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Analytic Philosophy of Literature

Jukka Mikkonen

Introduction

The philosophical study of the intersections between philosophy and literature can be roughly divided into two fields, namely, philosophy *and* literature and philosophy *of* literature. Works falling under philosophy *and* literature examine philosophy as a genre of literature or the literary features of individual philosophical works (philosophy as literature) or the philosophical aspects of particular literary works (literature as philosophy). Philosophy *of* literature, in turn, consists of systematic exploration of general issues related to literature from the viewpoints of logic, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Rather than individual literary or philosophical works, philosophy of literature focuses on more global matters, such as the concept of fiction or the principles of literary interpretation.

There has been a special interest in literature in the analytic tradition in philosophy—on which this chapter focuses[1]. Analytic philosophers have been concerned with questions about language and topics such as meaning, truth, and reference. For this reason,

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[1] Of course, philosophers in continental traditions have written influentially about literature. Figures such as Heidegger, Ingarden, Adorno, Derrida, and Ricœur have thoroughly affected literary philosophical and theoretical thinking and humanities at large.

imaginative literature has been a rather obvious attraction for them, raising questions about existence and meaning. Whereas philosophy of literature—considered a subfield of aesthetics—studies literature as an art form, analytic philosophers working in the 'core' areas of philosophy (logic, ontology, epistemology, philosophy of language) have often merely illustrated their theories with examples drawn from fictional literature. For example, philosophers of language, such as Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell, have explored the reference of fictional names, whereas moral philosophers such as D. Z. Phillips have contested allegedly schematic ethical theories with literary examples that are intended to illuminate the complexity and particularity of moral situations.

Of course, the ideals of analytic philosophy also guide enquiries in analytic aesthetics. In his introduction to *Aesthetics and Language* (1954), an early work in analytic aesthetics, William Elton declared that the aim of the anthology was 'to diagnose and clarify some aesthetic confusions, which it holds to be mainly linguistic in origin' (Elton 1954, p. 1). Also today, analytic philosophy's emphasis on language and logic can be seen in the philosophy of literature in the high priority given to questions concerning meaning and truth in literature.

Philosophers have become rather sceptical of ever coming up with a definition of the analytic method. Nonetheless, certain characteristics of the approach have been proposed. These traits also differentiate analytic philosophy of literature from literary theory which explores much of the same topics but commonly draws from continental traditions of thought. According to Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen's (2004a, p. 2) formulation—which implies slight criticism of the continental approach—features of the analytic method are: the emphasis on rational argument, objectivity, and truth; an inclination to define terms and explicate theses; noticeable use of logic and conceptual analysis; the application of a 'quasi-scientific dialectical method' that proceeds from hypothesis to counter-example to modification; a disposition to focus on narrowly defined problems, typically within on-going debates; and a preference for literal prose and the avoidance of rhetorical or figurative language. Moreover, it is rather typical for analytic philosophers to consider scientific discourse as paradigmatic and advocate realism about science and, further, to think philosophical problems 'timeless, ahistorical, and solvable' rather than constructs of history and culture (ibid., p. 2; see Wolterstorff 2015 for an analytic historical approach to

literature). Similarly, Gregory Currie and his colleagues (2014, p. 5) think that typical for the analytic enterprise are the ideal of clear expression; problem-centering; a focus on detail in argument; a high sensitivity to distinctions; and an interest in conceptual analysis. While conceptual analysis has been central in analytic philosophy, Currie and his colleagues (ibid., p. 6) however argue that a large extent of work within analytic aesthetics aims rather at 'reconfiguration' than analysis.

In 1950, Arnold Isenberg defined analytic aesthetics as '*an analysis of the concepts and principles of criticism* and other aesthetic studies, such as the psychology of art' (Isenberg 1987, p. 128; emphasis in original). Likewise, Monroe C. Beardsley understood aesthetics as a philosophy of criticism, its aim being to clarify and refine critical terms by investigating the practice of criticism (Beardsley 1981/1958). Today, the scope of aesthetics is wider than the analysis of concepts or the study of art critical practices. Lamarque, for example, proposes that the proper object of a philosophical inquiry of literature is the *institution* of literature. In his broadly 'Wittgensteinian' view, an analytic philosopher of literature 'seek[s]to analyze the logical foundations of the "practice" of literature, rather as the philosopher of law examines neither particular legal systems nor the history of law but the grounds on which any such system depends[.]' (Lamarque 2009, p. 8). Here, an institution is to be understood in 'analytic' rather than in sociological terms: the philosopher of literature is not interested in actual social relations but the principles and convention that govern social roles (Lamarque 2009, p. 60). Moreover, Lamarque and Olsen emphasize that philosopy of literature ought to investigate *aesthetic* matters: the art of literature, the pleasures of literature, and literary values (Lamarque & Olsen 2004b).

