structure of the work. This schematic structure leads the reader to participate in the fiction by building images. However, a mental image is not a vivid vision of a textual object for Iser. For him, the mental image transcends the sensory: "The process of image-building begins, then, with the schemata of the text, which are aspects of a totality that the reader himself must assemble; in assembling it, he will occupy the position set out for him, and so create a sequence of images that eventually results in his constituting the meaning of the text" (*Act*, 141).

Hence, for Iser the mental images constructed by the reader contribute to the meaning of the text. In this regard, we can claim that if certain points of indeterminacies in the text are to be filled in by the reader while some others are left open or passed over, the criterion for deciding of which to be completed should be the contribution of filling in activity to the meaning of the work. Hence, attributing a hair color to the character in a fiction is meaningful only if the attribution reveals us broader patterns of meaning in the narrative. One may object here, saying that if the hair color of the character is important for the meaning of the text, it would be mentioned in the text by the author. However, the history of literary criticism supplies us with many examples where the meaning of the text is enlarged through the contribution of new critical schools which reveal and fill in points of indeterminacy in the text that had not been realized till that time. The emergence of psychoanalytical criticism furnishes one such exemplary framework. It was by virtue of this new critical tool that we realized many points of indeterminacy in certain fictional narratives and ways of filling them in.

And since a great deal of these indeterminacies were not mentioned in the text, they were not realized by the former readers.

All in all, the criterion of meaning can be seen as Iser's complement to Ingarden's schematic theory. More important than this is Iser's shift of emphasis from the indeterminacies of the literary object to the vacancies between different segments of the work. As we saw in the previous sections, Iser is more interested in blanks in the overall structure of the work than the gaps in the determinacies of intentional objects. Here, Iser's outlook replaces the need for completion with a need for combination. Through this combination of different segments of the work, the reader first builds a gestalt on the plot level and then builds a second gestalt that reveals the significance of the story told.

The shift in the schematic understanding is significant for our purposes, since through this shift, the relation between the text and the reader becomes interactive. The reader, through ideation and meaning formation, co-creates the work as an aesthetic object. This ideational activity is indispensably dependent upon the reader's own disposition and capacity. The text, on the other side, hinders the reader's image building process through its complexity and forces her to reflect on her own disposition and (consequently) on the values and the norms in which she is entangled in her daily life. Hence, the reader is shaped by what she has given a shape. On the other side, by filling in the blanks between different segments of the work, the reader constructs meaningful gestalts and from these gestalts a complete story. However, the gestalten formed by the reader are always negated by the strategies of the text, and these negations force the reader to reflect on her own disposition. As a result, what is narrated in the work is not a mere representation of the world that the reader lives in, rather a new world that reveals a new reader.

## Conclusion

The previous sections postulate that Iser's theory of aesthetic response is mainly founded on two concepts: "negation" and "blank". Together, these notions reveal an essential aspect of the narrative which Iser calls "negativity":

Blanks and negations denote the missing links and the virtual themes along the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of the text. . . . Blanks and negations increase the density of fictional texts, for the omissions and cancellations indicate that practically all the formulations of the text refer to an unformulated background, and so the formulated text has a kind of unformulated double. This 'double' we shall call *negativity*. . . . Unlike negation, negativity is not formulated in the text, but forms the unwritten base; it does not negate the formulations of the text, but—via blanks and negations—conditions them. It enables the written words to transcend their literal meaning, to assume a multiple referentiality, and so to undergo the expansion necessary to transplant them as a new experience into the mind of the reader. (*Act*, 225-26; emphasis mine)

Iser's notion of negativity has important significances for our main question.

First, negativity supplies Iser with the critical distance for which he was searching—one that offers the reader a reflective eye on her habitual disposition and the social and moral norms within which she is entangled in her daily life. It is through the act of interrogating this distance that the ethical function of fictional narratives should be sought. By uncovering the deficiencies of the system as a model of reality in which she is entangled, by presenting the norms and conventions that regulate her life to her as themes in themselves, and by leading her to reflect on her disposition through negating the gestalts she builds during the realization process, the fictional narrative leads the reader to a reflective point.

This negative aesthetic is significant for our main question. First, as we have seen, the impact of the fictional narratives on the reader is not rooted in the formulated text, but in the unformulated background which reveals itself in the act of reading.

Hence, the involvement of the reader is an indispensable condition for the impact of the fictional narrative to come to fruition. By virtue of the involvement of the reader, the fictional narrative assumes the shape of an event, and the reading process becomes a conceptual experience. This involvement, however, depends on the openness of the work—an element which, taken over by Iser from Ingarden, can be apprehended through the notion of schematism as an intrinsic property of the fictional narrative. In this understanding, Iser's theory contends that if the ethical impact of the work is to be sought, the most opportune point at which to focus is that where the work and reader intersect; namely that of reading experience.

Second, the experience that the reader goes thorough during her reading is an inherently aesthetic one. Drawing on John Dewey, Iser claims that "The ability to perceive oneself during the process of participation is an essential quality of the aesthetic experience; the observer finds himself in a strange, halfway position: he is involved, and he watches himself being involved" (*Act*, 134). As Iser argues, the reader is involved in the work through an illusion of living another life. What he envisions, however, is not the identification of the reader with a character in the work, wherein the former emphatically simulates the life of the latter. Rather, in her effort to build consistency, she is forced by the work to adopt a disposition that is different than her own habitual one, which is now a past orientation. However, her own disposition, which is pushed to the fringes by the strategies of the text, always bombards the consistencies she has built. The discrepancies arising from this tension between the new and old disposition of the reader enable her to realize that the gestalt she has produced is inadequate, so that she may detach herself from her involvement in the text and see herself being guided from the outside. Hence the reader is positioned during her reading in an oscillating position between involvement and observation by means of the

discrepancies arising from the tension between her real and alien self. This position gives the reading experience its aesthetic character. At the end of this aesthetic experience, the reader is lead to a reflective position where she questions her own disposition. Hence we are faced with an aesthetic experience here which, in Iser's words, "eventually results in something non-aesthetic, that is practical, . . . or ethical" (Iser at al. 1980, 70). Hence, while revealing the ethical impact of the fictional narrative on the reader, Iser does not disregard the aesthetic character of the reading act.

Indeed, what Iser's theory suggests is an aesthetics which places negativity at the core of the reading experience. By virtue of productive negativity, some fictional narratives are imbued with the potential to possess a transformative power, which is revealed through the act of reading. This transformative power, however, functions through a partial negation; that is, it reveals the deficiencies of the system that allude to the reality outside the text. Realizing this function, the work does not offer an alternative system that will "cure" these deficiencies. It merely reveals the deficiencies and consequently signifies the reader that there are alternative possibilities. It is the task of the reader to actualize these possibilities. In this sense, we can claim that the reader is dislocated from her position on the world she has been living on hitherto. Her world is negated, destructed through her act of reading. She is lost, and forced to reflect on her existence. She finds herself in a position that is very similar to the position of the protagonist of Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The New Life*:

I read a book one day and my whole life was changed. Even on the first page I was so affected by the book's intensity I felt my body sever itself and pull away from the chair where I sat reading the book that lay before me on the table. But even though I felt my body dissociating, my entire being remained so concertedly at the table that the book worked its influence not only on my soul but on every aspect of my identity. It was such a powerful influence that the light surging from the pages illumined my face; its incandescence dazzled my intellect but also endowed it with brilliant lucidity. This was the kind of light within which I could recast myself; I could lose my way in this light; I already sensed in the light the

shadows of an existence I had yet to know and embrace. I sat at the table, turning the pages, my mind barely aware that I was reading, and my whole life was changing as I read the new words on each new page. I felt so unprepared for everything that was to befall me, and so helpless, that after a while I moved my face away instinctively as if to protect myself from the power that surged from the pages. It was with dread that I became aware of the complete transformation of the world around me, and I was overtaken by a feeling of loneliness I had never before experienced—as if I had been stranded in a country where I knew neither the lay of the land nor the language and the customs. (Pamuk 1998, 3-4)

The reality of the world, in which Pamuk's protagonist inhabits, is negated by the novel he reads. He finds himself in a new world that is foreign to him; in a country where he knows neither the lay of the land nor the language and the customs. He feels his body dissociating, the book work not only on his soul but on every aspect of his identity. He lost his world, he needs to reconstruct it. He also needs to reconstruct his path, his disposition on this new world. He first thinks that nothing besides the book can reveal to him what is the necessary course of action, what is it that he might believe in, and what path his life is to take in the new world in which he finds himself. But as he goes on reading he realizes that the novel resists the function of being a guidebook for the new world. Indeed, it does not present the reader a new world, it only signifies that world. It is the task of reader, who feels himself to be lost in limbo, to construct the alluded world. In addition, he also needs to re-construct himself, his selfhood on this new world.

Hence, the negative power of the fictional narrative brings that ancient question on to the scene once more; that of the question of "who?" "Who am I on this new world that is revealed by the fiction?" This question will be the main problem of our next chapter. We will see with Paul Ricoeur that, fictional narratives not only make us come up against the question of personal identity, but also reveals various ways of formulating it in a more explicit way. By virtue of this formulation, which will be termed by Ricoeur as "narrative identity," the question of selfhood will attain new

expansions that will help us to understand our being on a world which is not stable, which is always subject to change and negation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RICOEUR ON THE SELF AND NARRATIVE IDENTITY

#### Introduction: From Action to the Self

Alice took up the fan and gloves, and, as the hall was very hot, she kept fanning herself all the time she went on talking. “Dear, dear! How queer everything is today! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is, who in the world am I? Ah, that’s the great puzzle!”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Ricoeur’s oeuvre can be read as a philosophical anthropology of the human self.<sup>61</sup> From his first substantial work *The Voluntary and Involuntary*, where he problematizes the capabilities and finitude of human beings, to his last works *The Just* and *Reflections on The Just*, where the subject is the ethical perspective and moral obligations of the self in relation to the institutional aspect of justice, Ricoeur investigates the meaning of being a human self. As David E. Klemm rightly puts it, “a unifying theme, however, runs through Ricoeur’s work . . . ‘What does it mean to be human?’” (1983, 45).<sup>62</sup> From a phenomenology of the will to a narrative-based hermeneutics of the self, what remains constant in Ricoeur’s philosophy is the question of the subject in her temporality, historicity, and intersubjectivity. Hence, for Ricoeur, an effort to investigate the question of the self without taking its temporal existence with others in the world into consideration is misleading. Moreover, since the self is represented in the cultural artefacts that it produces, an effort to understand the self

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<sup>61</sup> Ricoeur defines philosophical anthropology as “an inquiry aimed at identifying the most enduring features of the temporal condition of man - those which are the least vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the modern age” (*ASH*, 60)

<sup>62</sup> A similar observation is made by David Rasmussen: “There is a central theme in the writings of Paul Ricoeur. Fundamentally his thought emanates from the question “who is man”? Methodologically his works represent a systematic quest for the resources for understanding the nature of man” (1971, 3).

should also consider the cultural monuments of humanity. In other words, what Ricoeur's philosophy suggests is an explication of the self in its temporality by means of a detour through the interpretation of cultural forms and epitomes of culture.

The elements of Ricoeur's method and philosophical assumptions that allow him to cover this long route mainly stem from three traditions: French reflexive philosophy, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. Before proceeding with an overview of how Ricoeur handles the problem of the self in different periods of his philosophy, I want to focus on the significance of these traditions for our problem.

Ricoeur positions himself in the 'reflexive' tradition, which has its roots in the Cartesian *cogito* and French post-Kantian philosophy.<sup>63</sup> He presents the basics of reflexive philosophy with the following words:

A reflexive philosophy considers the most radical philosophical problems to be those which concern the possibility of self-understanding as the subject of the operations of knowing, willing, evaluating, etc. Reflexion is that act of turning back upon itself by which a subject grasps, in a moment of intellectual clarity and moral responsibility, the unifying principle of the operations among which it is dispersed and forgets itself as subject. "The 'I think'" says Kant, "must be able to accompany all my representations." All reflexive philosophers would recognize themselves in this formula. (*OI*, 12)

In this sense Ricoeur's philosophy suggests a self that turns back upon itself. Accordingly, reflexivity signifies a distinctive act of reflection. As James Carter aptly puts, "it is crucial for Ricoeur that reflexivity implies reflection; that is, the self's reflecting upon herself, upon her appropriation of the conative expressions which elucidate ethical life in signs, symbols, actions, narratives, and institutions. In other words, the self's turning back upon herself is a hermeneutical act of reflection" (2014,

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<sup>63</sup> Ricoeur's reflexive philosophy has its roots mainly in Jean Nabert's works. To see how Ricoeur interprets Nabert's reflexive position see his Introduction to Nabert's *Elements for an Ethic* in (Nabert 1969).

110).<sup>64</sup> As we shall see, reflexivity is crucial for Ricoeur's hermeneutical treatment of the self. Against the immediate and transparent cogito of Descartes and Husserlian phenomenology, Ricoeur suggests a self that can be known only through a hermeneutical and reflective interpretation of epitomes of culture.

The reflexive structure of Ricoeur's philosophy is significant for understanding his so called hermeneutic turn, which he defines as "the graft of hermeneutics onto phenomenology" (*IB*, 16). In *Freud and Philosophy*, Ricoeur says, "when we say philosophy is reflection, we mean assuredly self-reflection" (42). Hence, the guiding question for Ricoeur is the self as both the object and the subject of reflection: "What does the self of the self-reflection signify?" (*FP*, 42). As G.B Madison puts it,

Ricoeur's approach to subjectivity has been both *phenomenological* and *hermeneutical* – phenomenological, in that it seeks to clarify through reflective analysis that which is immediately and indubitably given to consciousness: the fact of the subject's own existence, the 'mineness' characteristic of existence; hermeneutical in that this reflective analysis is not descriptive in an intuitive or introspective sort of way but is indirect and interpretative and is, moreover, motivated by the basic goal of all hermeneutics: a heightened self-understanding. (1995, 75–76)

Phenomenology helps Ricoeur to reveal the self that is lost in natural attitude.

