

BOOK REVIEWS

Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012, pp. 424.

Enchantment is the effect of charisma and “charismatic” is a subcategory of the sublime, says the author Jaeger. He picks up the notion of charisma from the sociologist Max Weber: “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader”. (p. 11)

Charisma implies a kind of force and authority, but its orbit varies so as to cover love, passionate devotion, elevation, transformation and, even destructive obsession. In the context of art and aesthetics the author uses the notion of charisma mostly in the sense of elevation that the works of art exercise on the audience. He complains that this term has not yet found an entry in any encyclopaedia of aesthetics, poetics or literary theory such as published by the University presses of Oxford, Princeton and Johns Hopkins. Therefore he undertakes to expound a theory of charisma as a subcategory of the sublime that developed as early as the Roman critic Longinus whose *Peri Hypsous* focuses on the height (*Hypsous*) of literary expressions that elevates the reader’s mind to a super mundane state. Longinus’s *hypsous* translated as the “sublime” stands on an aesthetic footing different from the persuasive rhetorical expressions treated by two other Roman critics Cicero and Quintilian. Elevation and persuasion are quite two different functions of verbal expressions.

Further, Longinus and Kant offer two different versions of the sublime. Kant’s notion corroborates the Aristotelian notion of magnitude, that, which goes beyond human comprehension. But Longinus pleads for elevation to a supernatural height. Aristotle’s *mimesis* of reality or nature is a criterion of artworks that are either more than real or less than real: “Mimetic artists... can represent people better than our normal level, worse than it, or much the same.” But Longinus always pleads for transnational level that heightens human experience. Contextually, Jaeger refers to the classic work of Erich Auerbach – *Mimesis* that treats representational character of Western literature.

“This book wrote mimesis and representation of reality into the history of Western literature. By tying art to the real, Auerbach at the same time created, or opened the door to a large project of investigating Western art and literature in their sublime, charismatic, hyper-real aspects” (p. 2). Whereas Auerbach confines himself to literature, Jaeger extends the scope of his investigation beyond literature – to painting, sculpture and film. The dominance of *mimesis* or representation (of reality) has been due to a strong rationalist anchoring. Jaeger thus distinguishes between Aristotle (inter alia between the Roman Aristotelians such as Horace, Plutarch and all others, and on the other hand, Longinus in their differences between realistic and

hyper-realistic approaches to art. He focuses on the congruence of experience and representation. His approach is phenomenological – the experience of the audience that distinguishes between art and non-art: the difference between life and art ceases or even is weakened when the beholder perceives charisma either in a real object or in its representation, i.e., art. Thus Jaeger proposes an affective theory of art – “The response to the work of art is central to my study.” (p. 4) It is this emotional response of the audience that is completely ignored by Auerbach whose rationalistic/ realistic approach was confined to the analysis and literary style of the works that he studied in *Mimesis*. If Auerbach correlated the Roman rhetorics with Aristotelian *mimesis*, Jaeger, following the line of Longinus, opposes the persuasive function of literary discourse pleading for a transformative function, not of literary discourse only, but of all function, not of literary discourse only, but of all the genres of artworks: “The effect of the sublime is not to persuade the audience, but rather to transport them out of themselves.” (p. 4)

Then what qualities constitute charisma in art? In answer Jaeger appeals to three theorists W.J.T. Mitchell (“What Do Pictures *Really* Want?”, 1996), David Freedberg (*On the Power of Images*, 1989) and Alfred Gell (*Art and Agency*, 1998). Gell’s concept of “agency” in art and Mitchell’s idea of dynamism in pictorial art connote some qualities/ effects of living beings – will, desire, ability to generate certain kinds of action in the viewer, and this approach is commodious to the idea of charisma in art that sharpens the focus on a particular human quality or potential. But both Mitchell and Gell point to this quality objectively whereas Jaeger argues for an interaction of art and its audience necessary for the charismatic effect that Jaeger calls “enchantment”. Obviously Jaeger appeals to the postmodernist perspective of inter-subjectivity – a text is meaningful only in its interaction with the response of its audience, otherwise a text does not carry any meaning in itself: “This book is perhaps best characterized as a study of response to art above all its educating and transforming effects.” (p. 5), although the way art produces charismatic effects is a question that resists any univocal answer.

Along with charisma Jaeger brings in another critical term – “aura” that is closely associated with charisma and there is no hesitation in a reader to accept the validity of this association. He cites an example from Joseph Roch’s *It* (2007), where the author fuses the medium with the artwork, somewhat in Merleau-Paunty’s fashion, an accretion of the stage-actor’s body and the role it plays – the “effigy” and the “ghost”. Quite commonly, the popularity, or say charisma of a cinematic actor/ actress depends upon, or grows out of a harmonious blend of the person’s physical appearance and the character of which he plays the role. This relationship is organic in nature, because one is meaningless without the other. This accretion is the very secret of the success and popularity, otherwise called “aura” of the whole phenomenon called theatrical performance.