On the other hand, many analytic philosophers are enthusiastic about natural sciences and maintain that the sciences are the most reliable source of knowledge about the world. Also in aesthetics there is a naturalist movement that follows closely achievements made in the psychology of art, for instance. In this camp, psychological study of perception and cognition is seen valuable for its potential to improve our understanding of art production and reception. Recently, some analytic aestheticians have explored how psychology and other empirical sciences could improve philosophical study of literature. Currie and his colleagues maintain that the sciences of the mind 'provide ... an important corrective to the native

biases built into traditional philosophical methodology' (Currie et al. 2014, p. 11). In their view, 'empirical work can force certain philosophical challenges upon us and thus enable us to see how theoretic accounts of, say, aesthetic preference or judgement have to be refined, what kind of phenomena may have to be addressed or, indeed, explained away' (Currie et al. 2014, p. 11).

Literature

Unsurprisingly, one of the key topics in the philosophy of literature has been the very concept of literature. In the *broad* sense, the word 'literature' is seen to denote any body of writing on a specified topic. Philosophers of literature have however been interested in a narrower, *artistic* sense of literature and literature as a subject for aesthetics. In the artistic conception, literary art has typically been associated with certain literary genres or artistic forms, such as novels, poems, and plays. Works within these genres are seen to possess, or seen presented as possessing, certain qualities that we value for producing a distinctive kind of pleasure. Many aestheticians consider literature an evaluative concept, dependent on judgments of the agents working within literary institution rather than the author's intention to produce literary art; after all, not all poems or novels count as literature in the aesthetic sense, no matter of their producers' aims. The idea of literature as aesthetically valuable texts also leaves out genre fiction, establishing a distinction between art and entertainment. But there is a third, aesthetically relevant notion of literature in the *extended* or *belles-lettrist* sense, which relates to writings in 'non-artistic' (and non-fictional) genres: works of history, biographies, memoirs, diaries, travel stories, and philosophical, theological and even scientific works may have literary value in the sense that they are finely written or skillfully composed (D. Davies 2007a, pp. 1–2; Lamarque 2009, pp. 29—32). From the above it can be seen that analytic philosophers have considered the distinction between *literature* and *fiction* important. A common view is that literature is about value, whereas fiction is about a mode of utterance and related response; further, not all works of fiction are literature just as not all works of literature are fictional.

In the past, many theorists have attempted to define literature with reference to a specific 'literary' use of language, understood in syntactic and semantical terms, such as 'complexity', 'ambiguity', 'semantic density', 'implicit meaning', deviation from 'ordinary' use of language, 'foregrounding', and the like. Nonetheless, non-literary texts may also be ambiguous or deviate from ordinary uses of language, and today's aestheticians are sceptical about definitions of literature based on the works' *intrinsic* qualities. Instead, the majority of philosophers think that literature is an 'open concept' (Weitz 1956) and that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for a work to qualify as a work of literature. Contemporary definitions of literature make reference to, for example, values determined by the cultural practice of literature or the work's relation to the tradition of art. For example, according to *historical* or *recursive* definitions, potential new literary works of art are considered against the existing tradition of literature, the tradition providing strategies for regarding and treating the new objects offered as literary art (see Carroll 1988, p. 149; see Levinson 2007, p. 74). An *institutional* definition, in turn, emphasizes the conventions and concepts which regulate actions and products in the practice of literature. In the institutional view, an author intends that her work is to be read adopting the *literary stance*, i.e. appreciating the work by seeking aesthetic value in it (Lamarque & Olsen 1994, p. 256). Finally, in a *disjunctive* definition a text is a work of literature if and only if it will satisfy at least one of certain conditions: it has to belong to a certain literary genre (e.g. novel, drama, poem) and its author has to have intended that it will possess aesthetic value and it has to be written with adequate technical skill; *or* it has to possess a significant amount of aesthetic or other relevant literary value; *or* it has to fall under an earlier concept of literature and be composed in the time the concept reigned; *or* it has to belong to the corpus of a great writer (see Stecker 1997).

In addition to the definition of literature, analytic philosopers have fascinated with the ontology of literary works, that is, their mode of existence. According to *textualists*, a literary work is a text or a text-*type*. Nelson Goodman, for one, claims that '[a] literary work ... is ... the text or script itself' (Goodman 1976, p. 209). For Goodman, the identity of a literary work 'is a matter pertaining solely to the syntax of a language—to the permissible configurations of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks' (Goodman & Elgin 1986, p. 570). *Contextualism*, in turn, holds that a work of literature is a text-type bound to its context of origin, or as Jerrold

Levinson puts it, a 'text poetically projected in a specific context anchored to a particular person, time, and place' (Levinson 1996, p. 197). The critics of textualism have pointed out that for many literary works, we lack the 'original text' or the 'notation' of the work—its manuscript—on which its identity ought to be grounded; instead, we have multiple versions of the text. Moreover, when a work's identity is tied to a text in a language, a work cannot survive translation, which seems counterintuitive. In turn, the opponents of contextualism have wondered what all belongs to the 'historical context' of a work. Which properties of the work's spatio-temporal context are essential and which merely accidental for its identity? How our new knowledge about a work's origins (e.g. the discovery of a historical work's real author) would affect its meaning?

