

## Speculative Sketches

*Critical Theory, Exegesis, Interpretation*

Theories and criticisms of the arts, and have been flourishing for a long time. This will not, as Beckett might have said, unknowingly be either. What is clear is that literature needs interpretation. The “fabrications” literature is made only by way of cognitive frames of reference developed for such a purpose.<sup>1</sup> A kind of ideality exists between literature and writing (and, since this has indeed normally been taken for granted, the relationship between literature and writing is a relationship that, although theory and criticism may have been parasitic, their supposed mode of existence is not that of parasites of science, parasitic enterprises without any and to ideological commitments of diverse kinds and interests). The presumed link between literature and writing is a larger and broader link—between literature and writing and therefore between literature and method and therefore between literature and methodological modes of analyzing and understanding.

Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, held that the performance, constituted the essential mode of existence, however, what kind of theater Aristotle had in mind. It is also unclear what effect the different conceptions of art. Plato still played with the questions of writing, questions of relative authority and the academy and, to a minimal extent, even the university may have cultivated philosophy as a community of experience.<sup>2</sup> With Aristotle (as a teacher), however, philosophy seems dedicated to a hegemony of writing and reading.

conducted as a form of life, it is more from culture at large.

If Aristotle practiced an empirical method, with respect to art, on the very few he knew well. The great dramatists were known a number of egoistic actors, like those who made plays into vehicles of their own personal or missing dramatic performances, Aristotle was qualified to discuss architecture or music or the intertwining of music and classical drama. Plato, in the *Republic*, had laid down very precise laws and keys allowed in his state.

Nevertheless, Aristotle did not draw a sharp line between the fine and the useful "arts," nor did he see imitation or even representation, as we do, as an Art, whether fine or practical (politics, for example), instead supposed to step in when the creative force fails. It is, as S. H. Butcher put it, "a rivalry of art with nature, fulfilled purposes, a correction of her failures, and the dichotomization of "art" and "nature" which itself later on."<sup>4</sup>

We owe the normalization of that dichotomized parasitic relationship between life and art, as it would suggest, primarily to the eighteenth century commentary, and interpretation related to the dramatic reorganizations of cultural realms. The eighteenth century growths issuing forth spontaneously from the culture. In the eighteenth century and again in the nineteenth the development of social systems were influenced by an emphasis on the need for sociability, including the professionalization of aesthetic education, a "natural" ethics and aesthetics of performance in general. Thus, David Hume could say that "the arts must . . . be allowed to have a natural beauty, which is first, antecedent to all precept or education, and the esteem of uninstructed mankind, and engaged by those that sort resonate through the hermeneutic process of the German eighteenth century."<sup>6</sup> Put in modern terms, they only produce and reproduce themselves in specific domains and types of experience in which

erated by the ruling systemic self-referentiality (scientific, religious, etc.) are possible. As systems theory sometimes also tends to see a shrinkage of the system, the system itself shrinks back from classifying culture—in other words, it appears to be somehow embedded—as such. In an economic and commercial sense, of course, the electronic (and electronic entertainment) media. We can be led to believe that the experiences generated by it are entirely new, but the social backdrop.

Developments from the eighteenth century onwards have subsequently exercised an enormous retroactive influence on the distinction between social realities on the one hand and the distinction on the other.<sup>7</sup> Systems of aesthetics in the nineteenth century still acknowledged the distinction, but they do not take the appearance of the differentiation for granted, however—which in the eighteenth century was empirically self-evident—was to restrict the distinction. The split of aesthetics into specialized literary and non-literary aesthetics contributed heavily to a misleading homogenization of the aesthetic.

At the same time, the border between the literary and the non-literary has proven easy to cross and impossible to maintain. The border has been mostly in one direction. Secular, scientific, and hermeneutic (in a very general sense) hermeneutics have been members since the eighteenth century. And it is not difficult to believe in the imperialistic tendency of the literary languages in the nineteenth century. The literary language, Butor thinks, expanded in fact. It is not only look at paintings, but talks and writes about them. It is not only thing, then, seems surrounded by “a gigantic world of things that can be assimilated to “literature, but also to the non-literary. This is the situation in which literary studies are now suffering. The generalization of the literary language that, within the domains now reasonably defined, the literary genre can really enforce a different type of hermeneutic.

It is true that, as Wittgenstein had it, “words are pictures and pictures need language in order to be understood.” But for him, words remain naked, and pictures remain naked. “Among these, pictures (meanings) loom large.”<sup>9</sup> But the hegemony of highly specialized literary language has hidden the advance, in culture,

ages and other forms of performance. Trenched academic disciplines have had to acknowledge the cultural status of these practices.