He explains this situation in *Husserl*, with the following words:

Initially I am lost and forgotten in the world, lost in the things, lost in the ideas, lost in the plants and the animals, lost in others, lost in mathematics. Presence (which can never be disavowed) is the occasion of temptation; in seeing there is a trap, the trap of my alienation; there I am external, diverted. Now it is evident how naturalism is the lowest stage of natural attitude, the level that leads to its re-engagement. For if I lose myself in the world, I am then ready to treat myself as a thing of the world. The thesis of the world is a sort of blindness in the very heart of seeing. I call living is hiding myself as a naïve consciousness within the existence of all things . . . [contrarily] phenomenology is a true

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<sup>64</sup> There is a confusion in Ricoeur's English translations between these two terms, Reflexive (*réfléchi*) and Reflective (*réflexif*). As Henry Isaac Venema says, "these two terms are often given interchangeable meaning, and even Ricoeur . . . seems to use them on occasion in an interchangeable manner. Yet, . . . the *reflexive* structure of the self and the *reflective* process that leads indirectly back to the self that is structured reflexively have two different meanings that must be handled with great care and subtlety" (2000, 178 n.1).

conversion of the sense of intentionality, which is first the forgetting of consciousness, and then its discovery of itself as given. (20)

Phenomenology, in virtue of its transcendental constitution, isolates and disentangles the self from being an object among objects and handles it as a theme to be investigated for its own sake. However, Ricoeur finds phenomenology's handling the self in an immediate, transparent manner problematic: "I was questioning a presupposition common to Husserl and Descartes, namely the immediateness, the transparency, the apodicticity of the *Cogito* . . . The subject, I asserted does not know itself directly but only through the signs deposited in memory and in imagination in great literary traditions" (*IA*, 16). Hence, he suggests, as a challenge against the immediateness of rival philosophies of subject, that we "introduce into the circle of reflection the long detour by way of the symbols and myths transmitted by great cultures." (*IA*, 16). For Ricoeur, "[t]he first truth – *I am*, *I think* – remains as abstract and empty as it is invincible; it has to be 'mediated' by the ideas, actions, works, institutions, and monuments that objectify it" (*FP*, 43). The significance of the notion of detour as a methodological choice lays in the fact that it becomes one of the pivotal points of Ricoeur's later philosophy and forges the direction of his philosophical path. If the self can be known by way of a detour through the epitomes of human culture, and if these symbols are objects of an interpretative act, reflection on the self becomes an object of interpretation. Accordingly, the detour Ricoeur proposes to take is possible through what he later called "the graft of hermeneutics onto phenomenology."<sup>65</sup> The incorporation is formulated by Ricoeur as a reciprocal dialectic: "On the one

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<sup>65</sup> This turn also has its roots in the Post-Husserlian phenomenological tradition. As James Risser explains, "what lies in the background of this inquiry is the changing direction of Ricoeur's own work, which initially situated itself within eidetic phenomenology, but since 1960 had turned to hermeneutics and specifically to what Ricoeur called the conflict of interpretations. In the 1975 essay, Ricoeur presents the question of the destiny of phenomenology through the concern that Husserl's project of phenomenology has been transformed, if not displaced, by hermeneutics, which he identifies with the work of Heidegger and, above all, Gadamer" (2000, 71). For Ricoeur's interpretation of the hermeneutical turn in phenomenology, see (Ricoeur 1967).

hand . . . phenomenology remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics; and on the other hand, that phenomenology cannot carry out its program of *constitution* without constituting itself in the *interpretation* of the experience of the ego” (*PH*, 38). This indeed clearly points to the formulation of Ricoeur’s later research program, which he calls “hermeneutic phenomenology.”<sup>66</sup>

The significance of this turn for our current purpose lays in the path Ricoeur’s studies has taken since then. Investigating the self through a hermeneutical investigation of the symbols of human culture leads Ricoeur to a focus on language as the bearer of these symbols and the mediating path to the self, and on symbol, metaphor, and literary and historical narratives as the products of culture and language through which the subject interprets herself in her temporality. In addition, Ricoeur later extends his hermeneutical investigation into the realm of action, through which the self is understood as an agent to whom actions can be ascribed and imputed. In all these investigations, Ricoeur stands firm in his reflexive background. All questions concerning these areas are formulated as questions concerning the subject: “Who is talking?” “Who is acting?” “Who is recounting?”

Ricoeur’s treatment of language is shaped by his critical allegiance with the structuralism of the time. The problem of structural linguistics –formulated mainly by Ferdinand de Saussure and expended to other fields of human life by his followers<sup>67</sup> – is its being disconnected from human life by being formulated as a closed system:

Language no longer appears as a mediation between minds and things. It constitutes a world of its own, within each item only refers to other items of the same system, thanks to the interplay of oppositions and differences constitutive of the system. In a word, language is no more intended as a

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<sup>66</sup> For a detailed investigation into Ricoeur’s hermeneutical turn and his understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology, see (Ihde 1971).

<sup>67</sup> Here Ricoeur mainly refers to the semiology of Roland Barthes, the semiotics of A.J. Greimas, the literary theory of Gerard Genette, and the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. For a detailed and well-constructed narrative of Ricoeur’s position against structuralism, see (Vlacos, 2014), esp. part 1.3.

“form of life,” as Wittgenstein would call it, but as a self-sufficient system of inner relationships. (*IT*, 6)

Ricoeur suggests that in order to rebuild the relation between language and human life we should “rescue discourse from its marginal and precarious exile” (*IT*, 2), and substitute it in place of language understood as a closed system. By restoring discourse to its place, Ricoeur also restores important elements that have been dislocated by structuralist linguistics: that of the speaker, interlocutor and referential function:

Discourse articulates a subject of discourse, an act of discourse, a content of discourse, a meta-linguistic code, an extra-linguistic reference, and an interlocutor. This can be summed up by the formula: someone following common rules says something about something to someone else. In other words, a “speaker,” something “said,” a “saying” (or meaning), a “world” (or referent), rules (phonological, lexical, and syntactical), and an “allocation.” (*Hermeneutics*, 12)

With this formulation, Ricoeur reintroduces the subject into the realm of discourse as the agent of the speaking act. At the same time, by focusing on interlocution, he acknowledges another speaker as the recipient of discourse, thus opening the problematic of intersubjectivity and communication. Last, by distinguishing what is said from what something is said about, he re-introduces the function of referentiality into the scene. Hence, Ricoeur suggests an open model of discourse against the close system of the structuralist understanding of language. This understanding of discourse as an open system is significant for our purposes, since it is through this openness that Ricoeur formulates literature as a communicatory process. In addition, it is in virtue of relocating the referential function to the realm of language that fictional narratives, which were characterized by structuralist critics as closed systems, are re-connected to the world of action. And it is this connection between the world of fiction and the world of action that gives fictional narratives their ethical significance.

These works say something about the world of action, moreover, as we shall see, by configuring the world of action poetically, they give shape to the world. In this sense, they have a reproductive power and this power undoubtedly has ethical and moral significance.

The shift of focus from language in the sense of *langue* to discourse highlights another important shift: the shift from semiotics as the science of signs to semantics as the science of the sentence. What does Ricoeur mean when he formulates semantics as the science of the sentence, in other words as the science that takes the sentence as the basic structural object of its inquiry? The answer lays in the formulation of the sentence as a unity that cannot be deduced from the words that constitute it:

There is no way of passing from the word as a lexical sign to the sentence by mere extension of the same methodology to a more complex entity. The sentence is not a larger or more complex word, it is a new entity. It may be decomposed into words, but the words are something other than short sentences. A sentence is a whole irreducible to the sum of its parts . . . A sentence is made up of signs, but it is not itself a sign. (*IT*, 7)

Hence, in Ricoeurian hermeneutics, the sentence is characterized as the basic unit of meaning. As we shall see, this shift will be followed by another important shift: the shift from the sentence to the text in which the same rules will apply: “There is therefore no linear progression from the phoneme to the lexeme and then on to the sentence and to linguistic wholes larger than the sentence. Each stage requires new structures and a new description” (*IT*, 7). As a result, for Ricoeur, semiotics is the science of signs that relies on the dissociation of language into its parts and is accordingly concerned with form. Semantics as the science of the sentence (and later, text), on the other hand, is defined by the integrative procedures of language, and concerned with sense (meaning).

I mentioned above that Ricoeur's interest in language stems from his method of detour. As Don Ihde states, "the need to understand symbolic expressions is the theme for Ricoeur's entry into language in the 'hermeneutic turn'" (1971, 23). Consequently, language in the symbolic, the metaphorical, the literary has an important function in self-reflection and self-understanding and, consequently, constitutes an important part of Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, the shift of focus from semiotics to semantics has a corollary in Ricoeur's investigation of the cultural resources of the self. As mentioned above, from a semantic point of view language says something about this world. Moreover, in its poetical form, it augments the world, reveals it in front of us in unknown ways. This function of language is achieved mainly in its symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic utilization. Ricoeur defines the symbol as "any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first" (*EH*, 7). Hence, in the symbol there is another meaning that is both given and hidden in the immediate meaning. Symbols are signs with a double intentionality. This double intentionality signifies a "surplus of signification," and it is here that language becomes the object of hermeneutics: "there is an interpretation wherever there is a multiple meaning and it is interpretation that the plurality of meaning is made manifest" (*EH*, 13). It is in virtue of this hermeneutics that one realizes an aspect of the world that has hitherto been latent to one, and consequently an aspect of the self that has been revealed to one through interpreting the secondary meaning hidden behind the symbol. Symbolic hermeneutics supplies the self with the lost vocabulary it needs for self-understanding.

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<sup>68</sup> For a detailed investigation of the place of language in Ricoeur's early anthropology, see (Rasmussen 1974), esp. Chapter 3.

Ricoeur later broadens his hermeneutics of symbolic language to take in the level of metaphor. It is here that the shift from semiotics to semantics finds a correlation with his investigation in poetics, since the primary unit of meaning in a metaphor is posited by Ricoeur as an entire sentence, rather than a single word. In this regard Ricoeur uses “metaphoric statement” instead of “metaphoric word.” A metaphor is more than a naming; it is an unusual predication. Ricoeur constitutes this formulation against the classical understanding of metaphor “as an incident of naming, in which the locus of meaning lies in a single word, which is the noun” (Gorospe 2007, 16). Hence, Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor is drawn from a theory of semantics.

Ricoeur defines metaphor as “that strategy of discourse by which language divests itself of its function of direct description in order to reach the mythic level where its function of discovery is set free” (*RM*, 292). Thus, Ricoeur attributes a creative function to metaphor, which stands in contrast to the classical understanding of metaphor as an ornament, a stylistic choice. Through metaphoric utterance, new meanings spring up in front of the reader. Metaphor fulfils this function by revealing the kinship, the resemblance between two incompatible ideas. Thus, the semantic dissonance between two ideas is resolved by metaphor, which results in a new way of seeing. As a consequence, metaphor is characterised by Ricoeur as a “semantic innovation:” “metaphor is an instantaneous creation, a semantic innovation which has no status in already established language and which only exists because of the attribution of an unusual or unexpected predicate” (*IT*, 51). The self’s understanding of reality that was reshaped, reproduced by the semantic innovation of metaphor has a corollary in its praxis. As soon as my understanding of reality is changed by metaphor, the reflexive question of “who,” which was covered by the hustle and bustle of daily life, once more comes out: “Where is my place in this new world? Who am I in this

reshaped reality?” Metaphor attains this function by virtue of its referential power. For Ricoeur, metaphor is not deprived of reference. Just as metaphorical meaning results from the ruins of literal semantic relevance, metaphorical reference results from the ruins of literal reference. Metaphor does not refer to the world in a descriptive sense, but in a productive sense that is marked by Ricoeur by comparing the seeing-as of the metaphorical statement to a being-as of the world revealed by poetic language. Hence for Ricoeur poetics opens up an aspect of reality for the reader that non-poetic prose is not able to detect; metaphor is not “simply a feature of language considered in its internal structures, but a feature of the relation of the language to the world” (*IA*, 28). This “world” is defined by Ricoeur as “the whole set of references opened by every sort of descriptive or poetic text I have read, interpreted, and loved” (*TNI*, 80). And this poetic world re-figures “the world of the reader that offers the ontological site for the operations of meaning and reference that a conception of language defined in a strictly immanent sense would prefer to ignore” (*IT*, 29). We shall later see that this re-figuration takes place in the act of reading, and the reader as the co-creator of the poetic world is one of the core elements of Ricoeur’s narrative theory. It is by virtue of this re-figurative reading that the world of the reader is re-figured and the reader turns back to the question of “who”: “who am I in this re-figured world?” In the following chapters, we will investigate the relation between the act of reading and the problem of the self in more detail, but at this point it should suffice to say that Ricoeur’s poetics, which starts with the investigation of symbol and then extends to the realm of metaphor and narrative texts, is never independent of the reflexive character of his philosophy, which is clarified in the reflective question of “who?”

The emphasis on the role of the reader will reveal its significance when we investigate, in the following chapters, the shift of Ricoeur’s focus to the narrative text as

the larger unit of discourse where rules of composition greater than the sentence appear. These rules, according to Ricoeur, are irreducible to predicative operations, but can be illustrated by the notion of “emplotment.” “With the narrative,” says Ricoeur, “the semantic innovation lies in the inventing of another work of synthesis – a plot” (*TNI*, ix).

My aim in this chapter is to discuss how fictional narratives, by means of emplotment, carry the question of subjectivity, or the question of who, into a larger and more fruitful framework. In other words, I will try to reveal how, in Ricoeur’s theory, the configurational function of fictional narratives helps us to construe the problem of selfhood in a subtler way. The chapter is mainly composed of two sections. In the first section, I will lay out and discuss Ricoeur’s problematization of human subjectivity in relation to the temporal characteristic of existence. For Ricoeur, the self becomes a genuine problem when it is placed in a temporal frame. In this frame the self becomes vulnerable to the reversals, unintended intentions, and coincidences that threatens its identity in time. In this sense, understanding the subject as the same in different phases or in different eras of her life-span becomes problematic. Ricoeur claims that in order to understand the identity of a subject in her temporality, we need to differentiate two kinds of personal identity: that of *idem* and that of *ipse*. It is the dialectic relationship between the *idem* and *ipse* identities that helps us to understand the subject as an identical self in the face of the changes and contingencies of life. At this point Ricoeur introduces his notion of “narrative identity” as a mediator between these two kinds of personal identity. Hence, Ricoeur suggests “narrative identity” as a solution to “our confused, unformed, and at the limit mute temporal experience” (*TNI*, x). What differentiates Ricoeur from other thinkers of narrative identity is his emphasis on the role of fictional narratives for the formation of narrative identity. In this regard, the

second section of this chapter deals with Ricoeur's poetics, and tries to show how the notion of emplotment that is borrowed from the field of narratives helps us to understand and construe our lives as a unity despite the contingencies and reversals that are brought about by temporality. In short, this chapter investigates what Ricoeur says about narrativity and the significance of narratives, more specifically literary and fictional narratives in relation to the construction of one's identity as an ethico-moral self.

