

Cover Chapter One: *Wandering and Surveying*,
oil, acrylic and ink on wood,
2009,
40 x 27.5 cm / 16 in x 11 in

CHAPTER ONE.

Wandering and Surveying: Links to Literary Theory and Contemporary Aesthetics

Creating Is Moving To A Location (here)

- 1 The created object is brought into existence.
- 2 The created object is brought into being.
- 3 Aspirin can make your headaches go away.

Note: (here). When we understand creating in this way we are actually understanding it as an instance of causation: as a caused change of state of an affected party.

—George Lakoff ¹

Affinities

Scholars, other intellectuals and artists operate in landscapes populated with a vast array of competing and overlapping circles of discussion, dialogues both historical and contemporary. One's own thought will reflect these, as one wanders among them seeking insightful inspiration, yet one must also critique them. To make a play on the title of Goethe's famous novel, these are one's eclectic affinities, thinkers to whom one's own thought is linked. Scholars generally emphasize the importance of specific affinities to their own projects. The process is similar for creators, yet they dramatically foreground their divergence from their discoveries in others. In land surveying the most important practice is triangulation, the act of using multiple reference points to connect to and locate (that is, find and describe) ones exact position with the greatest possible accuracy. I am using this metaphor in this chapter, both because I find it very productive and because I am attracted to it as a former land surveyor and now both an artist and scholar.

In the "Prelude," I quickly described my individual response to a current, specific situation in the artworld. That is, for the last several decades what is termed "literary" or

¹ George Lakoff, et al., Conceptual Metaphor Home Page (University of California at Berkeley website, <http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/>), page:
[http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/Creating_Is_Moving_To_A_Location_\(here\).html](http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/Creating_Is_Moving_To_A_Location_(here).html)

"cultural theory" has had a signal, even hegemonic, position within the analytic segments of the fields of literature and visual art. In this chapter, I will explore more completely the particulars of some of the theories themselves, tracing and retracing my search through the various ideas. This is a somewhat curious endeavor, because on the one hand, I know much of the outcome already, having of course done most of my research previous to this writing. On the other, I will remain open to fresh decisions as I retrace my peripatetic explorations, while continuously "tying them in" to my principal personal perceptions concerning art and creativity. Thus a doubling of exploration will occur here, and throughout this dissertation, as I recreate an intellectual journey and yet intensely live it, leaving it open to new finds. Perhaps this is something of a simile for painting itself.

In this first decade of the new millennium, dogmatic partisanship appears to have begun to wane. Nevertheless, most authors in these fields still appear to pay attention and respect to a delimited pantheon of theorists. The various theories comprising this multifarious enterprise include Structuralism, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction, Hermeneutics, Formalism, several Marxisms, some neo-Freudianism, Reader-Response theory, Feminist criticism, Relational Aesthetics, Performative Aesthetics and a few others. The dominance of "theory" has been so persuasive as to have given rise to an attack against it as if it were a single, monolithic entity as exemplified in Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michael's essay "Against Theory."² Much of postmodern advanced theoretical reflection on literature and art is rooted in poststructuralist French ideological thought and has been polemically used to prod the sleepy beast that standard Anglo-American criticism unfortunately had become. Sole adherence to this group of Postmodernists can lead to simplistic clannishness or it can manifest academic trendiness. However, the creature is certainly now wide awake and frisky, (although, unfortunately not in standard art criticism itself yet). All aesthetic or metacritical speculation must come to terms with the challenges and insights within what is called literary or critical theory. My thought has been influenced by selected aspects of postmodern theory. This includes, nevertheless, a skeptical and sometimes even antagonistic response to the sophistry and solipsism of many partisans of theory. Contemporary literary theory has been perceptively termed the "hermeneutics of suspicion," a term introduced by Paul Ricœur, who

² See the volume *Against Theory*, with its many, often defensive, responses. It appeared at the end of the 1980s, but this book and others with similar complaints have had ever increasing effect in the new millennium. W. J. Thomas Mitchell, ed., *Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

felt that all texts are corrupted by societal forces aiming for domination.³ This is a rather paranoid, totalizing conception of creative works, relegating them to symptoms of illness and of creators, seeing them merely as minions of the powerful. Nevertheless, literary theory can be intellectually stimulating, particularly as a provocative catalyst to thought. The sundry doctrines of theory expose new insights by subjecting every assumption to recrimination. The light of theory may be actinic, but it throws deficiencies into high relief.

Concurrently, the philosophy of art has assumed an unprecedented prominence in analytic thought. From accusations of "dreariness" by J. Passmore in 1954, aesthetics has developed into an exciting and important realm of inquiry in the hands of such philosophers as Arthur C. Danto, George Dickey, Nelson Goodman, Noël Carroll and Berys Gaut.⁴ Nevertheless, more than literary theory, it has tended to stay within its own frame of reference as Lydia Goehr has described.