Theatrical performance as the model artwork can be extended to all other arts explaining the accretion of the medium and the artwork as a whole. Once this stand is

accepted, it is easy to trace the genesis of charismatic art in the very sense and style of decorating human body during the primitive age. The living human body was the very medium of representation. Tattooing, masking and painting the human body has been important media of religious rituals intended for various purposes such as representation of the gods, spirits, eradication of malefic spiritual effects, protection from diseases, and of course with an aesthetic intention for beautification of the body such as so as to appear *charismatic* for attracting others. The author here invokes several sources, particularly anthropologists such as Bronnaislaw Malinowski, Claude Levi-Strauss, Karl Steinew and literary critics like Roland Barthes for illustrating and justifying his arguments that art originated in (re) presenting charisma in several media. In its journey from religious performance to secular art from sacred to profane it is this charisma, a specific glamour that enchants the audience that has dominated the artworks in all their genres. Duchamp's *Fountain* is even no exception. In the pages that follow the author's introductory remarks attempting at defining the term charisma and its cognate "aura" the author has treated the epic of Homer, tragedy of Sophocles, medieval religious sculptures, Romance and Adventure literary genres, Renaissance painting by Albrech Durer, *Don Quixote*, Goethe's *Faust*, modernist poet Rainer Rilke, Classical American Cinema, Alfred Hitchcock's modernist film and Woody Allen's late twentieth century cinema. Jaeger thus follows the raw schemata of Auerbach to juxtapose his theory of Charisma, the phenomenology of audience-response against the former's rationalist tie with the Aristotelian mimetic objectivism.

Drawing on Weber again, the author observes that there are grades of charisma, as there are "pure forms" of charismtic personalities such as Shamans, berserks and prophets: "Applied to art and literature, it is possible to argue that some media and genres manifest the charismatic mode better than others." Thus in the third chapter he opposes Homeric epic to Sophoclean tragedy arguing that the epic aims at catharsis: "Tragedy may draw on elements of charismatic representation, but it does not do what the epic does – magnify the subject and inspire imitation. In that sense epic is more "purely" charismatic than tragedy. (p. 98) Whereas in Aristotle's view the only difference between the two genres – epic and tragedy – is that of length, the basic character being the same, i.e., imitation of serious human action, Jaeger's challenging arguments need careful examination. How can one agree that Odysseus is more "charismatic", more "purely" charismatic than Oedipus? Does tragedy project a pessimistic view of human life? Is catharsis unfit for causing enchantment in the audience. Is there no "aura" around the character of Oedipus who does not enjoy the company of feudal lords like Alkinous (who share the aristocracy of divine beings) and is not coveted by women like Nausicaa, rather is betrayed by the cruel destiny to sleep with the woman who conceived him? Jaeger himself confesses "...it would be wrong to imagine that epic shows men as god like, while tragedy shows them deceived fools. Both forms have in their highest realizations in the ancient world the effect of glorifying heroic characters and so also the human condition." (p. 88) In no condition, one can over-rule the Aristotelian depth of catharsis causing an elevating enchantment in the audience.

Who can question the "purely" charismatic personality of Oedipus in his super human struggle for discovering the truth that plays the role of a villain which fails to vanquish the valour of the hero shining ever in the history of human civilization much more brilliantly than the romantic expeditions of an Odysseus or a Don Juan Jaeger's analysis of the tragic structure as a tension between enigma revelation, comparable to that of detective/ mystery novel (e.g., Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes) appears (p. 91) unacceptable by us. His statement "Revelation is consistent with the indestructibility of Odysseus, guarantees survival and a course of life pleasing to man and gods, and so exercises a magnetic attraction on the audience. Enigma is the undermining of charisma...", sounds contradictory when Oedipus's exploration of the enigma of destiny at all cost enhances his charisma to the highest point unattainable by the expeditions of an Odysseus. The catharsis of pity and fear transforms common human feelings and emotions to the level of a sublime experience called *Rasa* in Sanskrit poems, whereas in *Odyssey* there is no such sublime transformation of emotions and feelings. Moreover, Odysseus's charisma aspires an elevation from earth to heaven whereas Oedipus's charisma is manifest in his struggle for an elevation from humanity to an ethereal superhumanity.