Fiction

Matters such as the concept of fiction(ality), the status of fictional propositions and the reference of fictional names, and our mental stance toward works of imaginative literature, have greatly attracted analytic philosophers. In the theory of fiction, the lay intuition which contrasts fiction with reality and truth has also received philosophical support. Nelson Goodman (1984, p. 124), for instance, claims that '[a]ll fiction is literal, literary falsehood'. Today the consensus is however that fiction cannot be defined semantically as a text that lacks reference and truth. This is because fictions may accordingly refer to real people, real events, and real places, whereas a non-fiction, such as a history book, may fail in its references without becoming a fiction. Moreover, semantic definitions have been criticized for not being able to distinguish between deceptional pretence (lies) and collaborative imaginings (fictions). The majority of philosophers of literature have hence turned their attention from semantic issues to pragmatic matters and approached fictionality in terms of a *mode of utterance* and a related *author-intended response* in the audience, such as pretence, imagining, or make-believe. The consensus view maintains that fiction is communication and that we can indicate whether a work is fiction without assessing it for its truth.

Fiction-making has often been associated with 'pretence' (see e.g. Ryle 1933; Lewis 1978). In particular, J. L. Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts inspired a massive amount of theories of fiction which saw 'fiction-making', the production of works of fiction, as a pretence or imitation of speech acts. For example, in John Searle's (1975) influential theory, the author of a fiction is pretending to be the narrator (first person narratives) or pretending to perform illocutionary acts (third person narratives). Searle's theory was extensively disputed and developed in the past decades. Much of the debate has centered on the notion of *pretence.*

It has been argued that pretending is neither sufficient nor necessary for producing fiction. Many philosophers and literary theorists also resist the idea that fiction-making would be 'parasitic' upon some 'ordinary' use of language, as Austin and Searle claimed, for such a negative definition fails to account for what the author is doing by her pretence. During the past decades, many nuanced models were proposed on how authors of fiction could perform genuine illocutionary acts, such as assertions, via their 'pretended' illocutionary acts, as in satires, allegories, and the like.

Kendall Walton developed the idea that our engagement with fictional works is about adopting a 'make-believe' attitude to the works' content. Walton saw fiction as a social affair and argued that fictions are representations 'whose function is to serve as props in games of make-believe' (Walton 1990, p. 72). According to Gregory Currie (1990), Walton's theory does not however distinguish between works that *are* fiction and works that *are merely treated as* fiction (Currie 1990, pp. 35–41). Currie, drawing on H. P. Grice's theory of meaning, argued that the author's 'fictive intention' is necessary for works of fiction. In producing fiction, Currie maintains, the author intends that the reader will make-believe the content of the work (at least partly) as a result of recognizing the author's intention (Currie 1990, p. 31). Both Walton and Currie have later revised and developed their theories of fiction. Walton (2015) has remarked that a prescription to imagine is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for fictionality, whereas Currie has extended his view by appeals to 'secondary imaginings'—not only imagining the content of the work (propositions) but the experience of the character (perceptions) (Currie 1995)—and the perceptual and emotional intensity of imagining (Currie 2014). This kind of painstaking, long-standing work on a single topic represents well the analytic enterprise.

Gricean-based 'fictive utterance theories' have been paradigmatic since Currie's (1990) work. However, recently the idea that fiction and non-fiction invite different responses or attitudes (make-believe vs. belief) in the reader has been contested. Stacie Friend, for one, argues that fiction and non-fiction cannot be separated with reference to imagination or make-believe. For her, vivid non-fiction narratives invite readers to imagine their content just like fictions (Friend 2008, p. 151; Friend 2012, p. 183). Likewise, Derek Matravers has extensively argued that fictional narratives are not imagined because of their fictionality but because of their narrativity. Matravers claims that the experience of reading a narrative is irrelevant for our labelling the narrative fiction or non-fictional. For him, the possibility of action separates narratives: in our engagement with 'representations' action is not possible, for the thing being represented is out of reach, whereas with 'confrontations' action is possible. Furthermore, confrontations do not require the imagination, as the object in question is in one's immediate environment; thin representations as those used in conveying information do neither require imagination but are simply comprehended, whereas thick representations such as novels invite imaginative engagement (Matravers 2014, pp. 50, 57, 78, 113). While offering interesting ideas about narrativity and imagining, the new approaches that contest the fiction/non-fiction distinction have been criticized, for instance, for a superficial talk of 'imagination' that confuses visual imagination prompted by (parts of) historical nonfictions with the various (possibly distinctive) sorts of imagination prompted by fictions.