### **1. Narrative Identity: From the Aporias of Time to the Aporias of Self**

Ricoeur introduces the concept of "narrative identity" for the first time in the concluding chapter of *Time and Narrative*. Here, he defines narrative identity as "a bridge set over the breach speculation constantly opens between phenomenological time and cosmological time" (TN3, 244). Narrative identity is offered as a response to the aporia between the experienced imagination of subjective time and the objective time of things which is observed, and controlled, by dating the flow of daily events, and systematized by calendar systems: "It is the aporia of the mutual occultation of these two perspectives on time that our poetics of narrative seeks to offer its answer" (TN3, 245). Ricoeur's answer to this aporia is a "third time" that arises from the interweaving of historical and fictional narrative. As Peter Kemp explains, "his answer is that our life and physical cosmos in which we live are connected by historical time, and this 'third time' is always, at least to some degree a narrated time. There is no history without a minimum of narration that tells us *who* did this or that, *who* was the agent or author, and *who* is to tell something of his or her lifestory" (Kemp 2002, 34). The offshoot of this "third time" is what Ricoeur calls "narrative identity" as the appropriate answer to the

question “Who?”: “Who did this?” “Who is the agent or author?” The first way of answering this question is to designate the agent with a proper name: “x”; “x did this”, “x is the agent or author.” But the question following this answer: “Who is x?” requires another kind of designation, a designation of the subject in her historicity and temporality. “The woman you met in London, ten years ago.” “I remember. She was a young, charming woman with black hair.” “She is not young anymore, and her hair is no longer black – it turned grey.” “I see. But, she was such a nice person; how could she do such a mean thing! Are you sure we are talking about the *same* person?” What is in question in this imaginary dialogue is a kind of permanence in time. What makes that nice woman I met ten years before identical with the woman who is the subject of this terrible action? What provides permanence to this proper name? What makes x I met ten years ago, the *same* as the x who is the subject of the terrible action in question? “The answer,” says Ricoeur, “has to be a narrative. To answer the question ‘Who?’ . . . is to tell the story of a life. The story told tells about the action of the ‘who.’ And the identity of this ‘who’ therefore itself must be a narrative identity” (*TN3*, 246).

Narrative identity, introduced as a bridge between phenomenological time and cosmological time in *Time and Narrative*, is once more examined by Ricoeur in his later work *Oneself as Another* but from a different perspective. This time narrative identity is formulated as a solution to the problem of selfhood. In *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur suggests a “hermeneutics of self” that is placed at equal distance between the double heritage of the philosophies of subject: “the apology of the cogito and its overthrow” (*OA*, 4). In other words, the aim of hermeneutics is to move beyond the philosophies of cogito and anti-cogito.<sup>69</sup> Such a hermeneutics is possible by replacing the posited *I* as

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<sup>69</sup> In the “Introduction” of *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur treats Descartes as the paradigmatic example of the first approach, for he designates the *Cogito* as an indubitable and ultimate foundation of all that can be known. For the second approach the paradigm is Nietzsche, for whom the *Cogito* is the name of an illusion.

the “paradigmatic of the philosophies of the subject where the subject is formulated in the first person – *ego cogito*” (OA, 4). with the “self . . . implied reflexively in the operations, the analysis of which precedes the return towards this self” (OA, 18). Before proceeding with the analysis of the self in its temporality, I shall now lay out how the problem of selfhood is investigated and developed by Ricoeur in *Oneself as Another*.

### **1.1. *Iipse and Idem***

In the Introduction Ricoeur presents *Oneself as Another* under four subcategories. The first subset (the first and second studies) deals with a philosophy of language both as semantics and as pragmatics. Here, Ricoeur suggests a detour through the analysis of language in which we talk about the self and through which the self designates itself reflexively. The semantic detour helps us to see how the self is identified amid a range of other selves by virtue of “identifying reference.” The pragmatic detour, on the other hand, reveals the reflexive designation of the self in its utterances. At the end of these studies, the self appears as the object to which one refers by means of language and the subject who designates herself in her very own speech acts.

In the second subset (the third and fourth studies) – which covers a philosophy of action in the sense that this term has now acquired in analytical philosophy – the aim is to restore the “Who” question formulated as “Who is the agent of action?” which was suppressed by “What?” and “Why?” questions in the analytical philosophies of action. This second subset “annexes the first, inasmuch as speech acts are themselves action, and by implication, speakers are themselves actors” (OA, 17). Hence, in this subset, Ricoeur tries to disclose the interconnectedness of the question of the first subset, “Who

is speaking?” with the question that comes to light through the investigations into theory of action: “Who is acting?” This interconnectedness will later be formulated with the question “Who is speaking/narrating about her actions?”

The third subset (fifth and sixth studies) is about the question of personal identity tied to its temporality. For Ricoeur, the lacuna that appears at the end of the previous studies is the temporal status of action and the self. And what Ricoeur suggests to fill this lacuna is to reveal the distinction between two kinds of personal identity that has been overlooked by previous philosophies of the subject. It is here that Ricoeur introduces “*ipse*” and “*idem*” identities as two kinds of personal identity and “narrative identity” as a mediating term between them. By virtue of narrative identity, the self is formulated in this chapter as the subject who recounts her actions such that the contingent actions and events in her life can take a concordant form. Ricoeur says that, “thanks to this new development of the theme of narrative identity, the concept of action . . . will recover the full scope of meaning that belonged to the Aristotelian concept of praxis, in contrast to drastic limitations . . . placed upon human action by the semantics of action in the preceding subset” (*OA*, 18).

The fourth subset (seventh, eighth, and ninth studies) is about the ethical and moral determinations of action. In these chapters Ricoeur designates the self as a responsible agent to whom an action, whether good or not, cannot only be ascribed but also imputed. The emphasis on imputation is significant, since for Ricoeur, “moral experience requires nothing more than a subject capable of imputation, if we understand by ‘imputation’ the capacity of the subject to designate itself, himself, or herself as the actual author of its, his, her own acts” (Ricoeur 2007, 47). Here Ricoeur also formulates

his “little ethics” for the first time, as “aiming at the ‘good Life’ with and for Others under just institutions” (OA, 172).<sup>70</sup>

In addition to these subcategories, in the last chapter of his work Ricoeur develops an ontology of the self which grounds the objectifications manifested in the previous studies. Hence, “on the one hand Ricoeur examines the objectivities of selfhood, namely, ‘(discursive, practical, narrative, and prescriptive predicates) in the reflective [*réflexif*] process of the self’; on the other hand, not wanting to reduce selfhood to reflection and its objective structures, Ricoeur turns to an ontological question, ‘What mode of being, then, belongs to the self, what sort of being or entity is it?’” (Venema 2000, 124).

As we can see, then, Ricoeur approaches the problem of the self via a long detour through the objectivities in which the activities or operations of the self are reflected. Although all these analyses of different objectivities enlighten one side of the self, the analytic–reflective structure of the studies in *Oneself as Another* result in its having a fragmentary character. These fragmentary studies, however, have as their thematic unity “human action.” But this unity “is not the unity that an ultimate foundation would confer to a series of derivative disciplines. It is rather a merely analogical unity between the multiple uses of the term ‘acting,’ which . . . receives its polysemy from variety and contingency of the questions that activate the analyses leading back to the reflection on the self” (OA, 20). Through the mentioned subcategories, the self as an acting being is analysed in an interrogative form introduced by the question “Who?”: “all the assertions relating to the problematic of the self, and in this way giving the same scope to the question ‘who?’ and to the answer – *the self*. Four subcategories will therefore correspond to four manners of questioning: Who is

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<sup>70</sup> For a briefer and more rigorous version of his little ethics, see (Ricoeur 2007), especially the first part.

speaking? Who is acting? Who is recounting about himself or herself? Who is the moral subject of imputation?” (OA, 16).

For present purposes, it is the third question that matters – who is recounting about himself or herself? – because it is through this question that Ricoeur directly addresses the problem of personal identity in relation to narratives, especially fictional narratives. As I mentioned, Ricoeur investigates this question in the fifth and sixth studies of *Oneself as Another*, where he introduces two modalities of permanence in time: that of *ipse* and *idem* identities. And it is here that he introduces narrative identity as the mediating term between these two kinds of personal identity.

Ricoeur begins his studies on personal identity by stating that the lacuna that appeared in his earlier studies in *Oneself as Another* concerns the temporal dimension of the self as well as of action as such:

Neither the definition of the person from the perspective of identifying reference nor that of the agent in the framework of the semantics of action, considered nonetheless an enrichment of the first approach, has taken into account the fact that the person of whom we are speaking and the agent on whom the action depends have a history, are their own history. The approach to the self along the second line of the philosophy of language, that of utterance, has also failed to give rise to any particular reflection concerning the changes that affect a subject capable of designating itself in signifying the world. (OA, 113)

What has been underestimated by way of bracketing temporality is not only one dimension among others but the entire problematic of personal identity. Ricoeur claims that personal identity can only be articulated in the temporal dimension of human existence. Ricoeur suggests that the way to fill this lacuna is “to reconstruct here a theory of narrative, no longer considered from the perspective of its relation to the constitution of human time, as ... in *Time and Narrative*, but from that of its contribution to the constitution of the self” (OA, 114).

By means of a detour through narrative theory the dialectic between *sameness* and *selfhood* attains its fullest development. Moreover, by virtue of the narrative theory it becomes possible to designate the self not only as an “agent” to whom we can “ascribe” actions, but also as a responsible “self” to whom we can “impute” these actions. Hence, by means of narrative theory, human action, in addition to the descriptive features revealed by semantics and pragmatics of action, and the explanatory features exposed by action theory, attains its prescriptive features, which makes it dependent on ethics and morality. In this way, narrative theory finds one of its justifications as a middle ground in Ricoeur’s triad that defines his studies on action and self: “describe, narrate, prescribe – each moment of the triad implying a specific relation between the constitution of action and the constitution of the self” (*OA*, 114–15). In this formula, narration is posited as the mediating phenomenon between description and prescription.

The meditative role attributed to the narrative theory is only possible, according to Ricoeur, if it can be shown that narrative theory covers a greater expanse of the practical field than the field covered by the semantics and pragmatics of action sentences, and the actions organized in a narrative form imply ethical considerations:

[I]n many narratives the self seeks its identity on the scale of an entire life; between the brief actions, to which our earlier analyses were confined (conforming to the constraint of the grammar of action sentences), and the connectedness of life, of which Dilthey speaks in his theoretical writings on autobiography, we find staggered degrees of complexity which carry the theory of action to the level required by narrative theory. In the same way, I would say, anticipating the course of these studies, there is no ethically neutral narrative. Literature is a vast laboratory in which we experiment with estimations, evaluations, and judgments of approval and condemnation through which Narrativity serves as a propaedeutic to ethics. (*OA*, 115)

By introducing the temporal dimension of the self into the discussion, Ricoeur makes a shift from the problem of agency to the problem of personal identity; in other

words, he moves his investigations on the relation between the act and the agent into a wider framework. The question that is asked now is the place of the human self in the world; how does one situate oneself in the world among others and with others as an acting and suffering being without disregarding one's temporality? This new understanding of the problem does not exclude the first problem, of agency, but, as we said, it positions it in a more profound framework. Against the immediacies offered by previous studies on the subject, Ricoeur claims that, the self can only be understood through a hermeneutical detour through its objectivities, in other words through an interpretation of the symbolic, cultural, and historical context surrounding the self and its actions. All these objectivities refer to the temporal aspect of the self, and, as mentioned above, this temporal aspect can be understood only in a narrative setting. And the narrative identity that is suggested by Ricoeur to solve the problem of the temporal aspect of the self exposes itself in the dialectic between two types of identity – *ipse* and *idem*: “The genuine nature of narrative identity discloses itself, in my opinion, only in the dialectic of selfhood [*ipse*] and sameness [*idem*]. In this sense, this dialectic represents the major contribution of narrative theory to the constitution of the self” (OA, 140).

The problem with rival philosophies of personal identity, from a Ricoeurian point of view, is their failure to recognize the distinction between these two uses of the concept of identity: *idem* identity (identity as *sameness*, German *Gleichheit*, French *mêmeté*) and *ipse* identity (identity as *selfhood*, German *Selbstheit*, French *Ipséité*). The distinction becomes a genuine problem with the question of *permanence in time*, which is formulated by Johan Michel with the following question: “Are there any dispositions that allow an individual to remain identical over the course of time or is the ‘subject’ never unified and thus only a discontinuous flux of perceptions and sensations?” (2015,

3). In order to understand permanence in time or personal identity (identity of the self in its temporality), what should be revealed is the tension within identity itself which is indicated by the two accounts of permanence in time that we mentioned above: *ipse* and *idem*.

Ricoeur defines *idem* as “a concept of relation and relation of relations” (*OA*, 116). It is found in manifold forms. First comes *numerical identity*: the occurrence of the same thing over time. This is one and the same thing now as it was then; there are not two or more different things. What is at stake is oneness, not plurality. This first form of *idem* identity corresponds to the notion of identification and reidentification as the same. The second form of *idem* is *qualitative identity* or extreme resemblance. In this mode of identity, two temporal things are so similar that we identify them as interchangeable, not as different things. It corresponds to the operation of substitution. These two forms of *idem* identity are irreducible to each other, but they are not foreign to one another: “In certain cases the second serves as an indirect criterion for the first, when the reidentification of the same is the object of doubt and of debate” (*NI*, 189). Such doubts and debates deepen in the case of a great distance in time. In such cases, we need another criterion, the third mode of *idem*: *uninterrupted continuity*. This signifies a connection between the first and the last stage of what we consider to be the same, a continuity in the development of a being. Here, although the object in question goes through some changes, we take it to be the same in virtue of the continuity among its successive states; “the ordered series of small changes which, taken one by one, threaten resemblance without destroying it” (*OA*, 118). Time is a factor of difference here, dissemblance; and it still represents a threat to identity. In order to dissipate this threat, we need another mode of identity that is the fourth sense of *idem*: the criterion of *permanence in time*; for Ricoeur the idea of *structure*, opposed to that of event, is the

strongest criterion that can be applied here. It is through structure as the organization of a combinatory system that we can identify an oak tree as the same from the acorn to the fully developed tree. In the same sense, a human being can be comprehended as the same from her birth to her death in virtue of her genetic code, which gives her a constant structure. The change is conceived as happening to something that does not change.