But keeping these individual cases aside, Jaeger's major aim at evaluating some aspects of art viewed in the light of charisma, aura, hypermimesis and the sublime through the entire spectrum of the Western cultural history is itself an epical dimension in critical exercise that successfully complements Erich Auerbach's survey of the Western literary history in Aristotelian perspectives of realistic objectivism. Aristotle-Auerbach juxtaposition with Longinus-Jaeger in a remarkable critical fashion appears an invincible intellectual courage. The author concludes: "What this book aims at in large part is to show the transforming force of participation in the life of works of art, to show the dynamics by which the viewer or reader is drawn into a kind of art and literature especially fashioned to stimulate participation. ... What constitutes charismatic art in its fullest form is the cooperation of charisma and aura... charismatic effect in art depends to a great extent on the preparation of the viewer or reader to perceive it..." (pp. 372-373).

A.C. Sukla

Terry Eagleton, *The Event of Literature*, London: Yale University Press, 2012, pp. 255.

Terry Eagleton's *The Event of Literature* is currently in discussion in the academic forums of literature and theory across the world. In the book, he has made a modest, liberal and pragmatic approach referring to the parameters of select Western philosophical canons, common linguistic and literary theories with admixture of the commonsense understandings of literature in our time. We know that in his earlier books like *Literary Theory: an Introduction* (1983, revised 1996), he traces the history of the study of texts, from the Romantics of the nineteenth century to

the postmodernists of the later twentieth century. His approach to literary criticism remains firmly rooted in the Marxian tradition though he has also incorporated techniques and ideas from more recent modes of thought as structuralism, Lacanian analysis and deconstruction. In his *After Theory* (2003), he represents a kind of about-face: an indictment of current cultural and literary theory and what Eagleton regards as the bastardisation of both.

While developing a revisionist attitude to analyze literary work of art, he does not forget to bring in the highlights of the two other famous books written on the thrust topic so far viz. *What is Literature?* (1988) by Sartre and *Theory of Literature* (1949) by Welleck and Warren. Sartre, one of the most influential philosophers and literary critics of the existentialist movement discusses the differences between literature and other arts such as music and painting. His argument is that prose writing is different from all other media because of the relationship between the individual and language itself. He says that we might not know anything about musical scales for instance, but we cannot know about language. In the context of 'Why We Write', he says that there are some fascinating and vigorous reflections on the psychology of writing and reading and that the meaning of writing remains only latent until it is brought alive in the reader's mind, and his observation that "reading is directed creation" is, so to say, Reader-Response Theory summed up in four words.

Theory of Literature is a book on literary scholarship by Rene Wellek a member of the Prague school structuralism and Austin Warren a self-described 'old New Critic'. The book describes various aspects of literary theory, criticism and history. After defining various aspects and relationships of literature in general, Wellek and Warren divide analysis of literature based on two approaches: extrinsic, relating to factors outside a work such as the author and society, and intrinsic, relating to factors within such as rhythm and meter. They stress the need to focus on the intrinsic elements of a work as the best way to understand it. In doing so, they adapt the phenomenology of Roman Ingarden.

The book under review contains a preface and five chapters. In the 'Preface' he makes the point clear that the book takes a liberal, open, general yet up-to-date account of understanding the basics of literary works in the light of the philosophical, linguistic and literary theories we know so far. He declares his purpose of rejuvenating the literary theories of 1970s and 80s in order to avoid imbalance in interpretation of literature in the heat of the studies of literature mostly that go along with postcolonialism, ethnicity, sexuality and cultural studies. He says that this is an 'evolution to be welcomed' in the course of 'shift from discourse to culture – from ideas in a somewhat abstract or virginal state' (p.ix) with an investigation of the critical trends of the 70s and 80s in the light of the present scenario of literature. He says that 'this book is an implicit rebuke to literary theory' and rather much of his argument, apart from the final chapter, draws not on literary theory based on the philosophy of literature because, according to him, literary theorists have 'too often cold-shouldered this sort of discourse, and in doing so they have played their stereotypical role in the age-old

contention between the Continentals and the Anglo-Saxons.' (p.x) They seem to lead a controversy with the approval between literary theory and philosophy of literature. He reacts that such intellectual conservatism and timidity of so much philosophy of literature is characterized by fatal lack of 'critical flair and imaginative audacity.' He puts up ironically that, some of these theorists behave as though they never heard of Frege, whereas the other acts as though they have never heard of Freud. He remarks that literary theorists tend to give little attention to questions of truth, reference, the logical status of fiction and the like, while philosophers of literature 'often display a marked insensitivity to the texture of literary language.' (p.x)

He then touches the line of the age old question 'Can there be a definition of literature?' and subsequently focuses on many important logical sub-questions in the field of literary theory. His concerns in this book are broadly based on

- i. the question of whether one can speak of 'literature' at all
- ii. how the term 'literature' is generally used today
- iii. characterizing fictionality
- iv. the question whether literary theories with their various forms have central features in common or not (pp.xi-xii)