Analytic philosophers' interest in meaning and reference in fiction extends to topics, such as the ontological status of fictional characters and 'truth in fiction' (or 'fictional truth'). For example, there has been an extensive debate on how fictional characters, such as Hamlet exist (see → 'Fiction and Talking about Fiction: Semantical and Metaphysical Issues' in this volume). These sorts of disputes unite many aestheticians and philosophers working on the core areas of analytic philosophy. Nonetheless, it has been proposed that while such ontological considerations are valuable as such, the consequences which the ontological theories have for art ought to be discussed more in aesthetics. How the ontological theories could contribute to our understanding of creativity or trans-work character identity or the notion of a 'fictional world', for instance (Lamarque 2013, p. 779)?

The study of 'truth in fiction' or 'fictional truth' has also been exhaustive in aesthetics. How can we determine the state of affairs in the fictional world, that is, what is true in the world of the work? How are fictional truths established and how are we to infer them? In particular, which principles should guide our inferences about things that are not explicitly stated in the work or in cases where the narrator is unreliable? Do Huck and Jim have a homosexual relationship in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)? Are the ghosts seen by the governess hallucinations or (fictionally) real in Henry James's 'The Turn of the Screw' (1898)?

Work in this area, pioneered by David Lewis (1978), has analyzed fictional worlds in terms of *possible worlds*. The analysis has applied two principles: the Reality Principle and the Mutual Belief Principle. According to the 'Reality Principle', the reader should assume that the fictional world is as like the real world as is compatible with what is stated in the work. She should make the inferences about the world of the work accordingly and fill in missing details with fact, such as her knowledge of physics, psychology, and the like. The 'Mutual Belief Principle', in turn, maintains that intepretation ought to comply with the beliefs that were common in the author's society. As expected, both principles have been found problematic (see Lewis 1978; Lewis 1983; Walton 1990; Currie 1990). The Reality Principle seems to allow anachronistic and incongruous interpretations, whereas the Mutual Belief Principle sets the reader an extremely difficult task of reconstructing the mutual beliefs of a community that may be historically and culturally very far from her. More generally, theories of fictional truth have been criticized for their realist assumptions—that there are 'fictional facts' simply to be discovered—and their neglect for literary interpretation (Lamarque 1990, p. 335). Moreover, it has been suggested that the closer we look at fictional narratives, dramatic settings and nuanced literary descriptions by which the 'world' of the work is created, the more uncertain many fictional 'facts' start to look (Lamarque 2016).

A vastly popular topic in the philosophy of fiction has been the nature of the emotions we experience in engaging with fictional works. The matter has been addresssed as the 'paradox of fiction'. The alleged paradox, introduced by Colin Radford (1975), contains three inconsistent premises, which are: i) that in order for readers to be moved by people and

situations they must believe that these people and situations really exist or existed; ii) that such 'existence beliefs' are lacking in our engagement with fictions; and iii) that fictions sometimes move us. From these premises Radfords conclused that our emotional response to fictional characters is 'irrational, incoherent, and inconsistent' (Radford 1975, p. 75).

Kendall Walton's (1978) solution to the problem is to consider our emotional responses to fictions as 'quasi-emotions' or 'make-believe emotions' rather than emotions proper. Lamarque (1981) and Noël Carroll (1990), in turn, argue that emotions arise from *thoughts* and do not require existence beliefs about their objects. Recently, the nature of the 'paradox' has been questioned and there have been attempts to understand philosophers' great interest in the problem. There has also been a shift of focus from logical to psychological aspects in the debate and a move from the question of rationality of emotions to a broader discussion on the nature of emotions and moods (Stock 2006).

A newer topic in the philosophy of fiction has been the 'puzzle of imaginative resistance', which refers to our assumed limitations—inability or unwillingness—to imagine fictional propositions that counter with our moral beliefs, compared to the easiness for us to imagine physically or logically impossible scenarios in science fiction or fantasy. Kendall Walton, who introduced the problem, argues that it is difficult for us to imagine 'morally repugnant ideas', such as infanticide, *justified*, even in fiction (Walton 1994). Tamar Szabó Gendler (2000) thinks that the difficulty lies in that morally repugnant propositions take a *general form*, and in imagining them true of the fictional world we ought to accept (or entertain) them true of the actual world too. As with the so-called paradox of fiction, the problem of imaginative resistance has also been itself problematized. Many have questioned the problem as an artificial, philosophical problem which reflects poorly our engagement with literary works proper and which ignores the role of narration and viewpoint in fiction, or remarked that it contains a variety of puzzles (Tanner 1995; Mothersill 2003; Weatherson 2004; Stock 2005; Walton 2006).