While the *idem* identity accounts for the identity of the corporeal aspect, it is the *ipse* identity that problematizes the identification of the self: “Is there a form of permanence in time which can be connected to the question ‘who?’ in as much as it is irreducible to any question of ‘what?’? Is there a form of permanence in time that is a reply to the question ‘Who am I?’?” (OA, 118). As Peter Kemp points out, the distinction between *idem* and *ipse* is not “simply used to claim a difference between personal life and physical things. The aim is to analyse the meaning of the self that cannot be reduced to a substance or thing, although it is always a thing” (Kemp 2002, 35). Hence, Ricoeur does not deny the embodied nature of the self, rather what he tries to reveal through *ipseity* is the fact that the self is more than what the analytic philosophies of identity have taken it to be. The weakness of these philosophies lays in their limiting their focus to the question of “what?” at the expense of the “who?” question, which characterizes their attempt as an approach to the question of identity under the heading of *idem* alone.

Ricoeur talks about two models of permanence in time, which are both descriptive and emblematic with regards to *ipseity*: *character* and *keeping one's word*. There is a polarity between these two models of permanence: “the permanence of character expresses the almost complete mutual overlapping of the problematic of *idem* and of *ipse*, while faithfulness to oneself in keeping one's word marks the extreme gap

between the permanence of the self and that of the same and so attests fully to the irreducibility of the two problematics one to the other” (OA, 118). *Narrative Identity* intervenes here as a specific mediator between these two poles: character, where ipse and idem tend to coincide, and self-constancy, where selfhood completely frees itself from sameness.

Ricoeur defines character as “the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of a human individual as being the same” (OA, 119). Character allows us to identify and reidentify the individual as the same in face of the changes and reversals she undergoes in time. It is the set of lasting dispositions that is indicated by character that allows us to recognize an individual as the same in different parts of her history. Hence the problematic of idem and ipse overlaps in character. The self in its many dispositions is recognized as the *same* individual. Ricoeur associates character with two notions; that of *acquired habits* and that of *acquired identifications*.

Habit gives the character a history in which innovation covers over the sedimentation that preceded it: “It is this sedimentation which confers on character the sort of permanence in time that I am interpreting here as the overlapping of ipse by idem. This overlapping, however, does not abolish the difference separating the two problematics: precisely as second nature, my character is me, myself, ipse; but this ipse announces itself as idem” (OA, 121). Each habit formed in this way constitutes a *trait*, a distinctive sign that allows us to recognize and reidentify a person as the same.

*Acquired identifications*, on the other hand, implicate the place of the other in the composition of the self. By this notion, Ricoeur intends to disclose the role of the social surroundings of an individual in her identification and self-identification: “To a large extent, in fact, the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values, norms, ideals, models and heroes, *in* which the person or the

community recognizes itself. Recognizing oneself *in* contributes to recognizing oneself *by*” (OA, 121). Through identification with these external elements, or in other words, by the internalization of these elements, an individual dissolves the effect of otherness, transfers it from outside to the inside, and displays an otherness assumed as her own. This internalization gives the individual a stabilized recognisability. Here again *idem* overlaps *ipse*, but this time in an evaluative way. The dispositions by which the person is recognized through this identification are open to evaluation and thus can be taken as a threshold to ethics.

The acquired habits and identifications bring a stability to the character, and by means of this stability “character assures at once numerical identity, qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity across change, and, finally, permanence in time which defines sameness” (OA, 122). However, this overlapping does not mean that we give up our attempts to distinguish between *idem* and *ipse*. The other emblematic point of *ipse* identity, *keeping one’s word* or *self-constancy*, indicates the other edge of the relation between these two modalities. In self-constancy, the overlap of *idem* and *ipse* ceases, they dissociate from one another: “keeping one’s promise . . . does indeed appear to stand as a challenge to time, a denial of change: even if my desire were to change, even if I were to change my opinion or my inclination, ‘I will hold firm.’” (OA, 124). This new manner of constancy in time constitutes a contrast with the character. As a result, two modalities of permanence in time construct a polar opposition: *character* where *ipse* and *idem* overlap and *self-constancy* where *ipse* is entirely dissociated from *idem*.

As a result, the dialectical relationship between *idem* and *ipse* oscillates between these two poles of personal identity: “a lower limit, where permanence in time expresses the confusion of *idem* and *ipse*; and an upper limit, where the *ipse* poses the question of its identity without the aid and support of the *idem*” (OA, 124). And for Ricoeur, it is in

this dialectic of selfhood and sameness that the notion of narrative identity discloses itself.

## 1.2. The Narrative Unity of Life

If we wish to know about a man, we ask 'what is his story – his real, inmost story?' – for each of us is a biography, a story. Each of us is a singular narrative, which is constructed, continually, unconsciously, by, through, and in us – through our perceptions, our feelings, our thoughts, our actions; and, not least, our discourse, our spoken narrations. Biologically, physiologically, we are not so different from each other; historically, as narratives—we are each of us unique.

Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*

Ricoeur starts his sixth study in *Oneself as Another* by stating that there are two tasks that remain to be accomplished in order to explicate narrative identity in its relation with personal identity. “The first task is to carry to a higher level the dialectic of sameness and selfhood implicitly contained in the notion of narrative identity. The second is to complete this investigation of the narrated self by exploring the mediations that narrative theory can perform between action theory and moral theory” (OA, 140).

As mentioned above, it is the succession of the person in the face of change that is searched for in the problem of personal identity. Hence, to use Dilthey’s words, it is the connectedness of life (*zusammenhang das lebens*) that he took to be the equivalent to the concept of a life story that the question of identity seeks out. Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, suggests that human life can be understood in its unity most appropriately in a narrative form and calls this “the narrative unity of life,” by giving a narrative colouring to Dilthey’s expression. According to MacIntyre, in order to render

human life intelligible, we need to grasp it as a whole, as a “a unity whose character provides the virtues with an adequate *telos*” (2011, 237). Before discussing MacIntyre’s understanding of the “narrative unity of life,” I want to pause for a second and turn back to Aristotle and Dilthey. I will first try to reveal the relationship between action and fiction in Aristotle’s work. At the end of this investigation, we will see that poetic imagination is a necessary part of our actions; all intentions are in fact poetic imaginations about the end of an intended action. In addition, the end of a human life, which can only be experienced by the survivors, also needs the poetic imagination in order to be formulated as a meaningful closure by the agent. I shall call this phenomenon of construing the ends of our actions and the closure of our life imaginatively, *prospective reflection*. Later, I will lay out Dilthey’s concepts of “meaning,” “configuration,” and “connectedness of life” as supplementary to Aristotle’s thoughts and as a threshold to MacIntyre’s understanding of the “unity of life.” This investigation will show us that in order to grasp our lives as a whole, we also need to configure our past actions retrospectively. This phenomenon will constitute the other part of the reflective process, which I shall call *retrospective reflection*. Last, I will discuss MacIntyre’s notion of the “narrative unity of life,” through which the two processes I mentioned above are connected in the configurational character of narrative.

In his *On Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy as “an imitation of action . . . of people acting” (2002, 1449b25). Hence, there is a relation between the world of fiction and the world of action through *mimesis praxeos*. However, this mimetic relation is not the only reason for claiming that Aristotle approximates fiction and life. There are some other clues in *On Poetics* that refer us to other works by Aristotle and give us hints about this relationship between fictional narratives and life.

Michael Davis, in his helpful introduction to *On Poetics*, gives us a clear summary of these clues. He begins by reminding us of the double meaning of the original title of *Poetics*, namely *peri poiêtikês*: “on the art of whatever it is that the verb *poiein* means. Ordinarily *poiein* would mean ‘to do,’ especially in the sense of ‘to make.’ It is the French *faire* or the German *machen*. Then it gets a narrower meaning as well – to make poetry. So, *peri poiêtikês* means on the art of poetry” (2002, xii). He then directs our attention to a footnote at the end of Aristotle’s discussion of the history of tragedy and comedy, where he remarks that while the Dorians call doing (*poiein*) *dran*, the Athenians call it *prattein* (praxis, action). And so – the thought runs – “this seems scarcely more than a footnote, in the context of *On Poetics* Aristotle has invited us to consider *poiein* and *prattein* synonyms. Should we accept his invitation we would have to retranslate the title of Aristotle’s most frequently read book. *Peri Poiêtikês* would mean *On the Art of Action*” (2002, xiii). He adds that there is also some circumstantial evidence that supports such an interpretation of *On Poetics*. If *On Poetics* is about human action, and if all human actions aim at some good, and if politics (*politikê*) is the science of the highest good for Aristotle, poetics and politics should be closely linked: “They are. Aristotle’s *Politics* ends with an account of music, especially poetry, as both the means for educating men to be good citizens and the goal for which they are educated” (Davis 2002, xiii). Another instance of this relation is found in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, where courage is designated as the mean of the poles fear and confidence: “courage is a model for how to deal with all fear understood as *prosdakia* of the bad, and so for how to deal with the bad properly” (2002, xiv). The problem with Aristotle’s notion of courage (mainly understood as the courage to face death in a war), however, is that while all moral virtues are supposed to bring happiness, what is brought about by courage is mostly unpleasant and can easily lead us to death.

Neither killing nor being killed is good, so what makes courage so valuable? Aristotle says the value of the courage lies in the *kalon* that is achieved through courage; hence it is not present in the acts itself, as Davis says:

The brave man, presenting an image to himself of action as completed, looks at his deed as others will look at it, and so reaps the benefits of honour even before it has been granted. The present action becomes *kalon* insofar as it is made complete through reflection or imagination. The brave, therefore, do what they do not because it is good, but because they can say “it is good.” This is what the *kalon* means. (2002, xiv)

Hence, it is impossible to see courage as a virtue in its wholeness without the help of reflection and imagination. This is why poetry has an important function in

*Nicomachean Ethics*:

From the act itself it is impossible to tell the difference between [the] spurious forms of courage and the real thing. We need the whole story, and only poetry gives it to us . . . Poetry makes it possible to experience our action as a whole before it is whole. The wholeness then becomes a part of the experience itself. Or rather, since the conjunction does not appear temporally, poetry constitutes the experience. (2002, xv–xvi)

As a result, Davis claims that in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, poetics rises as the necessary condition for moral virtue in general. It is our ability to meditate about the possibility of our death that makes it possible for us to project our life as a whole, but since it is not possible to experience the life as a whole, this meditation and projection remains a sort of fiction, and hence a poetic experience. Here Davis goes one step further: “It is the distinctive feature of human action, that whenever we choose what to do, we imagine an action for ourselves as though we were inspecting it from the outside. Intentions are nothing more than imagined actions, internalizings of the external. All action is therefore imitation of action, it is poetic” (2002, xvii).

In the example of courage, what is achieved by the subject – by virtue of a prospective reflection on the results of her action and construing them through

imagination – is a kind of meaningful closure to her life such that her life can be recounted by survivors and future generations as a meaningful story. However, a good ending does not always make the story a meaningful one, since the meaning of a story cannot be derived from the particular incidents that it recounts. In order for a story to be meaningful, it should represent a coherent wholeness that is more than the sum of the consecutive incidents recounted. At this point, in addition to the prospective reflection that permits us to construe the ends of particular actions and the overall closure of the story in a meaningful way imaginatively – as implied by Aristotle – the subject need to carry out another task: that of recounting her past reflectively. In other words, we need the other part of the configurational act that I mentioned above: that of retrospective reflection. Only through these two operations can the story reach its meaningful wholeness. At this point we face the phenomenon that is conceptualized by Dilthey as “the connectedness of life (*zusammen des lebens*).”

For Dilthey, there are two crucial categories that shape the temporal character of the human subject: that of development (*entwicklung*), and configuration (*gestaltung*). The category of development implies the purposive character of human experience; it is always on the way to a goal. Configuration, on the other hand, signifies the propensity of the human subject to create configurations of meaning from her experiences. These two categories are inseparable from the category of meaning (*bedeutung*): the structural element of human life that binds all other categories into a life-unity and makes life intelligible as a whole. By virtue of the category of meaning, the experiences and actions in a life achieve their connectedness: “Experience in its concrete reality is made coherent by the category of meaning” (Dilthey 1962, 74). The connectedness achieved by the category of meaning helps us to self-reflect (*selbstbesinnung*) on our lives as a whole: “Looking back at the past in memory we see the connections between the parts

of life in terms of the category of meaning. In the present, we feel the positive or negative value of the realities which fill it, and as we look towards the future, the category of purpose arises” (Dilthey 1976, 216). Hence, the connectedness of life brings the successive moments of a life together as a unity and according to Dilthey this unity finds its most concrete expression in autobiographies: “Autobiographies are the most direct expression of reflection about life” (Dilthey 1976, 213). And – so the thought runs – if we regard autobiography as a narrative genre in which the life of the subject is presented in a configured way, we can claim that Dilthey’s life-philosophy implies that the meaning of a life can be revealed only through a retrospective reflection about life in accordance with its telos. And such a reflection can be rendered most accurately in virtue of narrativity, which represents a life in its connectedness.<sup>71</sup> At this stage we can go into McIntyre’s understanding of “the narrative unity of life,” which is characterized by Ricoeur as an expansion of Dilthey’s life-philosophy by “giving a narrative coloration to [his] expression ‘the connectedness of a life’” (OA, 157). MacIntyre carries Dilthey’s theory one step further and explicitly claims that the connectedness of life can be rendered intelligible only through a narrative formation.

MacIntyre begins his discussion of the unity of human life by positioning himself against modern atomistic and fragmentary tendencies to think of human action in terms of simple components and the human self in some demarcated areas of role-play. What he suggests instead is a concept of action that is defined as “a moment in a possible or actual history or in a number of such histories” (MacIntyre 2011, 248) and “a concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end” (239).

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<sup>71</sup> For a detailed investigation of the role of narrative formation in Dilthey’s life-philosophy, see (De Mul 2004).

MacIntyre claims that in order to characterize a segment of a human behaviour we need to understand the intentions behind the behaviour, and in order to characterize these intentions we need to figure out the social settings in which these intentions become intelligible to both the agent and others. A behaviour may have more than one intention, in which case it may belong to more than one setting. MacIntyre observes that there are at least two ways in which this may be so.