Chapter one entitled 'Realists and Nominalists' presents his views on the dispute between realists and nominalists that flourished most vigorously in the later Middle Ages among a number of eminent schoolmen of opposite persuasions leading to two sets of questionnaires. They are:

1. Are general or universal categories in some sense real, as the realists claim in the wake of Plato, Aristotle and Augustine, or are they, as the nominalists insist, concepts which we ourselves foist upon a world in which whatever is real is irreducibly particular?
2. Is there a sense in which literature or giraffeness exists in the actual world, or are these notions entirely mind-dependent? Is giraffeness simply a mental abstraction from a multitude of uniquely individual creatures, or are such species as real as those individuals, if not necessarily in the same way?

In fact, Nominalism and Realism are the two most distinguished positions in Western metaphysics dealing with the fundamental structure of reality. For the Nominalist camp, abstractions are posterior to individual things, being ideas derived from them; for the realists they are in some sense anterior to them. The running battle between realists and nominalists is among other things a question of '...how seriously one takes the sensuously specific'. This is what he claims to be a political matter as well as an ontological and epistemological one coinciding Nietzschean fashion of unique identities of objects.

But, he notices that for Hegel and Lukács, by contrast, knowledge of essences can liberate the individual object into its true nature, revealing what it covertly is. In a similar way, he finds that the Romantic imagination transforms the phenomena into the image of their essences, while preserving the fullness of their sensuous presence. (p.9)

He synthesizes that language is 'essentialised' or 'phenomenalised', rendered not semiotic but iconic, linked by an unbreakable bond to a reality which can only be signified in this particular way.

This he concludes by saying that most literary types are in this sense natural-born nominalists, whether of the old-style liberal or newfangled postmodernist kind. There might be movements away from theory but they lead towards truth. So, in this way, he recognizes that all theorizing is flight and that 'Theory is one thing, while art or life is another.' (p. 14)

In the second chapter entitled 'What is Literature?', he questions whether something called literature actually exists or not. Primarily, he focuses on the properties of literary work in terms of linguistic and literary interpretations. Referring to his earlier work *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, he argues that the nature of literature is a strongly anti-essentialist case. Those pieces of writing dubbed literary have no single property or even set of properties in common. (p. 19)

Along with Thomas Aquinas and Stanley Fish he believes that things without essences have no real existence correlating his belief with to E.D. Hirsch who argues that literature has no independent essence, aesthetic or otherwise. It is an arbitrary classification of linguistic works which do not exhibit common distinctive traits, and which cannot be defined as Aristotelian species. But, he quotes John Searle and Wittgenstein saying that literature is a 'family-resemblance notion'. (p. 9). He refers to Christopher New's remark that, '...all literary discourses would resemble some other literary discourse in one way, but they would not all resemble each other in a single way'. (p. 21) On the basis of need they vary but they might have similar discourse features.

Relating to art and literature, he says that the fact is that art is made up of too amorphous a set of objects for this to be done with any great reasonability. Literature, however, is a less amorphous phenomenon than it. A crime thriller and a Petrarchan sonnet are scarcely lookalikes, but they would seem to have more in common than do impasto, a bassoon solo and a glissade in ballet. So, perhaps family resemblances can be more easily picked out in the case of works that people call literary. They mean by 'literary' a work which is fictional, or which yields significant insight into human experience as opposed to reporting empirical truths, or which uses language in a peculiarly heightened, figurative or self-conscious way, or which is not practical in the sense that shopping lists are, or which is highly valued as a piece of writing. The fictional, moral, linguistic, non-pragmatic and normative factors are combined in a specific piece of writing to make it literary. This literary work talks in a certain way about its language, moral vision, and fictional credibility and so on including literariness.

He argues that a work may be called literary because it is fictional and verbally inventive even though it is morally shallow or because it yields significant moral insights and is 'finely' written but non-fictional; or because it is non-fictional and morally trivial but superbly written and serves no immediate practical purpose, and so on. Some people might count literature as a pragmatic but verbally decorated text

whereas others might regard the fact that it has a practical function as outweighing its rhetorical allures. He expands the discussion by saying that a private diary kept by a survivor of Nazi Germany may also be ranked as literature because of its historical value, along with the depth and poignancy of its moral vision, despite being non-fictional, pragmatic and appallingly written.

In this context, he discusses Wellek and Warren who insist in their *Theory of Literature* that there is a special literary use of language, a claim that has turned out to have embarrassingly few adherents. Literary theorists these days are well-nigh unanimous in their conviction that there are no semantic, syntactical or other linguistic phenomena peculiar to literature.

