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SCHOOL LEAVERS' ATTITUDES TO, EVALUATION OF AND PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

Abstract. The article discusses the results of a survey conducted among 12-grade secondary students aiming to establish the ratio between the languages studied at school and out of school as well students' evaluation of Bulgarian and foreign language education with regard to their efficiency. The survey also sought to find out whether students are able to identify any relationships regarding the way the different languages are taught and learned and if they consider it necessary to continue their language education after graduating from secondary school.

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DO WE NEED THEORY IN LITERARY EDUCATION?

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Abstract. The paper dwells on some anti-theoretical attitudes in literary education and suggests an alternative that could, hopefully, make use of literary theory in the classroom without undermining the immediacy of the students' contact with the literary text. The pedagogical strategy suggested aims at avoiding any facile attachment of the literary medium to extra-literary discourses, which does not preclude the possibility of aesthetic pleasure.

Keywords: literature, education theory, *disattachment*, pedagogy

In a recent interview for the Atlantic Monthly, American writer Francine Prose, after answering questions about the pitfalls of contemporary Creative Writing graduate programs offered by colleges in the US, was asked what made her quit the career of an academic and pursue a career as a writer instead. She comes up with the following confession:

Graduate school was driving me quite literally insane. I wanted a different approach to the work. I just felt that the passion I felt as a reader was not being reflected by my professors and by my future colleagues. I don't know what they were doing, but it wasn't what I was doing. And I don't know how they were reading, but it wasn't the way I was reading. When I look at the list of papers presented at an MLA convention, I still get that same feeling of what are these people talking about? It was extremely alienating, because in theory we were all talking about the same (as they would say) „texts“, but I really, literally could not understand. I had never thought of myself as the stupidest person in the room, but suddenly that's what I had become. Nothing anyone was saying made any particular sense to me.¹⁾

The disenchanting attitude to literary theory and its potential to produce a meaningful and worthwhile discourse on literature in the academic classroom is quite common among both teachers and students of literature. The reasons for this aversion are manifold. However, it appears that the opponents of theory in literary education share the conviction that theoretical approaches to the literary work de-humanize it by depriving those who study literature, as Francine Prose puts it, of „the passion [we feel] as readers“. In other words, the living language of literature ends up suppressed, submerged and swallowed by an alienating, abstract conceptual dis-

course. And this leaves no room for passion. On this account, passion goes hand in hand with spontaneity and immediacy.

I find this a rather simplistic scheme, since there are so many instances of passionless spontaneity and so many examples of passionate theorizing in the business of reading literature. So there is no guaranteeing that by dissociating themselves from theory, teachers of literature will not throw the baby with the bathwater. In what follows I will attempt to outline some of the manifestations of what I call the anti-theoretical posture and then I will suggest an alternative approach, which, hopefully, can combine theory with the passion for reading in the academic classroom.

The anti-theoretical/professional attitude to the teaching of literature appears in a number of guises. The common denominator between them is the *reductive attachment* of various constructs to the academic discourse about literature. In fact, there seem to be at least four widespread strategies that reduce our pedagogical meta-language to a flat, one-dimensional medium.

The first one draws upon the constructive convictions of the classical philologist. The practitioner of this approach would pursue the formation of fairly distinct intellectual grids in which each period, each literary movement and each author would enjoy a comfortable conceptual status. Under such an approach the classroom is a space the student inhabits with the intention of passing an examination that will leave him/her more knowledgeable about the history of literature and ideas. In other words, this cumulative ideology is based on the good old Arnoldian belief that knowledge/culture is what constitutes the difference between anarchy and civilization. The scheme presupposes the teacher's authoritative position as the source of ultimate insights. This does not necessarily suggest one-way lecturing. The modern adept of the classical approach might well simulate the subversion of his/her authority by organizing various forms of discussions and staging presentations. It is not so much the form of communication that matters. What really makes a difference is what lies at the core of a discussion or a presentation. If the discussion confines itself to eliciting axiological responses from students or to making them state what they „think“ about moral issues raised by the text, and the presentation is an Internet-based encyclopaedia-like exposition of the author's biography and work, we are still in the untroubled waters of classical philology.