In the first case the primary intention of the behaviour is accompanied by a secondary intention or some secondary intentions. She is seated in front of her computer, typing. “What are you doing?” I ask. “I am writing e-mails to my colleagues so that I can inform them about my recent research;” “I am developing my typing skills;” “I am taking a break from my studies.” All these intentions may be carried out by the agent simultaneously. She may be developing her typing skills by writing e-mails to her friends during a break from her studies. In such a case, the observer needs to know which intention or intentions are primary. MacIntyre defines primary intentions as those that “of which it is the case that, had the agent intended otherwise [s]he would have not performed that action” (241). Without knowing this, the intention cannot be placed in the right settings, and consequently cannot be characterized correctly. To know the primary intention is to know the causal order of the action.

In the second case, a single action may have more than one intention that can be ordered in the stretch of time. She is seated in front of her computer and typing. “What are you doing?” “Trying to get a PhD,” “Working on my PhD thesis,” “Revising my last chapter.” In this case, there is a strict interrelation between the short-term and long-term intentions: “Each of the shorter-term intentions is, and can only be made intelligible by reference to some longer-term intentions; and the characterization of the behaviour in terms of the longer-term intentions can only be correct if some of the

characterizations in terms of shorter-term intentions are also correct” (241). The behaviour can be characterized adequately only if the temporal order of the intentions and the relation between them are figured out.

As a result, the intentions should be ordered both causally and temporally, and they should be placed in the adequate settings accordingly. The setting in which an action is situated can be an institution, a practice, or a milieu of some other kind. In our first example, the setting is the practice of letter writing if we take it as the primary intention, and in the second example the short- and long-term intentions of the agent can be placed in the historical and institutional setting of academic practices. What is noteworthy here is MacIntyre’s assertion that a setting also has a history in which the personal histories of the agent should be situated: “without the setting and its changes over time the history of the individual agent and [her] changes through time will be unintelligible” (240). The academic tradition may show differences in the different eras of history, and in order to render the agent’s typing act intelligible, we need to know to what era the setting of the act belongs. Moreover, the academic rituals of different traditions and cultures may – indeed do – differ from one another, and by no means do we need to be aware of these differences to understand the action.

The model suggested by MacIntyre in order to understand an action reveals the interrelationships between the intentional, the social, and the historical. A particular action is identified by conjuring up two kinds of contexts. First, the intentions of the agent are situated in a casual and temporal order with reference to their role in the agent’s history. Second, they are also placed in order with reference to their role in the history of settings to which they belong. In this way, a course of human events is seen not merely as some complex sequences of individual actions, but as a part of a certain form of a narrative history: “In doing this, in determining what causal efficacy the

agent's intentions had in one or more directions, and how his short-term intentions succeeded or failed to be constitutive of long-term intentions, we ourselves write a further part of these histories. Narrative history of a certain kind turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human actions" (242).

MacIntyre claims that "characteristically human actions have the property of intelligibility" (1986, 63). And an action renders itself intelligible by finding its place in a narrative.<sup>72</sup> The concept of intelligibility is closely connected to one of the most basic distinctions between human beings and other beings: that of accountability: "Human beings can be held responsible for that of which they are the authors, other beings cannot," says MacIntyre; "to identify an occurrence as an action is in the paradigmatic instances is to identify it under a type of description which enables us to see that occurrence as flowing intelligibility from an agent's intentions, motives, passions and purposes" (2011, 243). Therefore, to ask an agent to give an account of an action she has carried out is to ask her to give an intelligible explanation of that action. And, because an action finds its intelligibility in a narrative form, what we ask for is a story, a narrative description of the intentions (in a casual and temporal order) and beliefs (of the agent) on which the action is based, along with the social settings in which the action is situated. Consequently, the ethical aspect of an action – its being accountable as an intentional action – requires a narrative explication of that action. However, this narrative explication of a specific action is connected to various other actions of the agent. Moreover, in order to understand this specific action, we should also take into consideration the actions of others, which in turn become a constraint of our agent's actions. Hence, we see a narrative that is larger than the narrative of a particular action.

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<sup>72</sup> Here it should be noted that MacIntyre does not make a distinction between intelligible and unintelligible actions. As mentioned above, for MacIntyre human actions are characteristically intelligible. "Unintelligible actions are failed candidates for the status of intelligible action" (MacIntyre 2011, 243). For a more detailed discussion of the notion of "intelligible action," see (MacIntyre 1986).

This narrative includes – in addition to the narrative of the specific action – the narratives of other actions of our agent, and the actions of others which more or less construe our agent's actions in various ways. Thus, the framework of narrative is enlarged from a particular action to a whole life, with all its complexities and interrelation with other lives.

By expanding the framework of actions to a narrative setting, MacIntyre takes a stance against “the tendency to think atomistically about human action and to analyse complex actions and transactions in terms of simple components” (237). He claims that a life understood in the form of a narrative history is more fundamental than a consequent collation of actions: “A history is not a sequence of actions, but the concept of an action is that of a moment in an actual or possible history abstracted for some purpose from that history” (252). In other words, these actions and experiences compose a narratable life; but the life composed as a whole in a narrative structure is more than the sum of these actions and experiences. This unity of actions goes hand in hand with another type of unity: “the unity of the character.” Like the actions in a life history, “a character in a history is not a collection of persons, but the concept of a person is that of a character abstracted from history” (252). Hence, a character implies a unity: the unity of the subject about whom the story is told. The subject may be characterized in various ways in different epochs of her story. What makes her the same person despite these differences is the unity supplied by the narrative formation:

To say of someone under some one description (‘The prisoner of the Chateau d’If’) that he is the same person as someone characterized quite differently (‘The Count of Monte Cristo’) is precisely to say that it makes sense to ask him to give an intelligible narrative account enabling us to understand how he could at different times and different places be one and the same person and yet be so differently characterized. (252)

Here, MacIntyre's notion of "narrative unity" seems to suggest an answer to the problem posed by Ricoeur: the problem of permanence in time or the problem of personal identity. For MacIntyre, a subject can be understood as identical, in spite of her different characterizations in different periods of her life, if a narrative account of these differences can be given. He states that "all attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrative intelligibility and accountability are bound to fail" (253). It is obvious from this citation that, for MacIntyre, different characterizations of a person in different periods of her life are brought into an intelligible whole in virtue of narrative formation.

What is the consequence of the narrative understanding of a whole life for the notion of accountability posed by MacIntyre in relation to intelligible actions? Through the unity of life and unity of character, the agent is formulated by MacIntyre as the subject of a narrative that runs from one's birth to one's death. In this sense, one is accountable for one's entire life: "It is, that is, to be open to being asked to give a certain kind of account of what one did or what happened to one or what one witnessed at any earlier point in one's life than the time at which the question is posed" (252). In addition, as mentioned above, one's life story is constrained by the stories of others. In other words, she is not only an agent of her own actions, and an author of her own story, but a sufferer of others' actions and stories – either in a positive or negative manner. And this gives her the right to ask others for an account of their actions and stories: "I am not only accountable, I am one who can always ask others for an account, who can put others to the question. I am part of their story as they are part of mine. The narrative of any one life is part of an interlocking set of narratives" (253). This interlocking character is significant since it is in virtue of this character that one becomes not an author, but a co-author of one's own story. One also takes part in the stories of others

both as a character and a co-author. “Only in phantasy do we live what story we please,” MacIntyre states. “We enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our making. Each of us being a main character in his own drama play subordinate parts in the dramas of others, and each drama constrains the others” (248). One cannot start one’s narrative literally *ab initio*: I am someone’s son, someone else’s friend, a citizen of this or that country, a member of this or that profession; I belong to a tribe, or a nation. As such, I inherit from the past of my city, my nation, my family of debts, expectations and obligations; I approach my circumstances as a bearer of a particular social identity. In other words, my story is to a certain degree constrained by the stories of others or some meta-stories to which my personal story belongs. However, MacIntyre insists that beyond these constraints, there are always various alternatives through which one can carry one’s story on. In addition, by constructing her story in a specific way, she also gives shape to other stories that she takes part as a subordinate character and consequently a co-author. Hence, one is accountable not only for one’s stories, but also for the stories of the others and the meta-stories that one takes part in due to one’s co-authorship. As a result, what MacIntyre suggests is not a model of linear individual stories that runs in parallel or consecutively in time, but a complex web of stories that intersect and interact with each other. If a human life is to be rendered intelligible, the stories that she takes part in, or the stories of the others who take a part in her story should also be considered.

The analysis above clearly shows that the self formulated by MacIntyre is obviously an ethically responsible self. Being accountable for the stories one is entangled with means that one is ethically responsible for the consequences of one’s actions that shape these stories. In this sense, a life understood in the form of a narrative unity is a quest, and it has a teleological aspect since “without some at least partly

determinate conception of the final *telos* there could not be any beginning to a quest” (254). The moral life, then, is formulated by MacIntyre as a narrative quest for the good.<sup>73</sup> The good, which a moral life seeks, however, is not pre-given; it is not already adequately characterized:

It is in the course of the quest and only through encountering and coping with the various particular harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which provide any quest with its episodes and incidents that the goal of the quest is finally to be understood. A quest is always an education both as to the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge. (254)

By formulating the narrative unity of life as a quest for the good, MacIntyre crowns his virtue ethics with a teleological character. Consequently, MacIntyre does not characterize the virtues merely as dispositions that maintain individual practices and enable the self to achieve the goods internal to these practices, he also attributes them the function of sustaining the self in the relevant kind of quest for the good. Hence, in Ricoeur’s words, “the idea of gathering together one’s life in the form of a narrative is destined to serve as a basis for the aim of a ‘good life’” (OA, 158). Now, it should also be noted that MacIntyre’s formulation implicitly suggests a hermeneutic circle. Recall that he started his investigations by explicating the intelligible character of human actions. In order for these actions to be rendered intelligible, they should be placed in an appropriate narrative, through which the intentions laying behind these actions, the social settings in which they take place, and other actions or the actions of others that construe them become explicit. A narrative, on the other hand, is the configuration of the actions of a human self into a concordant structure. Hence, particular actions need the whole narrative in order to be rendered intelligible, while the whole narrative can be realized through these particular actions. What is at stake, as a result, is a dialectic of the

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<sup>73</sup> Some of MacIntyre’s commentators interpret his theory as a quest for narrative. To me, it seems that MacIntyre suggests a quest for the good. Narrative is the necessary configurational form that permits us to examine our actions with regard to this quest. See my discussion of Bernard Williams’s criticism of MacIntyre below.

parts and the whole. This dialectical understanding is fundamentally different to one that analyses complex actions in terms of simple components, since what is revealed by the whole story is more than the sum of its parts.

Common to the formulations of three philosophers we have discussed so far is an emphasis on the importance of grasping one's life as a whole, in virtue of a reflective and prospective reflection, in order to render it intelligible. And narrative configuration is seen – either implicitly or explicitly – by all as a necessary stage in reflecting or self-reflecting on one's life. In virtue of narrative, the actions of an agent and her different personalities in different stages of her life are represented in a consonant form. In other words, the permanence of the self is represented through narrativity in the face of the changes and diversities of her life. This is basically what we understand from the notion “narrative identity”.<sup>74</sup> Hence, the actions and characters brought to us by a life-narrative remain in a mimetic relation with the world of action. What is important for the purpose of this study is the relation between these representations and another kind of representation: that of fictional narratives. However, even in MacIntyre's formulation, in which the function of narrative is most explicitly declared, we do not find any reference to fictional narratives. And as Bernard Williams states in his commentary on MacIntyre's notion of narrative unity of life, “here, at the level of narrative interpretation of a whole life, the most interesting questions are about the sources of these interpretations; their standing; and their relations to fiction” (Williams 2007, 309).

At this point, Williams' aforementioned article may help us to clarify some obscurities that have appeared in our investigation. In this article, Williams tries to construct the relation between the narrative interpretation of a whole life and fiction by

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<sup>74</sup> Of course, the discussion of the notion of “narrative identity” is not limited to the philosophers I have mentioned here. One can add Heidegger, Gadamer, and Charles Taylor to this line. For an extended review of discussions of this notion, especially in the hermeneutical tradition, see (Guignon 2016).

contrasting the coherence of the life of a person with that of a fictional character. He claims that fictional characters share with us the limitation of not knowing the future, because that is how they are represented. However, there is something that is essential to fictional characters: “When the reader starts, and in that sense when [the fictional characters] start, they are already finished” (2007, 310). In this regard, the lives of fictional characters are something that our lives are not: a given whole. Because the end of our lives is not presented to us in the beginning, and because it is not a whole, like the life of a fictional character for that reason, the peculiar unity of the lives of fictional characters do not help us in leading a life: “The idea of a completed, unified, or coherent narration is of no help in leading a life. The idea of living as a quest for narrative is baseless” (312).

To me, this citation reveals the basic mistake of Williams’ interpretation of MacIntyre’s theory. MacIntyre’s theory implies a life in quest of a narrative. However, this does not mean that life should be lived in a concordant way, like a narrative. A life may include discordant events, untidy actions, or reversals that disrupt the flow of life. The issue is to interpret these elements such that we can construe a concordance out of this discordance. To put it in another way, I agree with Wolfgang Iser’s claim that everyday life is heterogeneous in itself, such that the harmony we attribute to a life is merely the form by which our memory can apprehend it: “only in memory do we have the degree of freedom necessary, if we are to bring the disordered multiplicity of everyday life into harmonious form of a coherent gestalt – perhaps because this is the only way we can retain meanings of life. Thus, the gestalten of memory extract meaning from and impose order on the heterogeneity of life” (*Act*, 125). In this sense, I do not agree with Williams’ reading of MacIntyre, such that living is a quest for narrative. Rather, what he suggests – as I have tried to show – is that living is a quest for the good.