He directs our attention towards more liberal form of identifying literature. According to him even the British Banking Act of 1979, with a statement sounds like a tongue-twister or piece of wordplay; one might see it as an instance of the self-referentiality it speaks of, hence qualifying it for literary status on a formalist view of the matter. (p. 36) In this way, people sometimes grant the title of literature to works which are finely but not self-consciously written, rather than simply to those which are verbally self-regarding. He says:

They may see an economy and lucidity of language, or a certain sinewy plainness, as more admirable than a bristling thicket of exotic tropes. Fine writing, like good manners, may be thought to involve a certain self-effacing unobtrusiveness – though if it becomes understated enough, as with Roland Barthes's 'degree zero' writing, it becomes obtrusive once more. Hemingway is the standard example. Stylelessness can be a style in itself. (p. 37)

He brings in F.R. Leavis who is keen on signs and takes a stern view of autonomy of texts. Then, he argues quoting Stanley Fish that there is no general intrinsic difference between 'literary' and 'ordinary' language, and insists that what we call literature is simply language around which we draw a frame, indicating a decision to treat it with a peculiarly focused attentiveness. (p. 39) Fish's concept could be seen as the critical equivalent of decisionism in ethics where the contexts of literature are part of the way the world is, since for Fish 'the way the world is' is itself a product of interpretation. Interpretations generate facts but not vice versa. The so-called facts of the text are generated by the reading of it. As for the Kantians, it is phenomenal appearances which intrude their ungainly bulk between the reader and the world as it is in itself; for the postmodernists it is discourse or interpretation. For the formalists like Roman Jakobson, it is a 'set towards the message' – meaning that it is a question of orienting ourselves to a piece of language as valuable and significant in itself. It is hard to see how this clearly distinguishes poetry or fiction from, say, history or philosophy. The language of such works is not always a purely instrumental affair, inviting us to pass straight from the sign to the referent in brisk disregard of the former as a value in itself. Even quoting Victor Erlich, he says that 'In literary art ideological battles are often

acted out on the plane of the opposition between metaphor and metonymy, or metre and free verse.' The same can be true of a work's structural aspects.' (p. 46)

He agrees with Wellek and Warren that literary texts are those in which the 'aesthetic function' is dominant. But then he goes on saying that aesthetic features are not restricted to works dubbed as literary. Assonance, chiasmus and synecdoche may be more common in an advertisement than in a literary work of art. In addition, design, formal complexity, unifying themes, moral depth and imaginative creativity, however, are not the monopoly of literature. They can be just as characteristic of a treatise on human psychology. Poems and novels as 'imaginative' writings are not the only reasonable way to characterize literature. The other kinds of writings such as political and ethical theories that guide our action in the world in a sense are also literary works. Even advertisements exploit poetic devices for the distinctly non-poetic goal of making profit.

Literature is a quality of attention. It is the way it makes us find ourselves already biased and attuned when we pick up a book. We submit some texts to especially close scrutiny because we take the word of others that they will turn out to deserve it. Good works of literature are those that resemble other good works of literature, allowing us to do with them what we are accustomed to doing. The literary canon submits itself to no other court of judgment than self-confirming. (p. 57)

The third chapter entitled 'What is literature? (2)' focuses on the moral and non-moral dimensions of literary works. He uses the word 'moral' to signify the realm of human meanings, values and qualities, rather than the deontological, anemically post-Kantian sense of duty, law, obligation and responsibility. He finds that the literary figures in the nineteenth-century England, from Arnold and Ruskin to Pater, Wilde and Henry James, helped to shift the meaning of the term 'morality' from a matter of codes and norms to a question of values and qualities. It was a project consummated in the twentieth century by some of the age's most eminent critics like Bakhtin, Trilling, Leavis, Empson and Raymond Williams. Moral values and literary meanings have in common the fact that they are not objective but are not purely subjective either. For a moral realist, moral judgements pick out real features of the world rather than simply expressing attitudes to them.' (p. 62)

It is true that literary works often produce the effect of lived experience through written signs. Everything that happens in a literary work happens in terms of writing. Characters, events and emotions are simply configurations of marks on a page. Also, literary works represent a kind of praxis or knowledge-in-action, and are similar in this way to the ancient conception of virtue. Like virtue, they have their ends in themselves; in the sense that they can achieve those ends only in and through the performances they signify. 'Literature yields us a type of moral cognition which is not readily available in other forms.' (p. 64) The kind of moral insight at stake in literary works is more like personal knowledge than knowledge of facts. Art thus represents an alternative mode of cognition to Enlightenment rationality. Literature does not disclose truths but

establishes close links between fictional form and moral cognition which implies an evaluation of truth.