Narrative

Ontological, epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic issues related to narratives, everyday and literary, have also interested analytic aestheticians, albeit questions about narrative and narrativity have not been as central as matters related to literature/literariness and fiction/fictionality. In the analytic philosophy of narrative, epistemic concerns have again been central. The epistemic nature and value of narrative explanations have received much attention (see e.g. Velleman 2003; Livingston 2009). Nevertheless, many analytic aestheticians have been sceptic to the grandiose views about the role of narrative in human cognition expressed by psychologists, cognitive scientists, and the like, in recent decades. Indeed, there has been much philosophical doubt about different sorts of ethical and epistemological views that are grounded on the concept of narrative. After all, the value of a narrative might not be due to its narrativity but factors that are not distinctive to narratives (Livingston 2009, p. 28).

Analytic philosophers have also been suspicious towards narrative theorizing that conflates narrative with fiction, especially the line of thought associated with the historian Hayden White's influential view that all stories are fictions, as stories are not found but told (White 2000, p. 9). Analytic philosophers' typical—while not universal—metaphysical realistic assumptions manifest themselves in the suspicion of the idea that all narration would automatically lead to the distortion of fact, or the more radical idea that a narrative would create the events it represents (see e.g. Lamarque & Olsen 1994, pp. 224, 235–242).

As one might expect, analytic philosophers have been very interested in the (minimal) definition of narrative. Analytic philosophical enquiries into the nature of narrative have mainly centered on plot-based definitions of narrative. A typical analytic concern is the requirement of causality for narrative. Is a causal element necessary or only typical of narrative? Could there be other coherence-making features of a narrative than causality? Noël Carroll (2001) thinks that narratives possess a large number of 'narrative connections'. Likewise, for Gregory Currie (2010), narratives possess narrativity, and being a narrative is a matter of degree. Another focal analytic interest has been the structural dimension of narratives, such as the ontological status of narrative agents (see e.g. Currie 2010). Nonetheless, analytic philosophers have also investigated the experiential dimensions of narrative, such as narrative closure as a phenomenologial feeling of finality (Velleman 2003).

For Carroll (2007, p. 15), narrative closure is expected from narratives that are created for 'aesthetic consumption'. 'Erotetic' narratives raise questions and provide answers, and hence they sustain narrative closure; we feel frustration, if a narrative does not answer to questions that were implicitly promised in it.

In broader analytic theorizing on narrative, narrative identity has been an important topic. Many philosophers have defended a narrative conception of personhood which holds that narrative unity is a condition for personal identity (or moral self). Narrative constitution of personal identity has been studied by philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre (1984), Charles Taylor (1989), Mary Schechtman (1996, 2004), Daniel Hutto (2007) and Anthony Rudd (2012). On the other hand, Galen Strawson's (2004, 2015) provocative attack on 'narrativism' and his view about 'Diachronic' and 'Episodic' (or 'Narrative' and 'non-Narrative') personalities has received much support. In this discussion, analogues with literary narratives have been common. Daniel Dennett (1988) and Jonathan Glover (1988), for instance, have made parallels between self-narration and literary artistry. Many have seen literary characters as models for self-narration and a source of enhanced self-understanding (Goodman 1978, p. 103; Danto 1981, p. 172). Others, focusing on the genre dimensions of narratives, have highlighted the differences between real-life narratives we tell about ourselves and others and literary narratives, such as novels and short stories. Peter Goldie argues that we might acquire 'fictionalizing tendencies' from artistic narratives, thus becoming inclined to plot out our lives, to see agency where it is none, to desire for closure, and to think of ourselves and our lives in terms of character and genre (Goldie 2012, pp. 441–443). In a similar vein, Peter Lamarque claims that literary narratives and real-life narratives are qualitatively different, and if we model our lives on artistic narratives, we might distort our understanding of ourselves: we might seek symbolic meaning in events (where there is none) or let the 'genre' of our life-narrative dictate action (Lamarque 2014, ix & p. 30).

Author, Meaning, and Intention

It is no surprise that analytic philosophers working in aesthetics have been keen to examine 'meaning' in the arts. What is meaning in literature and what sorts of meanings do literary artworks, such as *Hamlet*, convey? Again, logical and epistemological questions have been dominant. Historically, much of the debate has centered on the logical status of interpretative claims and the inconsistency of critical interpretations. Can interpretations of artworks, or interpretative claims about the works, be true or false or right or wrong, or should they rather be treated as plausible or implausible, apt or inapt, or probable or improbable? Can there be mutually incompatible interpretations which are equally valid? Further, could all the admissible interpretations—even if they were mutually exclusive at their face value—be combined in one super-interpretation? Is the aptness or plausibility of an interpretation relative to a critical theory? Are interpretations about the same work or do they construct different objects? (Krausz ed. 2002.) Could a single text embody several works, such as an artwork and a work of philosophy, and could these works allow different criteria for interpretation (Gracia 2001, pp. 52–56)?