And the function of narration in this quest is to project our life – which is originally a discordant sequence of events – as a concordant configuration, so that we can reflect on our past and make projections about the future: “To be the subject of a narrative that runs from one’s birth to one’s death is . . . to be accountable for the actions and experiences which compose a narratable life” (MacIntyre 2011, 252). Hence, there is a nuance between “a *life* in quest of narrative” and “*living* in quest of narrative.” To me it is the former that is suggested by MacIntyre’s theory. The second problem in Williams’ discussion is not unrelated to the first. I have suggested that what is implied by MacIntyre in the notion of a “narrative unity of life” is not a life lead in a coherent way, but a life that can be represented in a coherent form. For this reason, the function of fictional narratives – if they are any help in this configuration – cannot be limited to presenting us models of a coherent life through fictional characters, as suggested by Williams. First, what we are looking for is not a model of coherence in order to lead our lives, but tools and strategies that will help us to compose our discordant lives in a concordant form. Second, Williams seems to reduce the interaction between fictional narratives and the reader to a mere relation of influence when he says that “people can of course live their lives by reference to fiction, and there are many more, and less, interesting ways of coming to grief in that project than Emma Bovary’s or Don Quixote’s. But that could not provide *the* way of living a life. Nor is it merely that we cannot impose narrative coherence upon our lives by consciously referring to existing fictions: the point goes much further than that” (Williams 2007, 310). I agree with Williams that the point goes much further than that, however in a different sense. Williams rests his criticism of the narrative unity of life on a naive model of influence from fiction to the reader and claims that leading a life goes much further than this. My objection is to his formulation of the very relation between the fiction and the reader.

The interaction between the two goes much further than a mere relation of influence; in Ricoeur's words, it goes much further than the "naïve conception of *mimesis*, the very one that is spotlighted in certain fictions, like the first *Don Quixote* or *Madame Bovary*" (OA, 161).

## **2. *Mimesis* and *Muthos***

### **2.1. Creative Reference**

At this stage, I want to return to Ricoeur, who suggests a subtler and more dialectical account of the relation between the unity of life and fictional narratives. MacIntyre's notion of the "narrative unity of life", as we have seen, suggests a solution to the problem of the self's permanence in time. However, Bernard Williams' criticism reveals that in order to understand more profoundly how narrativity supplies us with the necessary tools to configure our lives – through respective and prospective reflection – in a concordant form, we need to refer to fictional narratives. To put it in another way, in order to grasp how narrativity helps us to mediate between permanence and change we need to refer to the structural resources of fictional narratives. In addition, in the light of these resources, we need to return once more to the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader, namely the act of reading. In this section, I will follow Ricoeur and take a detour with him through the world of fictional works, or to put in his words, through "the kingdom of as if."

Ricoeur distinguishes his effort from that of MacIntyre by saying that:

Whereas MacIntyre relies principally on the stories told in the course of and in the midst of life, I propose to make a detour through the literary forms of narrative and more precisely through those of fictional narratives. The problematic of connectedness, of permanence over time,

or, in short, of identity, finds itself raised to a level of lucidity and also perplexity in fictional narratives that is not achieved by stories immersed in the course of life. (*NI*, 77)

Dilthey's notion of connectedness, and MacIntyre's notion of a "unity of life" corresponds to the notion of "narrative identity" in Ricoeur's formulation: "According to my thesis, the narrative constructs the durable character of an individual, which one can call his or her narrative identity" (*NI*, 77). In *Oneself as Another* he adds that, "the genuine nature of narrative identity discloses itself . . . only in the dialectic of selfhood and sameness" (*OA*, 140). The question is, how does the theory of narrative contribute to the constitution of the self in relation to this dialectic? To answer this question, we should focus on a pair of notions in Ricoeur's poetics, that of *mimes* and *emplotment*, since for Ricoeur "the self intersects with the same at one exact point, precisely with regard to permanence over time" (*NI*, 75), and "it is primarily in the plot [*muthos*] . . . that we must search the mediation between permanence and change . . . The advantage of this detour through the plot is that it furnishes the model of *discordant concordance* upon which it is possible to construct the narrative identity of a character" (*NI*, 77–78; emphasis mine). In addition, *muthos* constitutes a pair with *mimesis*; it is "the working of mimesis, that is, the act of composing, bringing together, and arranging the incidents into a unique and complete action" (*MR*, 138). By virtue of emplotment, mimesis is constituted not as a static form of representation, but as a process, and it is my aim in this section to analyse this process and to reveal the points that will help us to understand how fictional narratives enhance our understanding of the self.

Ricoeur's theory of mimesis can be characterized as an extension and radical interpretation of the Aristotelian understanding of mimesis. He follows Aristotle's formulation of mimesis as "an imitation of action . . . of people acting" (Aristotle 2002, 449b25). However, in order to understand the genuine character of mimetic activity, we

need not to disregard another important notion in *Poetics*: that of *muthos*, which is defined by Aristotle as “the putting together of events” (1450a32). In order to emphasize the dynamic and structuring character of the notion, Ricoeur translates it as *emplotment*: “I say emplotment rather than plot, in order to underscore the process character of plot itself” (*TDI*, 176). Hence, Ricoeur approaches *muthos* not as a plot which “traditionally has been understood as a static closed system identified with the configurations of a text” (Gorospe 2007, 23), but as emplotment, which implies a dynamic process that covers not only the configurational acts of the author, but also the refigurational acts of the reader. The distinction is significant for three reasons. By formulating *muthos* as emplotment, Ricoeur re-supplies fiction with a referential function, formulates the reader as an active participant in mimetic activity, and recovers mimesis from being understood as a mere replica to interpret it as a *productive reference*.

First, by formulating *muthos* as a dynamic process, Ricoeur saves the referential function of fiction. As Athena Gorospe explains:

Literary critics using formalist approaches speak of a plot line or a plot structure where events follow a certain discernible sequence. The same idea of a closed system is found in semiotics, where only the internal laws at work in the text are considered relevant. This presupposition of a closed system prevents formalist and semiotic studies from venturing outside the text to address issues of life and ethics. As a result, these literary studies, although interesting, can become purely descriptive and analytical, failing to address questions of religious-ethical significance. (2007, 23)

Ricoeur obviously disagrees with the view that a text is a closed linguistic system that has nothing to do with the empirical world. He positions his hermeneutical approach in opposition to this notion of closeness by saying that “it is the task of hermeneutics, on the contrary, to reconstruct the set of operations by means of which a work arises from the opaque depths of living, acting, and suffering, to be given by an

author to readers who receive it and thereby change their own actions” (MR, 139–140). The aim of this task is to abolish the distinction between the inside and outside of the text by disclosing that the distinction is a methodological artefact of structuralist theories: “there is neither an inside nor an outside to the work . . . instead, there is a concrete process in which the textual configuration conjoins the practical prefiguration and the practical transfiguration” (140). Hence, by formulating *muthos* as a dynamic process, Ricoeur restores the referential function of fiction – which was restrained by structuralist theories – by abolishing the distinction between the inside and outside of the text, and consequently expanding the frame of mimetic activity to the practical field. However, his understanding of referentiality – especially the referential character of fiction – is different from that of classical understandings that characterize reference as a “reproductive” imitation of an already given reality. Rather, fictions “refer in a ‘productive way’ to reality as intimated by action” (FFSR, 121). I will examine this productive reference in more detail shortly.

The second significance of the process characteristic of *muthos* concerns the reader. Since the framework of mimetic action is extended to the practical field of the reader – as we shall see in more detail below – by means of the refigurational phase, in virtue of the dynamic character of emplotment, fiction attains its refigurative power. This means that Ricoeur attributes to fictional narrative a transformative power on the world of the reader. By virtue of emplotment and the mimetic process, the reader’s world is re-shaped. This transformative function has obvious ethical consequences. As a result, formulating *muthos* as emplotment permits Ricoeur to address issues of the ethical self.

The third significance of *muthos* understood as process lays in its forming a pair with *mimesis*, as a result of which *mimesis* is no more defined as a mere replica, but as a productive reference:

[Mimesis] does not seem to me to be governed by equating of the two expressions: 'the imitation (or representation) of action' and 'the organization of the events.' It is not that something has to be taken back from this equation. There is no doubt that If we continue to translate *mimesis* by 'imitation,' we have to understand something completely contrary to copy of some pre-existing reality and speak instead of a creative imitation. And if we translate *mimesis* by representation,' . . . we must not understand by this word some redoubling of presence, as we could still do for Platonic *mimesis*, but rather the break that opens the space for fiction. Artisans who work with the words produce the as-if. And in this sense, the Aristotelian *mimesis* is the emblem of shift that, to use our vocabulary today, produces the 'literariness' of the work of literature. (TN, 45)

We recall that for Aristotle a narrative is "an imitation of action and it is especially because of this that it is of those acting" (450b3). Hence *mimesis* for Aristotle is mainly a *mimesis* of action, and in this sense, it differs from Plato's formulation in which the notion is characterized as a weakened copy of things. This characterization is not unrelated to Plato's use of the notion with a clearly visual implication. As Arne Melberg states in his work on the theory and history of *mimesis*, "Plato uses the word [*mimesis*] with a primarily visual significance; *mimesis* suggests image, a visual image related to imitation, re-presentation" (1995, 10). This is so mostly because Plato rests his theory on the visual arts, and when he discusses poetic works he applies "a fanciful analogy between visual imagery and the linguistic forms of poetry and drama" (Melberg 1995, 11). According to Ricoeur, this rapture is instructive in revealing the polysemic resources of *mimesis* that may assist us in emigrating from the closure of representation to a mimetic opening. In other words, in order to free poetic *mimesis* from its boundedness as a re-presentation of presence, we should also liberate it from the visual character that it has gained through Platonic traditions and redefine it as a fiction.

In “The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality,” where he problematizes the issue, Ricoeur takes the picture (the portrait) as the paradigm of the understanding of *mimesis* as mere replica and contrasts this understanding with his notion of *mimesis* as a “productive reference.” For him, the main significance of the shift from picture to fiction is the shift in the referential status of *mimesis*. The referent of the picture is some existing thing in its absence. In the case of fiction, on the contrary, there is no given model that is already there to which it could be referred; it “has no reference in a previous original to which the image would be the copy. And this defines the status of unreality” (*FFSR*, 120). There is a distinction between the absence and the unreal that defines the characteristic of the referents of the two models that are very often confused. “The original of a photograph is absent,” says Ricoeur, “but may be real or may have been real . . . The referent of the portrait is a real thing aimed at *in absentia*” (*FFSR*, 120). Absence here is a mode of givenness of the real. The issue is fundamentally different in fiction. The basic characteristic of fiction in relation to referentiality is the non-existence of its object. And we cannot assume a symmetry between absence as a mode of givenness of reality and non-existence as the contrary of reality. Here, Ricoeur characterizes fiction by denying an original that comes before the fiction and to which the fiction refers. However, such a denial does not mean that the fiction is completely separated from reality. Rather, it opens new ways of referring to reality: “Because fictions do not refer in a ‘reproductive’ way to reality as already given, they may refer in a ‘productive’ way to reality as intimated by the fiction” (*FFSR*, 121). Thus, by virtue of fiction reality is not copied, but augmented:

That fiction changes reality, in the sense that it both ‘invents’ and ‘discovers’ it, could not be acknowledged as long as the concept of image was merely identified with that of picture. Images could not increase reality since they had no referents other than those of their originals. The only originality of the image had thus to be found in the spontaneity characteristic of the production of the image. (*FFSR*, 121)

This claim is not new for us, since in the previous chapter we have seen with Wolfgang Iser how fiction may re-shape our understanding of reality in the sense of world systems. Indeed, this is the most important common conception of both thinkers: the problematization of reality by fiction. While for Iser the main concept in understanding how fiction re-shapes reality is “negation,” for Ricoeur, it is “augmentation.” Still, for both thinkers, fictional narratives open up a new world in front of us. Ricoeur claims that this new world opened up by literary fictions is indeed the heart of reality. What fictional narrative negate as reality is what is understood by ordinary vision and described by ordinary language as reality: “The more imagination deviates from that which is called reality, the more it approaches the heart of reality” (*FFSR*, 133). Thus, what is meant by reality when Ricoeur says that fictional narratives have the power to re-shape reality is not a pre-given reality that is out there, but our understanding and conception of reality. And with this change in our understanding, a new world is opened up: a world “which is no longer the world of manipulable objects, but the world into which we have been thrown by birth and within which we try to orient ourselves by projecting our innermost possibilities upon it, in order that we dwell there, in the strongest sense of that word” (*FFSR*, 133). As a result, fictional narratives call our understanding of reality into question, and in order for this function to be revealed, the understanding of *mimesis* as replica should be replaced by an understanding of *creative mimesis*. As Ricoeur aptly puts it, for the productive function of fiction to be sustainable we have to amend not only what *mimesis* is, “but also our prejudices to what reality is. Under the shock of fiction, reality becomes problematic” (*FFSR*, 133).

## 2.2. Emplotment and Threefold Mimesis

What then is the function of emplotment in breaking the representative illusion which stems from “the impossible claim of uniting the interiority of a mental image in the mind and the exteriority of something real that would govern from outside the play of mental scene within a single entity of ‘representation.’”? (FFSR, 117) To put in another way, how does *muthos* in the sense of emplotment denounce the understanding of representation as the reduplication or re-presentation of presence? At this point, we can say that emplotment, through its organizing function, enables the mimetic process to attain its productive character. It transposes the contingent incidents of the world into a narrative that is organized by means of its own logic. A world represented in a logic of narrative, that is, a world of actions that has been configured by emplotment, is a world that is different from the world from which it springs. It is a new world, or to be more precise, a new way of seeing the world. It is here that Ricoeur’s notion of creative reference attains its full meaning. Still, to understand the creative aspect of emplotment fully, we should now turn to Ricoeur’s understanding of mimesis as a threefold arc. “Word artisans,” says Ricoeur, “do not produce things but quasi-things. They invent the ‘as if’” (MR, 139). However, mimetic activity neither starts with these creational acts of artisans, nor ends when these artisans inscribe their last word on the paper. For Ricoeur, to understand the productive character of *mimesis*, we should expand its frame. *Mimesis* should not be sought only in the plea of artistic configuration, but also in the practical life of both the author and the reader. In this manner, in *Time and Narrative* Ricoeur extends *mimesis* to a threefold process that he entitles *mimesis1*, *mimesis2*, and *mimesis3*. *Mimesis1* (pre-figuration) is the pre-understanding of the world of action in which the composition of the plot is grounded. Ricoeur says that, “if it is true that plot is

an imitation of action, some preliminary competence is required: the capacity for identifying action in general by means of its structural features” (TN, 54). Hence *mimesis1* implies our understanding of action in the practical field by means of the structures that gives the action its meaning. *Mimesis2* (configuration), on the other hand, “opens the kingdom of *as if* . . . the kingdom of fiction” (TN, 64). It is here that emplotment finds its uppermost functionality attained. The actions of people are configured by the creative acts of the author: “*Mimesis* at this stage, signifies the production of a quasi world of action through the activity of emplotment. Far from being an effigy or a replica of action, this emplotment is its intelligible schema [épure]” (MR, 143). Last, *mimesis3* (re-figuration) signifies the intersection of the world of the text and world of the reader. It is at this point that the moral and cognitive significance of the narrative fiction is revealed. By virtue of the creative configuration in *mimesis2*, the world of the reader, the world in which actual action unfolds, is re-figured. Hence, Ricoeur’s threefold process of *mimesis* begins in the world of action, invested through the world of fiction, and returns to the world of action. But, in this return, the world is re-figured, re-shaped by the reproductive power of *mimesis*. In this manner, the mimetic process is definitely a circular one. However, as we shall see, it is not a vicious circle, but a spiral circle that passes the same point at different times and at different attitudes.