The second pedagogical stance I shall term the *reality show* approach. In some cases it draws upon the assumption that our students are an inferior species as far as literature is concerned, and therefore we must make allowances for their ignorance as they cannot possibly make their way to the peak we have already scaled. In fact, it seems all too natural that when you are addressing an innocent audience, you will not want to corrupt them with your own sophistication, and thus de-motivate them. Instead, you will want to somehow reduce the distance between a text based on a number of conventions and the „natural“ world of its recipient. In fact, the older the

text the thicker the film of controversial critical opinion about it. The shortcut to real life situations, it might be hoped, will enable the student to immediately and viscerally experience the text rather than approaching, and never quite reaching its meaning, through the cerebral avenue. There is definitely something Wordsworthian, and anti-Coleridgean²⁾, about this posture as long as it assumes that literature can adequately reflect „the elementary passions of our hearts“ and is easily reducible to the everyday world of a democratic community. In other words, as long as the subject of literature is *life* in the most general sense of the word, the discussion of literature should also focus on *life*. The assumption is also that all theories are an unnecessary and unnatural appendix, which has no instrumental role at all. Its only conceivable role, in fact, is to jumble up readers' thoughts by resorting to an intentionally obscure vocabulary. Once the arcane speculations of literary theorists are left behind, we can happily coincide both with the medium and the message. The crisis of the *reality show* comes with the realization that by staging it we create in our students the false and facile impression that there is a self-evident continuity between the crudely empirical world and the creative world of the imagination. This does not necessarily mean that we, like the Romantics (did actually the Romantics unanimously and unequivocally believe in that?), believe that literature by definition transcends the concrete circumstances of historical situations. It quite simply means that it is the teacher's job to prove that the killing of the bird in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is hardly reducible to any act of violence in the real world.

Moreover, as Stanley Fish has shown in his book *Doing Things Naturally*, the real-life stance undermines the *raison d'être* of the literary academic profession. In a chapter entitled *Profession Despise Thyself: Fear and Self-Loathing in Literary Studies*, Fish takes issue with two newspaper reviewers who share a mistrust towards the academic obfuscation of the literary art. Their claim, as Fish presents it, amounts to the statement that the business of literature is to study „life itself“; therefore English departments had better take up the same business instead of spawning a specialized jargon that makes sense exclusively in their narrow, and narrowing, circles. Quite perspicaciously, Fish associates this claim with a direct threat to *academia*:

[This argument] has a larger target than its rhetoric suggests, for once you have identified the proper object of literary study with something so general as the study of life itself, it is hard to see why there would be any need for an army of specialists whose business it was to tell you about literature. Isn't everyone, after all, an expert in life itself, fully competent to read and understand the work of those who have taken life as their subject?³⁾

In an anecdotal vein, the profession of the literary academic seems as endangered as the one of the football commentator. It is quite conceivable that anti-professional attacks might come from quarters beyond the walls of *academia*.

But when the approach is adopted within the literary profession, this appears surprisingly suicidal.

The survival of the teaching profession aside, the mere attachment of literature to real life situations and responses is counter-productive. It may pursue the analogical pleasure of recognition. It can also foster the snug feeling that there is a world out there that can easily be reduced to finite opinions. But it is responsible for the illusion that some kind of worthwhile knowledge has been conveyed. I believe that the academic teaching of literature should pursue a more ambitious agenda than the easily gained knowledge based on analogy and self-identification. In such a classroom, students are provided with the sense that they „think“, but instead, „thinking“ features as a substitute for reading.

The pathos of the above paragraph is so radical that one might be led to assume that I exclude altogether the possibility of drawing upon my students' experience as a source of motivation. This is not the case. My point is that whenever we resort to real life illustrations we must do so reflectively and selectively, i.e. always bearing in mind that our primary business in a literature class is to *read critically* literary texts. In my view, such critical reading is unthinkable without the awareness that there is no self-evident correlation between *life* and the literary medium.