Whereas William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley's article 'The Intentional Fallacy' (1987/1946)— which argued for the autonomy of a literary work and denied the relevance of authorial intentions in interpretation—set an anti-intentionalist doctrine in literary studies for decades, intentionalist approaches have been prominent in philosophical aesthetics. 'Actual intentionalists' see literary works as communication comparable to everyday conversations or utterances in everyday discourse (Carroll 1992; Carroll 1993; Carroll 2000/2001; Carroll 2002a; Carroll 2011; Carroll 2013; Iseminger 1996; Livingston 2005; Stecker 1993; Stecker 1997; Stecker 2003; Stecker 2006). Actual intentionalists think that an interpretation ought to seek the intentions of the real, historical author. The 'absolute' form of actual intentionalism, which has few defenders today, identified the meaning of a literary work with the meaning which the real author had in mind in composing the work. The view is seen to lead to unintelligible 'Humpty-Dumptyism', in which anything could mean anything, if the author simply wishes so. Also, our access to (deceased) authors' intentions has been questioned in criticism of absolute intentionalism.

Much philosophical work has however been done in analyzing the concept of intention, and pro-intention philosophers have proposed a move from a 'mentalistic' or private conception

of intention to a Wittgenstein-inspired view, in which intentions are public as they manifest themselves in observable behaviour. As with the paradigmatic theories of fiction, many intentionalist theories of interpretation appeal to H. P. Grice's (1989) theory of 'non-natural meaning', in which a speaker, in order to mean something, must not only intend to induce a belief in the audience but also intend her utterance to be recognized as so intended. In Gricean-based views, (successfully realized) authorial intentions are to be found from the text. For today's 'moderate' actual intentionalists, a correct interpretation of a literary work is the meaning of the text that is compatible with the actual author's intention, that is, our best information about that intention. Actual intentionalists think that information about the author's intention is to be found from the historical context of the work, the beliefs of the contemporary audience, the author's biography, her other works, and the like (Carroll 2000/2001; Carroll 2002a).

Actual intentionalism has been criticized, among other issues, for its focus on linguistic meaning, identifying literary artworks with ordinary communication, and for grounding a theory of art interpretation on everyday discursive concepts, such as speech acts, utterances, or conversations. The critics claim that the meaning of a conversational remark is very different from that of a novel or a play—an extensive work often employing various speakers and viewpoints and developing complex narrative, dramatic and especially thematic structures. Likewise, it is open to dispute whether literary works have a 'meaning', if meaning is understood as something that can be paraphrased and stated. For the critics, understanding the verbal meaning of sentences in a novel, or the larger 'textual meaning' of the work, is just the first step to art interpretation, which focuses on examining and analyzing the work's themes and appreciating its aesthetic value.

For 'hypothetical intentionalists', the meaning of a literary work is our best assumption of either the actual author's or a 'hypothetical' or 'postulated' author's intended meaning, based on the beliefs and expectations of the author's 'intended or 'ideal' audience (see Tolhurst 1979; Nehamas 1981; Levinson 1992; Levinson 1996; Levinson 2006; Levinson 2010; Currie 2005). For a hypothetical intentionalist, a literary work is an utterance produced publicly by an author in a certain historical and cultural context. According to Jerrold Levinson, a literary work's central meaning is an 'utterance meaning' that is 'given by the

best hypothesis, from the position of an appropriately informed, sympathetic, and discriminating reader, of authorial intent to convey such and such to an audience through the text in question'. Rather than actual authorial intention, hypothetical intentionalism maintains that determinative of literary meaning is our best hypothesis about authorial intent. (Levinson 2010, p. 139.) Further, hypothetical intentionalists do not limit the work's meaning to the intention of its maker, even where that meaning would seem clear, but rather allow all the options that can be reasonable attributed to the author on epistemic and aesthetic grounds (Levinson 2010, p. 150).

For many, the difference between actual intentionalism and hypothetical intentionalism is ultimately epistemological, as actual intentionalism allows, whereas hypothetical intentionalism disallows, appeals to author's *private* declarations of intention, such as those she has expressed in her diaries and notes. In this rendering, hypothetical intentionalism has been criticized for its central notion of 'publicly available evidence'. It has been argued that the boundary between public information of the author's intention (legitimate evidence) and private information (illegitimate evidence) is unstable: it is difficult to draw a line between private and public, and private may become public in the course of time.