As mentioned above, *mimesis1* is the pre-figurational phase of Ricoeur’s mimetic arc that supplies us with a pre-understanding of narrative composition: “the composition of plot is grounded in a pre-understanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character” (TNI, 54). Hence, *mimesis1* is the ground on which *mimesis2* is constructed. But why should we claim that *mimesis2* requires such a ground in order to be understood? The answer lays, For Ricoeur, in the Aristotelian understanding of *mimesis* as the imitation of action:

“Now the simple mentioning of an action brings into play the pre-understanding common to the poet and his or her public of what action, or rather acting, signifies” (*MR*, 140). Hence, *mimesis*<sup>2</sup> requires a familiarity with the order of action and *mimesis*<sup>1</sup> provides us with this familiarity.

What then does Ricoeur mean by the order of action? He claims that the order of action signifies three major traits of action that makes it intelligible: “its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character” (*TNI*, 54). In order to render an action intelligible, one should master these major traits. In this sense, the order of action resembles MacIntyre’s notion of “intelligibility.” However, in contrast to MacIntyre, the intelligible actions of an agent’s life attain their narrative whole in Ricoeur’s theory, as we shall see, through the mediation of fictional narratives.

First comes meaningful structures, which signify “our competence for using in intelligible ways such terms as project and intention, motive and reason for action, circumstance, obstacle and occasion, agent and capacity to do something, interaction, adversary and helper, conflict and co-operation, amelioration and deterioration, success and failure, happiness and misfortune” (*MR*, 141). These terms, according to Ricoeur, constitutes the “conceptual network” that distinguishes the domain of action from the domain of physical movement. The notion of a “conceptual network” emphasizes the fact that “the very term ‘action,’ taken in the narrow sense of what someone does, gets its distinct meaning from its capacity for being used in conjunction with other terms of the whole network” (*TNI*, 55). Hence, all these terms mutually signify one another and mastering the whole conceptual network implies the ability to employ any of them in an appropriate way, that is to be capable of linking each term to every other term of the same set. This is what Ricoeur calls “practical understanding,” which he defines as “master[ing] the conceptual network as a whole, and each term as one member of the

set” (*TNI*, 55). It is in virtue of this practical understanding that one distinguishes the semantics of action from that of physical movement and event from psychophysical behaviour.

The second trait is the symbolic resources that make an action intelligible to an interpreter. This trait rests on Ricoeur’s basic assumption that human action is always articulated by signs, rules, and norms. Hence, before being configured by emplotment, human action is always already symbolically mediated. Symbolic mediation is defined by Ricoeur in the following way: “it is to distinguish, among symbols of a cultural nature, the ones that underlie action and that constitute its first signification, before autonomous symbolic wholes dependent upon speaking or writing become detached from the practical level” (*TNI*, 57). Symbolic mediation of action also signals the structured character of a symbolic system: rituals, beliefs, and institutions that make up the symbolic feature of a culture. It is only in virtue of mastering this system that one can appropriately articulate an action: “The same gesture of raising one’s arm, depending on the context, may be understood as a way of greeting someone, of hailing a taxi, or of voting. Before being submitted to interpretation, symbols are interpretants internally related to some action” (*TNI*, 58). In this sense symbols are rules for interpretation, and they provide a descriptive context for action.

The third feature of a pre-understanding of action, which mimetic activity at the level of *mimesis*<sup>2</sup> presupposes, concerns the temporal elements of action: “The understanding of action, in effect, is not limited to a familiarity with the conceptual network of action and with its symbolic mediations. It goes so far as to recognize in action temporal structures that call for narration” (*TNI*, 59). These temporal structures are best illuminated, for Ricoeur, by the Heideggerian concept of within-time-ness (*Innerzeitigkeit*). Through this concept, “temporality . . . crosses in going beyond the

simple succession of ‘nows’ that characterizes the vulgar representation of linear time” (*MR*, 142), and “narrative configurations and the most elaborated forms of temporality corresponding to them share the same foundation of within-time-ness” (*TNI*, 64).

As a result, the order, or in other words, the figuration of action corresponds to MacIntyre’s notion of intelligibility. One can render an action intelligible as long as one can grasp its semantic structure, its symbolic resources, and its temporality. From this pre-understanding of action, which is common to poets and readers, arises fiction. And it is at this point that we can reveal Ricoeur’s contribution to MacIntyre’s theory. In Ricoeur’s words, “under the rule of fiction the pre-understanding of the world of action withdraws to the rank of being a ‘repertory’ [repertoire], to speak as W. Iser does in his *The Act of Reading*” (*MR*, 142). Recall that, for Iser, the repertoire constitutes the familiar territory in fiction. However, for Iser, the familiar elements supplied by the repertoire are de-pragmatized while being embodied by fiction. In Ricoeur’s system, these elements are configured through emplotment. Through this configuration, a new world appears, the world of the text, which is handled by Ricoeur as the referential direction of the fictional text. I shall explain these points in more detail shortly. For now, it should suffice to say that although the configurational act introduces a break with the world of action at this stage of *mimesis*, “fiction would never be understandable if it did not configure what is already figured in human action” (*MR*, 143).

Now, it is time to focus on the configurational act that constitutes the second phase of the mimetic arc: that of *mimesis*<sup>2</sup>. We mentioned above that during *mimesis*<sup>1</sup>, we have the competence that Ricoeur calls practical understanding, namely situating actions in their semantic structure, symbolic resources, and temporal dimension. What then is the relation between our narrative understanding and this practical understanding? To understand the shift from practical understanding to narrative

understanding, we should first make recourse to a distinction in linguistics between paradigmatic and syntagmatic order. Ricoeur claims that “narrative is not limited to making use of our familiarity with the conceptual network of action. It adds to it discursive features that distinguish it from a simple sequence of action sentences. These features no longer belong to the conceptual network of the semantics of action. They are syntactic features, whose function is to engender the composing of modes of discourse worthy of being called narratives” (*TNI*, 56). Hence, the shift from *mimesis1* to *mimesis2* is a shift away from the paradigmatic order of action-sentences, which are characterized by a synchrony, to the syntagmatic order of narrative text, qualified by diachrony: “With regard to the paradigmatic order, all terms relative to action are synchronic, in the sense that the relations of intersignification that exist between ends, means, agents, circumstances, and the rest are perfectly reversible. The syntagmatic order of discourse, on the contrary, implies the irreducibly diachronic character of every narrated story” (*TNI*, 56). This is where the importance of emplotment is revealed: emplotment “understood broadly ... as the ordering of the events (and therefore as interconnecting the action sentences) into the total action constitutive of the narrated story, is the literary equivalent of the syntagmatic order that narrative introduces into the practical field” (*TNI*, 56). Accordingly, it is the configuring function of emplotment that supplies narrative with the diachrony that is fundamental to it. But how does it perform this function? In order to answer this question, I will now focus on the mediating function of emplotment, which is investigated by Ricoeur under three headings.

First, “emplotment *mediates* between scattered events or incidents . . . and the whole story” (*TDI*, 176). That is, emplotment draws an intelligible story from various events and incidents. To put it in another way, it makes these events or incidents into a story. In this sense, an incident is no longer just a single occurrence, but an event that

contributes to the wholeness of the narrative. A narrative, on the other hand, is more than a mere enumeration of events. It organizes these events into an intelligible whole so that one can talk about the “theme” of a story. This means that the narrative whole is more than the sum of the events it has put into order. In short, emplotment appears here as the operation of drawing a configuration out of a succession.

Second, emplotment “organizes together components that are as heterogeneous as unintended circumstances, discoveries, those who perform actions and those who suffer them, chance or planned encounters, interactions between actors ranging from conflict to collaboration, means that are well or poorly adjusted to ends, and finally unintended results” (*LN*, 21). In other words, emplotment mediates between discordant heterogeneous elements in the story and organizes them into a concordant whole. However, as we shall see, the wholeness achieved at the end of this progress is not a pure concordance, but a discordant concordance that defines the dynamic unity of contingent elements in a story.

Last, “emplotment mediates between the temporality proper to poetic composition” (*TDI*, 177). This temporality, according to Ricoeur, interweaves the episodic side of the story with the configurational act of narrative: “This act consists in ‘bringing together’ the incidents of the story, in creating a configuration from a succession” (*TDI*, 177). This trait gains significance in *Time and Narrative*, for it offers a solution to the enigma of the twofold structure of time both as what passes away and what endures. The narrative time that results from this configuration suggests a solution to this dichotomy by mediating between time as passage and time as duration: “What we try to pinpoint is the temporal identity of what is enduring in the midst of what is passing away” (*TDI*, 177).

By these mediational processes, the discordance of events in the world of praxis are transmitted into concordance. However, configuring the events in a concordant form does not mean that the discordant character of their appearance in the world are disregarded, wiped out, or abolished by emplotment. Rather, they are transfigured by emplotment into its own logic, which makes narrative a totality that at once includes discordance and concordance. This unique dimension of narrative configuration is formulated by Ricoeur with the notion of *discordant concordance*, invoking the Latin term *concordia discors*, which basically refers to the harmonious coexistence of conflicting elements: “The tragic model is not purely a model of concordance, but rather of *discordant concordance*” (TN1, 42; emphasis mine). The discordant concordance structure is constituted by emplotment by inverting the effect of contingency, which results from the discordant status of events in praxis, into the effect of necessity or probability. In Declan Sheerin’s words:

For Ricoeur, this universalization that springs forth from poetic composition is not an abolisher of discordance. On the contrary, discordance remains within what Ricoeur refers to as a model of ‘discordant concordance’. In other words, in composing a plot ‘the intelligible springs from the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary or probable from the episodic’ so that the art here is in making what is discordant appear concordant. (2009, 45)

The discordant incidents in a story can be found in the form of fearful and pitiable incidents suffered by the characters, unexpected surprises, etc. In other words, the discordance in the story reveals itself in the incidents that destruct the coherent flow of the story; to use Aristotle’s term, in the phenomenon of reversal (*peripeteia*). These incidents transform the plot from an initial situation to a terminal situation. However, this transformation is an ordered transformation that is regulated by emplotment. Emplotment, by means of configuration, mediates between these two states: that of the concordant structure of the initial situation and the discordance brought about by

reversals. By configuring these incidents into the story, emplotment attributes them a probability and necessity. The necessity attained by these incidents is defined by Ricoeur as a narrative necessity, which is different from physical necessity: “This necessity is a narrative necessity whose meaning effect comes from the configuring act as such; this narrative necessity transforms physical contingency, the other side of physical necessity, into narrative contingency, implied in narrative necessity” (*OA*, 142).

### **3. Life as Discordant Concordance**

At this point, we can return to the problem we posed at the beginning of this chapter: the problem of permanence in time and the claim that emplotment contributes to our attempt of understanding it as a continuity in virtue of its configurational function that transposes discordant incidents into a concordant whole. It is in virtue of this phenomenon of discordant concordance that contingencies in the self’s life can be transposed into an intelligible narrative and personal identity finds itself a path that does not disregard changes it undergoes in its temporality. Identity is no longer handled on the grounds of substantiality; rather it is formulated with a dynamic character that Ricoeur conceptualizes with the notion of “dynamic identity.” Hence narrative identity is a dynamic identity through which the contingencies in one’s life – such as reversals, unexpected circumstances, surprises, unintended results of actions – are configured into a concordance, into that of discordant concordance.

Although narrative identity, by means of emplotment, supports the self in its self-reflective effort by configuring the contingencies of the subject’s actions in life into a concordance, this function of emplotment does not give us a fully satisfactory solution

to the problem of selfhood in relation to the tension between *ipse* and *idem* identities. At this point, I want to return to the problem of selfhood and investigate, in the light of our discussion thus far, the mediating role of narrative identity in the dialectic relation between *ipse* and *idem*. Recall that for Ricoeur, “the genuine nature of narrative identity discloses itself . . . only in the dialectic of selfhood and sameness” (*OA*, 140). And this nature of narrative identity can be disclosed “by entering into the movement of a narrative which relates a character to a plot” (*OA*, 142, n.1). The problem is how can we reach this aim. We have seen that, drawing on Aristotle’s definition in the *Poetics*, Ricoeur formulates plot as “an integrating dynamism that draws a unified and complete story from a variety of incidents, in other words, that transforms this variety into a unified and complete story” (*TN2*, 8). What, then, is the relation of the character to the plot, formulated in this way? How is it configured in the narrative? Does emplotment have any organizational function when it comes to character? This problematic is not independent from another that Ricoeur underscores in *Time and Narrative*: the metamorphoses of the plot in the history of literature.

The term “fictional narrative” is used by Ricoeur as a notion that covers “everything the theory of literary genres puts under the rubrics of folktale, epic, tragedy, comedy, and the novel” (*TN2*, 3). However, these genres continually evolve, and appear in different forms; new types come up within them; what’s more, new genres spring up. Thinking about this broad and ever-evolving notion of fictional narrative that resists any kind of delimitation present us with a problem: can Ricoeur’s theory of *mimesis* comprehend all narrative forms, from ancient folktales to contemporary neuronovels? In *Time and Narrative* Ricoeur treats this problem extensively under the heading “The Metamorphoses of the Plot”. Living in 1960s France, where on the one hand structuralism dominated literary theory and criticism and on the other hand the *Nouveau*

*Roman* (new novel) rejected many of the expected paradigms of the genre to date, while Sartre brought the notion of the *anti-roman* (anti-novel) into literary discourse, it was inevitable that Ricoeur would problematize this issue.<sup>75</sup> In this context, the problem can be formulated as follows: the Aristotelian notions of *muthos* and *mimesis* were formed in an age when only tragedy, comedy, and epic were recognized as genres that were worthy of philosophical reflection. Are these Ancient concepts, which constitute the backbone of Ricoeur's poetics, capable of comprehending new literary types or genres?