In a liberal sense, he says that these days, texts such as essays on fish breeding, despite being 'non-moral', non-fictional and indifferently written might still be deemed literature by being treated 'non-pragmatically', used as an occasion for reflections which range beyond their evident functions. The non-fictional discourses, such as government reports on the leather industry, as opposed to fictional government reports on public disturbances which once more exonerate the police from all blame, shape and select their materials, occasionally employ narrative form constitute fictional features too.

The non-pragmatic as a constitutive feature is also nowadays called literature that sheds most of its traditional social functions which cannot be predicted, in the sense that we cannot predetermine what 'uses' or readings of them may be made in this or that situation. They are inherently open-ended, capable of being transported from one context to accumulating fresh significance in the process. The burning example is Burke's political speeches which are literary because of their figurative fertility, rhetorical brio, emotional bravura, dramatic virtuosity and so.

A work is called literary because its meaning is somehow supposed to be generalised and that what it presents is offered not just for its own sake but as resonant with some broader or deeper significance. He discusses Claude Lévi-Strauss' mythological signs and Peter Lamarque in this context who argue that a literary work not only presents a world but invites thematic interpretation of it, in which its content acquires a broader significance.(p. 32)

In terms of the structuralist interpretation, literary texts typically exploit the doubled nature of discourse by portraying irreducibly specific situations which are at the same time, by the very nature of language, of more general import. In Derrida's term, they are 'exemplary' too. There is a paradox involved in the dual nature of language. When this dual strategy rises to self-consciousness, it becomes allegorical. Deconstruction may see the literary work as a symbolic act seeking to achieve certain effects in a determinate context.

Literature is the 'thickest' description of reality that we have. Literary works have the power to present things in their tangible presence, and thus draw the reader in. But like the Husserlian phenomenology, they can also free them up to be viewed from a number of different angles, 'thus combining the palpable with the provisional.' (p.87)

In the context of defamiliarization and with reference to the semiotics of Umberto Eco, he says that literary texts are a reassessment of codes which issues in 'a new awareness about the world' and he continues to prove it saying:

The addressee [of the text], he writes, 'becomes aware of new semiotic [*sic*] possibilities and is thereby compelled to rethink the whole language, the entire inheritance of what has been said, can be said, and could or should be said....There is even a

structuralist equivalent to this view of literature, despite the notorious anti-humanism of structuralism in general. (p. 97)

Literature is an inherently valuable kind of writing with a highly specific history and the critic becomes the high priest of these literary rites, presiding with a due sense of his own authority over this self-legitimizing process. Quoting Derek Attridge, he writes that 'if the text comforts and reassures by simply confirming prejudices according to some well-known verbal formulae... it cannot be called... literature'. (p. 91)

Literary texts are in some sense radical or subversive too. But any way, literature in them assimilates the world into itself. It does so with a peculiar kind of self-consciousness, allowing us to grasp the nature of our forms of life and language-games more vigilantly than usual. This case assigns literature an inherently critical force. It can explore and shake the deepest levels of agreement upon which not only our language, but also our sense of ourselves and the world we share and struggle over, depend and seduces us into a spirit of self-criticism. (p. 101)

Quoting Jonathan Culler he says that the study of literature involves an '...expansion of the self. But this is no longer a question of individual moral enrichment as it was for traditional literary humanism.' (p. 103) It improves us morally by making us more self-critical, self-conscious, flexible, provisional, open-minded and robustly skeptical of orthodoxies. In a way, literature can be the negative knowledge of human existence where we can give a name to the groundlessness of our projects, the fictional nature of the self and our exile from reality too and make it moral and meaningful.

In the chapter four entitled 'The nature of fiction', he says, perhaps theory of fiction is the most difficult aspect of the philosophy of literature, as well as the one that has attracted the most sustained scholarly attention. It is full of agreeable paradoxes and conundrums. Fiction and literature are not synonymous, despite Jonathan Culler's claim that 'to read a text as literature is to read it as fiction', and Morse Peckham's opinion that what makes a work literary is its fictional dimension. But he argues that Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age* are usually ranked as literature, although neither is fictional or generally read as such.

He says, 'Literature is not confined to fiction, and fiction is not confined to literature.' Then, quoting Searle he says that 'Whether or not a work is literature is for the reader to decide; and whether or not it is fiction is for the author to decide.' (p. 109) This is further emphasized by the statement of Robert Brown and Martin Steinmann who insist that 'a discourse is fictional because its speaker or writer intends it to be so'. One might claim that taking a fictional text as factual does not alter the fact that it is fictional, since that is how the author conceived of it. The same goes for taking a factual text as fictional. Something can be factual and fictional at the same time. (p. 118)

Fiction is an ontological category, not in the first place a literary genre. A passionately sincere lyric poem is as fictional as *Lolita*. It is a question of how texts behave, and of how we treat them, not primarily of genre, and certainly not (as we shall see in a moment) of whether they are true or false. There is no good reason either to restrict the term to prose narrative. Only in the nineteenth century did

fiction become more or less synonymous with the novel. To confine the term to prose narrative simply means that you are likely to overlook some relevant aspects of poetry and drama, as well as some significant affinities between these forms.