The 'anti-intentionalist' or 'value-maximization' camp has called into question philosophers' focus on textual meaning and the author's semantic intention and suggested a turn toward the aesthetic appreciation of literary works. Value-maximization theorists argue that literature is a matter of aesthetic pleasure and not about communication of information (S. Davies 1982; S. Davies 1991; S. Davies 2007; Goldman 1990; Goldman 1991; Goldman 2013). In the value-maximization view, art interpretations aim at full appreciation of the aesthetic values in a work, and critics' task is to maximize that value for their audiences. The criticism to value maximization theories concerns the question whether we can ascribe such values, or postulate such properties, to artworks that were not, or could not have been, intended by their authors. A racist or sexist work might be aesthetically more satisfying when interpreted as ironic, but such an interpretation is seen to be insincere to the work's nature, the opponents claim.

Debate on intention has been focal in analytic philosophy of art. At times philosophers, immersed in their theories of meaning and artificial examples of naturally occuring texts without authors, might have shed little light on aesthetic appreciation and the art of literature. However, important work has been made in analyzing the concept of intention, differentiating between extra- and intratextual conceptions of intention, and in classifying kinds of intentions, such as those related to the category of the work, those related to its textual meaning, and those related to what the author wanted to do by means of her work.

Cognition

The question of the 'cognitive value' of literature, that is, literary works' ability to provide their readers knowledge and insight, is one of the oldest issues in philosophical aesthetics. Once again, given analytic philosophers' focus on truth and meaning and the communicative function of language, it is understandable that they have paid special attention to the epistemic dimension of art.

It is a common belief among analytic philosophers that literary works may have *cognitive* value: they may offer insights, broaden their readers' understanding, provide new viewpoints, or inspire moral philosophical thought, for instance. The question is rather whether art's contribution to cognition can be rendered in terms of *truth* and *knowledge* and whether cognitive values are literary values and integral to the appreciation of the works. In the debate, 'cognitivists' maintain that literary works may offeir their readers knowledge and insight of significant kind. 'Anticognitivists', in turn, argue that literary works' epistemic merits are trivial, reader-relative, or irrelevant to the work's literary function. In anticognitivists' typical autonomist conception of art, the author's intention to communicate truths is considered a 'supplementary' aim or an 'extra-literary' pursuit.

Since the 1930s and 1940s, analytic philosophers have scrutinzed the nature of 'artistic truths', the ways by which literary works might convey truth and knowledge, and how readers might learn from literature. Traditionally, philosophers' gold-standard has been *propositional knowledge*. Literature is expected to provide factual, such as historical or

geographical information—or more often universal psychological or philosophical truths. It has been suggested that a fictional work might contains its author's genuine assertions among the fictional discourse, as in narrator's gnomic sentences or explicit generalizations (see e.g. Searle 1975, p. 332, Currie 1990, pp. 48–49) or that fictional utterances and complete works could *imply* assertions or *suggest* something (Hospers 1960, p. 39; Searle 1975, p. 332; Walton 1990, pp. 71 & 79; Carroll 1992, p. 108). Literary works' contributions to cognition have also been modelled in terms of *hypotheses* (Kivy 1997a; Kivy 1997b) and *thought-experiments* (Davenport 1983; Carroll 2002b; D. Davies 2007b; Elgin 2007; Elgin 2014; Swirski 2007).

The criticism to propositional cognitivism highlights the difficulty of recognizing the author's alleged assertions in a fictional work and emphasizes problems related to the reader's application of a fictional setting to the actual world. The 'points' which literary works make are said to be inarticulate or reader-dependent, and when rendered enough general for everyone to accept, 'literary truths' have been found extremely banal, as they are not supported with *evidence* and *arguments* (Stolnitz 1992, pp. 196–197). Phrases such as Shakespeare's 'All the world's a stage' (uttered by Jacques in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*) are claimed to be so general and vague, that their truth-value is nearly impossible to ascertain (Lamarque 2009, p. 234). The notions of 'implication' and 'suggestion' have also been found troublesome, the former being too technical and the latter lacking a substantial theory. In turn, views based on the idea of a scientific hypothesis or thought-experiment have been criticized in that a scientific, philosophical or other truth-seeking response to an artwork is inappropriate from an aesthetic point of view, or by pointing to differences between thought-experiments and fictions (see e.g. Huemer 2019). Finally, the critics think that art's cognitive merits, if any, ought not to be rendered in terms of propositional knowledge, for that would subordinate art to disciplines and practices that characteristically seek to discover and communicate new information. Rather, cognitivism ought to seek art's *distinctive* cognitive value.