It is also our business, I believe, to use our professionalism to confront inexperienced readers with the multifarious, and often conflicting, interpretations that the rhetoric of a literary text can inform. In other words, we should not shun from making our students aware of the fundamental insolubility of the hermeneutic circle. The opposite would involve an attempt to create the impression that literary texts convey a readily available unequivocal message, which directly appeals to our sensibilities. This variety of the anti-theoretical stance often draws upon the intentional fallacy. A relatively recent example of this nexus is the pathos of a book appositely entitled *Reclaiming Literature: A Teacher's Dilemma*. The author William A. Glasser opens his introduction with the following lines:

Teachers of literature face an intensifying need that arises every time they stand before a class, trying to explain away what appears to be a major flaw or confusion in a classic literary work. When we turn for help to hosts of literary critics who have written about the work, we too often discover a wilderness of incongruous and conflicting readings. Attempting to find our way through the wilderness, we are confronted by entrenched camps of literary theorists defending increasingly abstruse positions, including the ultimate claim that there is no valid reading for any literary work.⁴⁾

The paragraph explicitly refers to the „confusion in a classic literary work“, which reveals the premises of the author's scenario. The presupposition is that a literary work that has deserved the label „classic“ will certainly be full of high-brow intricacies. In an attempt to make their way through this maze, teachers will turn a hopeful eye to

professional critics. The latter are invested with the responsibility to beacon teachers to some firmer ground to which students will be later dragged along. The frustration of this hope is powerfully conveyed through the „wilderness“ metaphor. Instead of ending up in a garden of insights, the teacher/reader comes upon „a wilderness of conflicting and incongruous readings“. Yet there is worse to come. At a loss, teachers will reach for the ultimate authority of literary theorists, only to be ultimately frustrated by the inscrutability of their positions and the endless dissemination of possible readings. The way out of this impasse is provided by the awareness that there is a unifying consciousness behind the labyrinth of messages. After an impassioned attack against Roland Barthes' undermining of the authorial figure and a litany of complaints against “the ultimate doomsayers” („the more recent camp of deconstructionists“⁵), Glasser comes up with his injunction to the teacher of literature:

We must be able to illustrate to our students that, although a multitude of educated readers have responded to each novel with an uncontrolled diversity of readings, there are guideposts pointing the way through that critical confusion, along a pathway cleared by our most accomplished authors practicing the fiction writer's craft.⁶

The author appears here in the guise of a savior from confusion who „clears a pathway“ out of the waters that have been muddied by erudite critics and academics. I consider this reliance on a monolithic authorial figure a variety of the *reality show* approach. In fact, the author is called upon to revive the possibility of unequivocal reference, and thus „reclaim literature“ for readers who would rather not leave the comfort of their real life situations where we share the illusion that we safely refer to things and effortlessly understand each other.

No less pernicious, however, is the stance that could be described as *finitely* theoretical. *Finitely* is meant to represent here the use of a limited theoretical jargon, which will greatly depend on the teacher's theoretical affiliations. This epistemology reduces the literary to a number of surrogate vocabularies. Literature will thus be mechanically attached to a variety of discourses, ranging, in a post-Foucauldian vein, from psychiatry to litigation. The fear that if we acknowledge some kind of identity inherent to literature, we will fall prey to Romanticism's transcendental ideology, has compelled many professional literary scholars to speak about anything else but literature. Geoffrey Hartman has suggested that we could benefit from „bring[ing] poetry, or literature generally, into the fold of cultural discourse“. For Hartman, „with its famous „concreteness“ or illustrative energy, [literature] is to provide counterexamples to disembodied thought and unearned abstraction“.⁷ It appears to me that our job as teachers of literature is, rather, to add the quality of complexity to the discourse of cultural studies and historicism.

I have quoted Stanley Fish on anti-professionalism in support of my claim that literary study should not be confined to the study of life. However, I will take

issue with him on the point that anti-professionalism is the obvious opposite of specialization. Fish argues that „specialization is the business of the academy, and if an argument against specialization is pursued far enough, it will shrink the area in which the academy can do business to almost nothing“.⁸⁾ Actually, one of the already mentioned newspaper editors, whose attitude Fish targets, comes up with what I believe is a fitting example of „specialization run amok“ – the ambition to become „the world’s greatest expert on Texas lesbian-feminist poets“.⁹⁾ There is nothing wrong with such narrow specialization. One should even say that the diligence of the pursuit is impressive and praiseworthy. Problems might arise if the specialized vocabulary and attitudes one will have acquired are mechanically transferred to the classroom, and are applied to texts from *Piers Plowman* to *Prufrock*. In other words, the anti-professional/theoretical posture can easily come unannounced into the academy. It will just use the back door under the guise of allegiance to a particular theoretical model. Such a finite stance might well leave a teacher’s audience with the impression that critical theory is a predictable and arid field planted with scant crops. In this way we will end up with the majority of students yearning for the „flowery tale“¹⁰⁾ that art could tell, which has been denied them. The rest of them will reproduce the model and come up with easily recognizable responses drawing upon a set vocabulary.