There is a sense in which a novelist is pretending to pretend, since he is supposed to convince us that certain fictional events actually took place, while knowing that we disbelieve that. (p. 124) With reference to speech-act theory, Eagleton says that, works of literary art are not a particular kind of language but a particular kind of utterance. They are imitations of real-life speech acts; but by violating the usual conditions of a valid speech act, they imitate such utterances in a 'non-felicitous' kind of way. Fictional texts have often been seen as in some sense duplicitous too.

Speech-acts are verbal illusions which pose as true accounts of the world. Speech-act theory reformulates this duplicity in a suggestive new way. A literary work is one that lacks the so-called illocutionary force that would normally attach to the sentences of which it is made, and is thus a deviant utterance. The role of constatives and performatives are important in this context too. Fictions have an autonomous or self-referential quality providing it a peculiar force.

Literary works of art are the product of a great many historical factors: genre, language, history, ideology, and semiotic codes, unconscious desires, institutional norms, everyday experience, literary modes of production, other literary works and the like. It is rather that these factors are combined in a way that allows the work to evolve according to its own internal logic. They are self-constituting. They are clearly snatches of 'discourse' rather than specimens of 'language', which is to say that they are language bound up with specific situations. In everyday life, such situations play a major role in how we make sense of signs but even then literature is not a question of evoking our everyday responses, but of repressing them.

Some critics say that literary works are especially congenial to semantic ambiguity and richness of implication and this leads to argument. It is the slackness of the bond between sign and referent; between fiction and the real world that persuades us to see literary art as plural in meaning. Quoting Skinner, he says, we cannot grasp the meaning of a piece of discourse from its words alone. Nor will putting the words in context automatically disclose their sense. Instead, we need to decipher not just the meaning of the utterance but its force – which is to say, what the act of speaking or writing is trying to achieve. (EOL 105) Skinner distinguishes here between what he calls 'intention to do' and 'intention in doing'. The former refers to an aim on the part of the author, one which may or may not be realized.

In this chapter, Eagleton's reflections on this topic turn on the idea of a grammar as an important element of discourse as he says meaning a set of rules that determine how expressions are to be used in a form of practical life. Instead, a grammar determines what might be intelligibly asserted about the facts. A grammar does not mirror anything in reality, as Wittgenstein himself had once believed. It is an activity, not an image. (p. 156)

The fifth chapter entitled “Strategies”, begins with questions like ‘What, if anything, do literary theories have in common? What links semiotics and feminism, formalism and psychoanalysis, Marxism and hermeneutics or post-structuralism and reception aesthetics?’, Then he tries to give an explanation by saying that there is no single feature or set of features that all literary theories share in common. There is, however, in Wittgenstein’s words, ‘a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing’ links them and this can be the case for psychoanalytic criticism and feminist literary theory too.

There may not be a single feature shared by all these theories of literature; but there is one concept in particular which can illuminate a good many of them: the idea of a literary work as a *strategy* what he calls Theory of Everything, a literary equivalent to the physicist’s elusive TOE. He says that ‘Strategy projects out of innards the very historical and ideological subtext of literary work of art. The context of a literary work reveals a utopian unity of word and world, as we have seen already in the case of speech-act theory.’ (p. 171-2)

There is an obvious relation between this hermeneutical model and the concept of the text as strategy. To illustrate the idea of the text as strategy, he takes a brief glance at John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and makes an analysis of the writings of Charlotte Bronte, D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce etc to find this mechanism. Then, he synthesizes, referring to Reception theory, that in a literary work of art.

... the reader is obliged to engage in a strategic enterprise which would tax even the most manically energetic of individuals: connecting, revising, code-switching, synthesising, correlating, de pragmatizing, imagebuilding, perspective-switching, inferring, normalising, recognising, ideating, negating, foregrounding, backgrounding, feeding back, contextualising, situation-building, coordinating, memory-transforming, expectation-modifying, illusion-building, gestalt-forming, image-breaking, blank-filling, concretising, consistency- building, structuring and anticipating....’ (p. 186)

Strategies constitute the vital link between work and reader, as the cooperative activity which brings the literary work into being in the first place; set off a series of different actions and interactions of a literary work. Thus the text is a set of instructions for the production of meaning, rather like an orchestral score. He continues saying that the meaning of the text is not an object but a practice. It emerges from a constant traffic between work and reader so that the act of reading becomes a project in which one receives back one’s own response in transfigured or defamiliarised form. (p. 187)