Inspired by Gilbert Ryle's (1949) distinction between knowledge-that and knowledge-how, philosophers have attempted to defend literature's epistemic value in terms of *non-propositional knowledge*. Literary works are seen to offer their readers phenomenal or

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experiential knowledge: *knowledge of what it is like to be* a certain kind of character or in a certain situation (Walsh 1969; Novitz 1987; Nussbaum 1990). Literature not only introduces to the reader persons and events she would not regularly meet but also provides her with an 'experience that is deeper, sharper, and more precise than much of what takes place in life' (Nussbaum 1990, p. 48). In non-propositional theories, learning from literature often happens via empathic identification with the reader and a character (Nussbaum 1990; Feagin 1996; Robinson 2005).

The criticism of non-propositional cognitivism holds that our imaginative experiences with fictions do not afford knowledge proper. A literary work may give us impressive, moving, emotional experiences and allow us to take on unfamiliar viewpoints and attitudes, but it is questionable whether the fictional scenarios—often based on the artist's imagination—provide us real experiential knowledge or genuine insight. Fictions may also give their readers false confidence. Furthermore, psychological study suggests that our speculations as to how we would act in a given imaginary situation often differ from how we will actually respond and act in such a situation. Also, the moral value of empathy—the basing of moral judgment on empathy—has recently been questioned (Currie 2016a). And again, a relevant question is how, and in which respects, the dramatic setting of the work is to be applied to the actual world.

Of recent, a growing number of philosophers have sought to explain the epistemic significance of literature not in the works' communicating new knowledge but 'deepening', 'clarifying' or 'enhancing' readers' existing knowledge (Elgin 1993; Carroll 1998; Graham 2000/1997). It is typical of these 'neocognitivist' theories that they prefer *understanding* to *knowledge*. According to them, works of literature do not provide that much new (propositional) knowledge but rather in some way 'enrich' the knowledge which the audience already possesses. For example, David Novitz thinks that fictions may make their readers aware of *conceptual relationships* they had not thought before. In Novitz's example, reading Jane Austen's *Emma* may make us to notice how pride breeds self-deception (Novitz 1987, p. 137). Likewise, Noël Carroll maintains that in interpreting fictional narratives, readers 'mobilize' their cognitive repertoire and have an opportunity to explore and exercise

their knowledge, concepts, and emotions which ideally leads to a (epistemically beneficial) reorganization of readers' conceptual relationships (Carroll 1998, pp. 140, 142).

Neocognitivists also empasize literary works' ability to train their readers' *cognitive skills*. Nelson Goodman and Catherine Elgin maintain that understanding is a cognitive faculty that includes 'the collection of abilities to inquire and invent, discriminate and discover, connect and clarify, order and organize, adopt, test, reject' (Goodman & Elgin 1988, p. 161). In their view, works of literature may increase readers' *acuity* or sensitivity (Goodman 1978, pp. 21–22) or *challenge* their dogmatic ways of thinking (Elgin 1993; Elgin 2002).

The criticism of neocognitivism maintains that the approach moves too far from truth and knowledge as traditionally understood and that (metaphoric) appeals to non-standard forms of knowledge have little explanatory value. Another worry—from the autonomist point of view—is that neocognitivism moves from literary interpretation to the work's 'extra-literary', subjective use, making the cognitive payoff of an artwork relative to individual readers and their interests. Cognitivism is expected to show how 'cognitive' values are literary values and integral to literary interpretation (Gibson 2008). Conversely, many philosophers in the anticognitivist camp believe that artworks may have significant ethical, philosophical, or psychological value through their themes, but that value ought not to be approached in terms of truth and knowledge (see e.g. Lamarque & Olsen 1994; Posner 1997).

Questions related to methodology and justificiation are new issues in the age-old debate. It has been noted that cognitivists provide little evidence for their claims regarding the effects of literature, nor properly explore the possibility that fictions could have harmful effects for readers (Currie 2014b; Currie 2016b). The rise of empirical studies of literary reception has inspired philosophers to ponder how learning from literature could be studied and what would count as a proof for the claims with respect to literature's educational function.

Contemporary issues

The devout, piecemeal effort and focus on detail characteristic for the analytic enterprise sometimes makes analytic study look slow-moving (or even stagnated). Analytic philosophers, in turn, firmly believe that the devil is in the detail. The view of philosophical problems as universal and ahistorical manifests itself in the returning to classical problems. Problems, such as the the reference of fictional names, stay and occassionaly become popular—a central interest for the philosophical community—again. But there is change, too. Specialization also occurs in analytic aesthetics when it comes to narrowly defined problems and the study of (more or less) marginal genres, such as the ontology of serial fictions or the possibility of empty fiction (fiction which contains no fictionally true propositions). Also, the young generation of analytic aestheticians show interest in contemporary cultural phenomena, such as interactive fiction.

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