I find that the reductive tendency in the academic teaching of literature calls for a pedagogical strategy that will at least partly overcome the limitations of the above mentioned stances. Let me refer to it as *disattachment*. *Disattachment* will largely overlap with the hermeneutic scheme of *recursive looping*, suggested by Wolfgang Iser in his recent book *The Range of Interpretation*. Borrowing the term from the founder of cybernetics, Norbert Wiener, Iser applies it to hermeneutic situations which transcend the scope of Schleiermacher’s traditional hermeneutic circle. We are bound to resort to *recursive looping* when translatability is challenged by the complexity of the subject matter to be translated. This more particularly concerns situations where there is no material text, or any material sequence of signs, to provide the ground for translation. According to Iser, one such situation occurs when the interpreting consciousness is faced with entropy or the random multiplication of contingencies. In this context, conventional interpretative techniques no longer work:

Controlling entropy and coming to grips with contingencies are not comparable to what a text-oriented hermeneutics had to face, even when the text was taken as a metaphor, as in psychoanalysis. Between entropy as a measure of disorder and the attempt to control it, there is a yawning gulf, which can hardly be regarded as parallel to the various gaps bridged by the different versions of the hermeneutic circle.¹¹⁾

This determines the need for a recursive movement which is defined as a continual interplay between input and output. The information fed into the system is

constantly corrected/modified by the feedback that comes at the other end. The new input assimilates these corrections and then feeds a new amount of modified information, which is in turn modified. In other words, the recursive mode of interpretation is so designed as to allow the interpreter's consciousness to weave its way back and forth between the foreign and the familiar. The familiar is used to help us appropriate the foreign but full appropriation never occurs in the economy of recursion. The familiar does not engulf the foreign:

Recursion, then, as a mode of achieving control, allows us to bring something foreign, something beyond our ken, within a range we are familiar with. Recursion, however, prevents the familiar from superimposing itself onto the foreign. Instead, the familiar is subjected to correction and change when something that is originally beyond its scope is fed back into it.¹²⁾

So recursion allows for an intelligible yet multidimensional discourse in situations where entropy has to be controlled. In fact, the mechanisms of recursion seem quite applicable to the academic environment because the situation that the teacher of literature is faced with is very much one of entropy. There are so many potential motivations and ideologies in a literature classroom that the question of controlling disintegration is of primary significance. The text to be interpreted does provide the situation with some kind of centre but, especially in the case of teaching pre-20th century literature, the subject is so foreign to its recipients that one could ask oneself, after Fish, if at the beginning there is a text in the classroom at all. The success of reading in such a context depends not so much on the teacher's and the students' interpretative perspicacity as it does on the efficient negotiation and re-negotiation of the premises and the objectives of every particular activity. From this perspective, one of the crucial questions that need to be constantly addressed concerns what it means to **understand** a literary text in a literature classroom and how the process of understanding is to be managed.

It is exactly the management of understanding that the pedagogical strategy of *disattachment* is about. *Disattachment* constitutes itself in the space between the prefix and the root word. The root word implies the effort to amalgamate a multitude of attitudes to a particular text and its context into an approximation of some common ground. The practitioner of *disattachment* will first reach for a unifying plane before confronting her audience with the complexities of the literary medium. As I have already mentioned, this kind of original amalgamation is vulnerable to charges of illusion-mongering but its motivating potential is not to be underestimated. The most effective tool at this stage seems an oral reading with special emphasis on the purely aesthetic dimension of the text. Preceding hierarchies of meaning, such an act of attachment is designed to „introduce“ students to something „before their ken“. This peculiar type of non-knowledge, which