Quoting Jameson, he says that a literary work should be understood as ‘a reaction to the thought systems which it has chosen and incorporated in its own repertoire.’ (p. 188) Interpretation in a work of art deals with self-generating and self-legitimizing. It can be done in two ways by considering literary work as objects and as

events. For American New Criticism, the literary text is a closed system of signs to be dissected. In Russian Formalism the work is also treated as an object though in the course of time it moves beyond a rather static view of it as ‘assemblage of devices’ to a more integrated, dynamic conception of its operations. The Formalists consider it as the process of ‘de-automating’ the reader’s perceptions. In this sense, the poem’s internal complexity exists for an ‘external’ end that there is a tentative transition at work here from the text as object to the text as strategic act. The Prague structuralists regard it as a functional system and a structural totality.

The text is less a solid structure than ‘a large labyrinthine garden’ with criss-crossing paths that permit us to take many different routes as he says:

Reading is thus more like strolling through Hyde Park than it is like crossing Westminster Bridge. These routes or ‘inferential walks’ through the artefact involve the reader in sometimes endorsing and sometimes repudiating the author’s codes, sometimes not knowing what the ‘sender’s’ rules are, trying to extrapolate such interpretive guidelines from disconnected fragments of data, proposing certain tentative codes of her own to make sense of problematic segments of the work, and so on. (p. 191)

Quoting Eco Eagleton says that the aesthetic of text continually transforms its denotations into new connotations, none of its items stop at their first interpretant and contents are never received for their own sake but rather as the sign-vehicle for something else. In this process each feature of the work is actualized by the reader which then spurs it as a consequence into new interpretive activity.

Only by grasping the function of this textual structure in relation to a context and seeing it as performance the structure can itself be properly laid bare. In this sense, the structure of the text is not the final datum, rather it needs to become relevant through the function of that text which is equivalent to the sense that the text is best seen as a strategy. Thus, he says that a strategy is precisely a structure which is broadly determined by its ends. It is function that determines structure in relation to its context. This may lead towards extratextuality and intertextuality. Myth or utopian quality of literary works is included in this system.

Eagleton formulates a system of strategy by saying that it is more than a matter of dynamic organization. Eagleton is rather a structure with a certain built-in intentionality, one organized to achieve certain effects. It is a project, not simply a system. Its internal disposition is determined by its active relations to what it addresses and as Jakobson says, a literary work is ‘a complex, multi-dimensional structure, integrated by the unity of aesthetic purpose’. (p. 29)

A strategy is the kind of structure that is forced to re-totalize itself from moment to moment in the light of the functions it has to perform. It is powered by an intention in the sense of a purposeful design or set of designs inscribed within it, not in the sense of a ghostly force propelling it from the outside. Moreover, the structure of

literary works generates events which can then react back on that structure and transform its terms. Since this two-way process is also true of so-called ordinary language, literary texts perform in a more dramatic, perceptible way what takes place in everyday speech. (p. 200)

In effect, then, the unconscious is always a subtext crafted by the conscious mind. Like the history and ideology which enter the literary work as subtext, it can never be known in the raw. We know it only in the form in which the ego has strategically shaped it. This is much the same like a dream for Freud which is a disguised wish-fulfillment, and to say that it contains both a real wish and an imaginary fulfillment.

Thus, strategies are purposive projects, but not the intentional utterances of a single subject. Strategies are neither objects nor unitary acts. If they are thoroughly worldly affairs, it is not because they 'reflect' or 'correspond to' reality but because, rather in the manner of a Wittgensteinian grammar, they organize it into significant shape by deploying certain rule-governed techniques. The concept of strategy finds parallels between different forms of literary theory and makes such connections always gratifying to philosophy and psychology strategically.

The book refreshes the critical tempo of literature by making a walk through the remarkable tracks of events of literature till now. But it is noticed that his interpretation is somehow dominated by the principles outlined by Wittgenstein and Lamarque and he liberally accounts for the reader-response factors as well as text linguistics plus analysis of speech-acts to consider validity of literature in our time. Quoting Barthes, he says that no literature in the world has ever answered the question it asked. The text is not bound to provide an answer like a medical diagnosis is meant to do. It may simply represent a response to the questions it poses, rather than a literal solution to them. If there are both acceptable and non-acceptable ways in which a work may resolve a problem, there are also acceptable and non-acceptable ways in which it may leave it unanswered. (p. 174). As the title suggests, Eagleton writes a history of literary theories that developed during the modernist and postmodernist periods with some of his own comments that he experienced as a (Marxist) literary critic. A reader fails to trace anything fresh that he expects from a critic of Eagleton's status.

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