Beginning in the eighteenth century, then, we have arrived at this state—how the text occludes the link between literature and the passionate, even physical involvement of the reader. Then, “popular” literature tried to pull the “high” literature tended to challenge it. The novel did not achieve a secure place within public cultural communication and performance. Of course, it invited private, silent reading. This is more significant for the way it addresses the command over public communicative and performative space.

The eighteenth-century novel may be seen in ways in which aesthetic as sociable, at least in the presence and a merely imaginative, interior company. The novel does not show up in the work for which, on the whole, his notions of poetry “great charm” of poetry consists in lived experience, which, even when they are “most disagreed upon,” cited by poetry, to convey a satisfaction that is not easily explained.<sup>10</sup> The novel does not offer a kind of experience. But rather than work to create self-experience within limited social groups, it addresses the atavistic disturbances in communication and performance to fuse social contexts.

For Hume, benevolence, though not a direct tendency from “a direct tendency or instinct” as in Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, however, where it is a direct tendency or instincts, benevolence, when it is not, verges on stupidity. Other things are good, but not on. Ian Watt plausibly portrayed Samuel Richardson as victims of the “urban neurosis” produced by the new communication and by vast social distance. The new communication (which is displaced by a direct, sociable interaction is conjured away by the text).

The novel thus *simulates* modes of cultural performance in which earlier “high” literature more or less directly. The fight of the novel

medium that combined, in an almost paradoxical way, with an apparent all-encompassing realism. The novel has perhaps never been completely naturalistic; it represents the conceptual, scholarly communication mode that excludes performance, yet deploys its powerful effects.

In its heyday, in the nineteenth century, the novel never, to a limited extent, the impoverishment of the communicative mode. With serial publication, it harkened back to a time when communication was still the eighteenth century, literary effects could be seen as rhetorical ones, as elements of a social psychology. However, the formation of new and specific cultural techniques, to "skillful" and "probable" forms of lyricism, literature's loss of status as public, as real, led to complementary demands for a new form that once the effort to fulfill those demands had failed (as in the latest with Henry James), the novel finally acquired its literary-aesthetic reputation. It may be even more so, a type of concentrated, intensive mode, a type of concentrated, intensive mode, that has been retroactively generalized into the present.

For us, it may have become self-evident, indeed, "literature as such," has been in fact, not at all follow, however, that these naturalistic fictions.<sup>14</sup> The resistance the novel met with, distinguished from the sometimes ferocious opposition of the melodrama, for instance, had been exposed to strong religious, Puritan resistance and within the literary culture of the aristocracy. Striking a balance between crude entertainment and "literary" communication, a place, or several places, within a broad cultural spectrum for which public visibility was essential.

The distinction between these public rituals, and the stage shows that maintaining a diverse audience may also be extremely difficult. It should not be treated as a transhistorical phenomenon. Elements of ritualistic elements in *Henry*

many other plays are highly sophisticated. Their *own* possibly ritualistic effect gauge. That such effects probably radiate help to explain why the later Stuart court changed back into court rituals.<sup>15</sup> This is a nineteenth-century classic of cultural history, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, which traces the public culture of festivities and spectacles as a mode of self-experience for a society that found a common ground between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, and education and erudition, according to Burckhardt. The visibility of a performative culture. One of the principles may have been Machiavelli, who, in his study, staged his reading of the sage's state. Thanks to this emphasis on the public, the writers did not achieve the visibility of renaissance hypertrophy and concurrently the melancholy that sail them.<sup>16</sup>

In short, the normalization of the "literary" should, contrary to our habits, be seen as a process where the exceptions allow for analogies or even

Although the serious English theater in the last two centuries, for example, has made it into a tradition, to vague dictates of continuity and some sense of time, a look into the monumental Elizabethan London stage from 1660 to 1800, to which the evidence suffices to raise doubts whether a "literary" tradition is warranted. And the situation of the theater in the last century, Shaw indicates a different set of constraints and engagements of human potentials.

The theater has thus formed part of a tradition of visibility that extends to and well beyond the stage. In dealing with a sacrificial ritual, a political act, the distinction between the representing individual and the represented is less important than the values imposed, and the values of "actors" and "audience" alike. It is true that we have elaborated reliable distinctions between the real and what is merely represented. Nobody would have been a mass in Notre Dame with the mystery of the Last Supper, however, to distinguish secular and religious

context, for the great traditional texts of China and Japan.<sup>17</sup>

For an anthropology of media, and for what follows, resisting the normalization of the field concentrating on a field misleadingly dominated by literary forms, one has to be on the lookout for more powerfully engaging forms assert themselves in literary ways. If there is no human essence, the historically encoded forms and illusions are gaged.