Romantics like Coleridge and Keats promoted as the most likely telos of poetry, might be seen as closely associated with the Kantian concept of *sensus communis*. According to Kant, this universal sense enables us to compare our own judgment of aesthetic phenomena to the judgment of others. In other words, *sensus communis* – a sense which provides the foundation for aesthetic judgment – is conceived by Kant as a possibility. As Simon Malpas has pointed out, it is not actual in the sense in which natural phenomena are actual: „in Kantian philosophy, ideas are distinct from empirical concepts: they provide the conditions of possibility and the categories for conceptual understanding and yet remain beyond the limits of any empirical experience“⁽¹³⁾ In his *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Terry Eagleton has demonstrated that the idea of *sensus communis* is „ideology raised to the second power“ as it „adumbrates a utopian community of subjects, united in the very deep structure of their being“⁽¹⁴⁾ For Malpas, however, aesthetic non-knowledge does not necessarily breed ideology; instead, it „disrupts systematic thought, highlighting its discontinuities“. More importantly, Malpas insists that „Kant’s rhetoric suggests... a potential universality, a potential community, that is never fully or empirically realised in the aesthetic response“.⁽¹⁵⁾ This is very much the way I conceive of the moment of aesthetic attachment in the literature class: it is meant to only promise a community that will never be realised.

Ideological or not, it is my firm conviction that the illusory moment of aesthetic harmony could work effectively as a preparation for the careful reading of a literary text in the classroom. Under the scheme of recursive looping, this would be the moment of familiar, or familiarizing, input. At this point, the teacher will have established her vicarious authority by riding on the high tide of delight generated by the affective impact of the text. It is at this “strong” juncture that the aesthetic value of literature could be affirmed. The momentum of the moment could also be used to assert a certain hierarchy of taste.

However, before long the teacher will be faced with the necessity to fill with some substance the ensuing silence filled with insubstantial pleasure. The moment will have come to correct the output with a new input. One option is to take up the job of interpretation straight away. It appears to me, however, that an abrupt transition to the murky conceptual waters of interpretation could leave too wide a gap and thus prove to be counter-productive.

Hence the avenue of attachment will be followed further by the teacher’s resorting to „factual“ information concerning the political, historical, cultural and intellectual context of the age when the text was produced. This pedagogical direction will also involve the elucidation of a number of key terms that are to be used in the interpretation of the text. The contradictory ramifications of a particular term will be deliberately suppressed at this point. This is also the time to attach some authoritative critical opinions, to the literary text. In other words, the attachment part of the technique presupposes a deliberate and controlled manipulation. It is designed

to create the impression that understanding a literary text is not „beyond our ken“. The illusory facility of this moment could be reinforced by the teacher's referring to a selection of real life situations that could serve as an illustration of some points to be made about the text.

So *disattachment* is meant to be conceptually different from Derrida's *différance*. The latter radically discards the possibility of fostering the illusion that origin exists. For Derrida, questions like „who differs“ and „what differs“ are to be avoided because if we chose to answer these questions „we would have to admit that *différance* is derived, super-venient, controlled, and ordered from the starting point of being-present“.¹⁶⁾ By contrast, *disattachment* originates in a deliberate play with the illusion of origin, part of which has to do with the assumption that in the situation of teaching literature, aesthetic and factual preparation is needed before the dissemination of meanings is unleashed.

Disattachment perceives itself as a slide, rather than a plunge, into the choppy seas of interpretation. By easy stages, the classroom situation will shift towards the moment of critical reading, i.e. the time when the prefix in *disattachment* will come to the fore. Even then, however, the shuttling movement between the undermining and the constitution of meaning will not be abandoned. The prefix will not supplant the root word altogether.

The dynamic part, the prefix, intends to initiate a mode of abstention from durably attaching the teacher's discourse about literature to flatly originary or teleological structures. It also involves abstention from the formation of a durable triangle between teacher, student and text.

Applying the *dis-* part of the technique to the literary text, the teacher will thoughtfully generate multifaceted rather than unequivocal statements. She will rely upon a distanced attitude to easy, obvious and unearned identifications with finite reality constructs, homogeneous subjects and fossilized terminologies. She will embrace theory in that the dynamic prefix in *disattachment* aims to raise awareness of our inability to read. This negative awareness will not only apply to the students only. In fact, the professional/theoretical attitude to teaching will take its momentum from the teacher's admission of being taught while teaching.