Ricoeur's answer to this question is affirmative. In the second volume of *Time and Narrative*, he tests "the capacity of plot to be transformed beyond its initial sphere of application in Aristotle's poetics" (TN2, 8). In this sense, he takes the modern novel as the realm in which the pertinence of emplotment has been contested most fully. He takes three specific deviational moments in the history of the modern novel as revealing this challenge. First, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century English novel, we witness the extension of the social sphere in which the action unfolds. The great deeds and misdeeds of legendary and famous characters leave their places to the adventures of ordinary women and men. And to represent the ramified praxis of this new social fabric, the novel moves toward the episodic form. Second, with the Bildungsroman, what we see is a deepening of the character (especially the central character), and accordingly the psychological and social

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<sup>75</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet defines the "new novel" with the following words: "the term *New Novel* [does not] designate a school, nor even a specific and constituted group of writers working in the same direction; the expression is merely a convenient label applicable to all those seeking new forms for the novel, forms capable of expressing (or of creating) new relations between man and the world, to all those who have determined to invent the novel, in other words, to invent man. Such writers know that the systematic repetition of the forms of the past is not only absurd and futile, but that it can become harmful: by blinding us to our real situation in the world today, it keeps us ultimately, from constructing the world and man of tomorrow" (Robbe-Grillet 1965, 9). This quotation clearly shows that new novel signified an effort to force a paradigm change in the literary tradition. We saw in the previous chapter – while discussing Hans Robert Jauss' understanding of literary history – that the literary tradition is constituted by a dialectic of such changes. In this sense, Ricoeur's understanding of tradition is no different from that of Jauss. He defines tradition as a dialectic relationship between sedimentation and innovation. Hence, tradition does not signify a static storage of past dispositions, but a dynamic process that is characterised by sedimentation–innovation dialectics. I will not dwell on Ricoeur's understanding of tradition here. It should suffice to note that the notion of tradition, in Ricoeur's thought, is not an obstacle to the metamorphoses of literary forms. See (TN2, 14–28).

complexities that surround her. Last, with 20<sup>th</sup> century stream-of-consciousness novel, new themes enter the sphere of narrative, such as “the incompleteness of personality; the diversity of the levels of consciousness, the subconscious, and the unconscious, the string of unformulated desires, the inchoative and evanescent character of feelings” (TN2, 9–10). Hence, between these periods, what we observe is an evolution in the novel from the novel of action to the novel of thought through the novel of character. This line shows us a tendency in the modern novel towards deepening the character at the expense of the plot. Hence, the Aristotelian understanding of *mimesis* as the imitation of action (*mimesis praxeos*), which subordinates character to the plot, is challenged by the modern novel. The question is whether it is still possible to apply the Aristotelian notions of *mimesis* and emplotment to these narratives. Ricoeur claims that even in the stream-of-consciousness novel, where the notion of plot seems to be in trouble, we can talk about a formal principle of configuration and therefore about the concept of emplotment. In addition, these novels can still be comprehended under the Aristotelian definition of *mimesis* as the imitation of an action. However, we need to extend our understanding of action:

By “action” we have to understand more than the behaviour of the protagonists that produces visible changes in their situation or their fortune, what might be called their external appearance. Action, in this enlarged sense, also includes the moral transformation of characters, their growth and education, and their initiation into the complexity of moral and emotional existence. (TN2, 10)

As a result, the modern novel gives us an extended understanding of action. By virtue of this extended understanding, we can extend the concept of *mimesis* beyond action novels to the thought novel and the novel of character:

In his sense, the modern novel teaches us to extend the notion of an imitated or represented action to the point where we can say that a formal principle of composition governs the series of changes affecting beings similar to us – be they individual or collective, the bearers of a proper

name as in the nineteenth-century novel, or just designated by an initial (K) as in Kafka, or even, at the limit, unnameable as in Beckett. (TN2, 10)

The extension of the concept of action later enables Ricoeur to transpose the notion of emplotment from the actions to the characters of the narrative. In *Oneself as Another*, he says that “understood in narrative terms, identity can be called, by linguistic convention, the identity of *character*” (141). Through an investigation into the identity of narrative character in terms of emplotment, and then placing this identity back into the dialectic of ipse and idem, Ricoeur tries to explain the mediating function of narrative identity between *ipse* and *idem*: “narrative constructs the durable properties of a character, what one could call his narrative identity, by constructing the kind of dynamic identity found in the plot which creates the character’s identity. So, it is first of all in the plot that one looks for the mediation between permanence and change, before it can be carried over to the character” (NI, 195).

So, Ricoeur suggests that we carry over the dialectics of discordance and concordance of the plot, which he conceptualizes as discordant concordance, to the configuration of narrative character: “the identity of the character is comprehensible through the transfer to the character of the operation of emplotment . . . characters, we will say, are themselves plots” (OA, 143). In order to transfer the configurational function of emplotment to the character, Ricoeur extends the definition of the notion of narrative configuration – which was formulated as the art of composition that mediates between concordance and discordance in *Time and Narrative* – as a synthesizing process that configures all the heterogeneous elements of a narrative into a coherent form:

By this I am attempting to account for the diverse mediations performed by the plot: between the manifold of events and the temporal unity of the story recounted; between the disparate components of the action – intentions, causes, and chance occurrences – and the sequence of the story; and finally, between pure succession and the unity of the temporal

form, which, in extreme cases, can disrupt chronology to the point of abolishing it. (OA, 141)

It is to this extended understanding of narrative configuration that the Diltheyan notion of “connectedness”, or the MacIntyrean understanding of “the narrative unity of life”, should be compared. In the above formulation, the character appears as the exact corollary of the dialectic of concordance and discordance:

The dialectic consists in the fact that, following the line of concordance, the character draws his or her singularity from the unity of a life considered a temporal totality which is itself singular and distinguished from all others. Following the line of discordance, this temporal totality is threatened by the disruptive effect of the unforeseeable events that punctuate it (encounters, accidents, etc.). Because of the concordant-discordant synthesis, the contingency of the event contributes to the necessity, retroactive so to speak, of the history of a life, to which is equated the identity of the character. Thus, chance is transmuted into fate. And the identity of the character emplotted, so to speak, can be understood only in terms of this dialectic. (OA, 147)

Hence the discordant concordance model suggests a model by which to configure the contingencies of our lives into coherence. In this way, personal identity is disclosed as a dynamic identity that is not reducible to a substantiality. However, the contribution of narrative identity to personal identity is not limited to this configuring function. As mentioned above, it also contributes to our understanding of permanence in time by mediating between *ipse* and *idem* identities. We mentioned that personal identity becomes problematic when it confronts the question of permanence in time. In order to resolve this problem, we claimed, we need to understand the two modalities of identity that are in a dialectical relation with one another: that of *ipse* and *idem*. The dialectical relationship between these two modalities oscillates between two poles of personal identity: “[between] a lower limit, where permanence in time expresses the confusion of *idem* and *ipse*; and an upper limit, where the *ipse* poses the question of its identity without the aid and support of the *idem*” (OA, 124). We can talk about the

variety of possibilities between these two poles and discover various models of permanence in time in virtue of these possibilities. The mediating function of narrative identity between the poles of *idem* and *ipse* reveals itself primarily by submitting *imaginative variations* to this identity, through which varieties of personal identity are not only tolerated, but also engendered: “in this sense, literature proves to consist in a vast laboratory for thought experiments in which the resources of variation encompassed by narrative identity are put to the test of narration” (OA, 148). According to Ricoeur, these thought experiments expose the difference between *idem* and *ipse*, the meanings of which tend to merge with one another in daily life.

Fictional narrative presents a vast variation of relations between these two modalities. On the one hand, we have stories in which the character is identifiable and re-identifiable as the same. This identifiable hero is formed by the superimposition of selfhood upon sameness. Folk tales present us with various examples of this type of character. At the other pole the character of the story ceases to have a definite character. This pole reaches its limit case in novels that Ricoeur describes as fictions of the loss of identity, an example of which is presented by Robert Musil in *The Man without Qualities*. In these novels, the *ipse* is exposed by taking away the support of *idem*. Between these two poles, the classical novel explores the intermediary space of variations, where the identification of the same decreases without totally disappearing. In other words, in these novels, the support of *idem* over *ipse* decreases but does not disappear. Hence, narrative presents us with various models that help us to understand the dialectical relation between *idem* and *ipse*, which contributes to our effort to constitute our own personal identity as a narrative identity.

After a long detour through fictional narratives, we are once more face to face with the question of who: “Who am I?” But this time, we have a powerful tool in our

hands with which to answer the question: narration. By means of this narration we can give an account of our permanence in time in the face of the changes and reversals in our lives. The model of discordant concordance helps us to organize such contingencies in our lives. The ethical significance of this configuration reveals itself in the Platonic maxim that an unexamined life is not worth living. It is by virtue of narrative identity that we can recount our life and submit it to an ethical examination. This is, without doubt, a self-reflective account and confirms one of the old convictions of Ricoeur:

The self of self-knowledge is not the egotistical and narcissistic ego whose hypocrisy and naiveté the hermeneutics of suspicion have denounced, along with its aspects of an ideological super-structure and infantile and neurotic archaism. The self of self-knowledge is the fruit of an examined life, to recall Socrates' phrase in the *Apology*. And an examined life is, in large part, one purged, one clarified by the cathartic effects of the narratives, be they historical or fictional, conveyed by our culture. So self-constancy refers to a self instructed by the works of a culture that it has applied to itself. (*TN3*, 247)

As a result, fictional narratives offer us models of permanence in time by presenting a vast variation of the dialectical relation between *ipse* and *idem*. In this sense, to use Peter Kemp's words, Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity helps us to understand the importance of literary narratives with regard to the problem of selfhood in two ways: "(1) as foundation of temporal identity and in particular of the more or less coherent lifestory of everyone by which he or she understands himself or herself as agent and person; (2) as foundation of the ethical identity of a person, by offering narrative models of life that express intentions of the good life and give rise to ideas about liberation from evil and creation of happiness" (Kemp 2002, 33).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis is part of a larger project that aims at exploring the significance of literature for human self. The project can be extended to literary genres other than fictional narratives. This, however needs careful structural and phenomenological explorations in these genres to see how their peculiar strategies and tools affect the interaction between the work and the reader.

In addition, in this thesis I focused mainly on the written works. That is the literary discourses that have been fixed on the paper. As J. Hillis Miller observes, “Western literature belongs to the age of the printed book and of other print forms like newspapers, magazines, and periodicals generally” (2004,2). The printing technology and the developments in this field, without doubt, changed the way we interact with the narratives. But nowadays, we are facing a new medium that may change the form of our interaction with fictional narratives: that of electronic media. Especially the emergence of mobile technologies and the development of electronic reader devices, gives authors new tools for constructing their narratives. With this technology, they can embed visual and audial elements in their works. May be in the near future, the technology will give them devices for embedding olfactory elements as well. These developments may significantly change the way we interact with literature and lead us to once more think about and revise our structural, ontological and phenomenological claims about literary works and literary experience.

As I mentioned in the introductory part of this work, our understanding of literature is always subject to changes. And these changes are interrelated with the changes in the social sphere. In this sense, literature always escapes from our denotational efforts. It cannot be grasped fully. It adopts itself to new realities, and

sometimes it even brings about significant changes in our understanding of reality. Hence there is a correlation between the changes in social paradigms and literary paradigms.

Despite all these changes and instabilities. What remains same is the fact that we, as readers, are always in a deep interaction with these works. The form of this interaction may change over time. However, what remains constant is the involvement of the reader in the fiction and the importance of this involvement for the significance of literary works for her. What I tried to achieve in this thesis is an explanation of the ontological and structural conditions of this involvement along with a phenomenological and hermeneutical exploration of the act of reading. And I argued that focusing on the interaction between the work and reader saves us from falling into the trap of autonomism and ethicism controversy. Claiming ethical significance of literary works does not necessarily makes us anti-autonomists who disregards the artistic and aesthetic character of the work. Rather, we can reveal the peculiar significance of these works only by considering them as aesthetic works. Hence, what I suggested with the notion of reading act is a journey to the world of the literary work and this journey, without doubt, is an aesthetic one. And the ethical significance of literature springs through this aesthetic journey.

As I said, the act of reading is an aesthetic journey to the world of the work. And when I return from this journey, I bring a bit of that world with me, and this opens me new ways of looking at my own world and myself. Hence my own world and my self does not remain the same after such an experience. A new reality, or an aspect of reality that I have not been hitherto aware of arises. I ask questions that I have not asked before about myself and my world. This is where the reflexive and reflective significance of literature lies. I shape the work, and the work shapes my-self. It is through such an

attentive reading that the literary work of art as a *gebilde* plays a significant role in my self-understanding and self-construction. It is in this manner that I can announce my being in the world as a temporal and ethico-moral being. Temporal in the sense that my subjectivity is subject to changes. Ethico-moral in the sense that, despite these changes, I can announce my identity, my permeance in time, my being here as a responsible self. And it is only through this permeance that I can hear the scream of the other, “Where are you?” and reply her as a responsible self who is faithful to his word: “Here I am!” this reply, as Paul Ricoeur shows us is the paradigm of the self’s ethical constancy. I declare: “Despite the changing circumstances and the changes in my character, I am here as I promised.”

As I claimed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, our engagement with literary artworks brings about not only accretionary changes but also revolutionary changes. And they do this by re-shaping the world we live in and by refiguring our self-understanding. The reader first loses herself and then once more finds herself in front of the work. This thesis is a story of such reader. The reader which was dreamed by Marcel, the narrator-protagonist of Proust’s *Time Regained*:

But to return to myself. I was thinking more modestly about my book and it would not even be true to say that I was thinking of those who would read it as my readers. For, as I have already shown, they would not be my readers, but the readers of themselves, my book only being a sort of magnifying-glass like those offered by the optician of Combray to a purchaser. So that I should ask neither their praise nor their blame but only that they should tell me if it was right or not, whether the words they were reading within themselves were those I wrote (possible divergences in this respect might not always arise from my mistake but sometimes because the reader’s eyes would not be those to whom my book was suitable). (415)

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