So the practitioner of the *disattachment* approach will focus the recipient's attention on a variety of gaps that emerge in the process of reading. For example, she will lay emphasis on the highly conventional and contradictory character of the authorial figure instead of representing the author as a homogeneous consciousness. She will not content herself with a descriptive taxonomy of the tropes in a literary text. Nor will she content herself with attaching a clear grammatical meaning to each trope. Instead, she will make an effort to bring to the fore the complex economy of undermined meanings, based on the tensions and frictions between different tropes. If we use Coleridge's coinage from *Biographia Literaria*, the teacher will seek to „desynonymize“ words in the literary text rather than suggest neat correlations between words, meanings and things. She will also question the

popular belief that if we cannot use a meta-vocabulary as simple and vivid as the one we find in the work itself, we had better not speak about it at all. In other words, she will question the spontaneous, primary nature of the work and the derivative, secondary nature of interpretation. Another urge to be controlled is the conviction typical of non-professional readers that there is a uniquely original response to a literary work, which they often regard as the only valid response. At this stage, when the practitioner of the *disattachment* approach might choose to broach the subject of history and politics, she will not content herself with the mere factual introduction of the historical context. Instead, she will at least partially introduce her students to the multifaceted history of the relation between literature and history. Such a strategy will involve an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of both autonomous and historicist readings.¹⁷⁾

The teacher's stance of authority will also undergo a change. At the stage of attachment the teacher will establish her unchallenged authority on the basis of aesthetic involvement and the „dependable“ communication of factual knowledge. When it comes to the hermeneutic enterprise, however, the teacher will have to resort to a number of meta-gestures so as to abandon the position of ultimate authority. At this point she is to disclose her own uncertainty about the conclusive meaning of a particular metaphor, line, paragraph or text. This does not mean relinquishing the posture of authority altogether and delegating all the power to the voice(s) of the students. It means, rather, initiating an economy under which the teacher will have to undermine and then reconstruct her authority in the form of non-authority. The management of understanding will thus be carefully directed so as to raise students' awareness that uncertainty is not necessarily equivalent to lack of knowledge.

To conclude, let me answer the question of the title: yes, I believe we need theory in the teaching of literature. It saves us from facile coincidences and illusory identifications. It teaches our students to actively assess rather than passively appropriate or associate themselves with readily made structures of knowledge and experience. Actually, this might well prove one of the few justifications for the existence of literature as an academic subject in a knowledge-intensive, problem-solving world. What is more, theory in the classroom should not necessarily be about skepticism, nihilism or relativism. It can be interwoven with the aesthetic experience of immediacy and unity that literature does provide. Theory can fit in with the passion for reading. And it can be fun.

NOTES

1. The Atlantic Online, July 18th, 2006, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200607u/francine-prose/3>.
2. As is well known, one of Coleridge's objections to the poetics expounded in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* is associated with his misgivings about the applicability of "the simple language spoken by men" to poetry.

3. Stanley Eugene Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1989), 200.
4. William A. Glasser, *Reclaiming Literature: A Teacher's Dilemma* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), XI.
5. Ibid., 6.
6. Ibid., 9.
7. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 61.
8. Stanley Eugene Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1989), 199.
9. Ibid., 199.
10. An image from John Keats's poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.
11. Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation*, (New York : Columbia University Press, 2000), 86.
12. Ibid., 114.
13. Simon Malpas, *In What Sense Communis? Kantian Aesthetics and Romantic Ideology*, Romanticism On the Net, 17 February 2000, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/17kant.html>.
14. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 96-97. Quoted in Malpas, *In What Sense Communis? Kantian Aesthetics and Romantic Ideology*.
15. Malpas, *ibid.*
16. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 145.
17. In other words, what I call the theoretical/professional approach presupposes a *thick* description of literary artifacts. The term is used by Clifford Geertz in opposition to *thin* description. The former involves making sense of the implicit aspects of signs and the way they interrelate with other signs, whereas the latter contents itself with the manifest aspect of signs. See Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press , 2000), 97-99.

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