[American aesthetics] continues seriously to investigate its relation to its single parent, philosophy. While it sometimes strives for independence, it never actually breaks free. Instead, it usually finds itself trying to reeducate its parent as a result of its own maturing. Perhaps this constant reeducation is a necessary, albeit unwieldy, component of the continuing rejuvenation of both aesthetics and philosophy.⁵

While this is true, aesthetics has much to offer working writers, artists and critics. Their reeducation could result in a healthy rejuvenation of creative practice. The stimulating effect of aesthetics on visual art can be illustrated by looking at Danto's philosophical criticism. His inspiration of the institutional theory of the ontology of art has had a great impact on the art world through his critical reviews and books such as *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, which first appeared in 1981 and has since become one of the most widely read texts in its field.⁶ Other philosophical problems and solutions could be potentially even more enlightening. Particularly important in recent history was the widening of aesthetics as a result of the disappearance of narrow positivism as an over-dominant force, allowing the

³ Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

⁴ J. Passmore, "The Dreariness of Aesthetics," *Mind* 60 (1951); reprinted in *Aesthetic and Languages*, ed. William Elton (Oxford, 1954).

⁵ Lydia Goehr, "Institutionalization of a Discipline," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 2 (spring 1993): 119.

⁶ Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981).

expansion in the field we see from the 1960s until today. According to Avrum Stroll, Ludwig Wittgenstein's "idea that philosophical problems are 'deep disquietudes,' that they must be taken seriously in their own right and not be assimilated into various forms of scienticism as the positivists urged, gave new impetus to a field that the positivists had dismissed as a species of nonsense." ⁷

Creators themselves have become acutely interested in aesthetics. Gordon Epperson is a musician who is also deeply involved with the philosophy of art. He finds this concern natural and necessary.

Musicians (like other artists) are inveterate theorizers, ceaselessly discussing their musical ideas and problems, analyzing techniques, making judgments, striving to get things "right." They are preoccupied in *practice* with form, function, and meaning: and their special vocabularies, sometimes as recondite as the argot of professional philosophers, are rich in imagery. They are, to a degree, aestheticians, though it would surprise most of them to be told that.⁸

This is also true for authors and creators in the other arts; it is even occasionally true of critics, publishers, curators and the like. Aesthetics has had a greater, if less particular, influence on my speculations than has literary theory. The theory of trope I am charting, building and applying in my dissertation bridges several gaps. First, it contains elements of both literary theory and the philosophy of art which I sought out and applied. Second, it is important for me that it should account for aspects of creativity from the standpoint of the maker, the object, and the viewer, as well as being a critical hypothesis. Third, it should focus on visual art but have wider implications for other arts. Finally, it is primarily inspired by the poetics of metaphor and research discoveries in contemporary cognitive psychology and linguistics, with additional elements from other theoreticians and of my own creation.

Owing to what I feel is my wide range of theoretical kin within the fields of literary criticism and contemporary philosophical aesthetics, I could present this chapter solely as a list of internet links, that is, as a hypertextual document containing the names of all the

⁷ Avrum Stroll, "Reminiscences," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 2 (spring 1993): 282.

⁸ Gordon Epperson, "Reminiscences," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 2 (spring 1993): 284.

theorists and philosophers who have influenced my theories, or whose thought borders on it in some way. The internet version of this chapter has hot links on many of the names. Additionally, as a part of this chapter, I have created a painting doing something similar. On it I am represented looking through a theodolite, viewing a mind-map-like array of all the names of the theorists and philosophers in this chapter, connected by lines as I see relationships among them, each name painted in a logo-like form reflecting their interests. This reveals my Diogenes-like wandering through their works and thoughts, seeking wise council which I apply in my own way as tools of understanding. The "world" of my theory is thus delineated indirectly in readers' minds, obliquely. Such a format models the searching, stumbling path of theoretical discovery itself, while dramatically foregrounding the social, cultural and historical bonds which constitute the theory's nexus — *links* to others in the original as well as computer-jargon sense. The two fields I survey here, literary theory and analytic aesthetics, frequently seem to despise each other, yet can be seen as co-dependent: a worthy topic for development in the future. The following chapter lists kindred souls and a few clear opponents. Each is rather cursorily canvassed for its direct bearing on the development of my thought. However, in the interests of readability, I have retained the form of a traditionally ordered text. Yet, this text, the hyperlinked on-line version and the accompanying artworks visibly reflect my survey-map-like search.

A better metaphor than a link being "clicked on," is a site being "measured to." I will attempt to locate the development of my theory, of central tropes being found within formal elements, in the world of other theories, much as a surveyor "locates" (legally designates the site of) a piece of land by running simple connecting lines to nearby, already documented sites through physically measuring to them, drawing and registering plans. The theodolite and measuring chains that I use in this chapter are applied inclusively, thus occasionally brusquely. Let this be a plat (a map showing existing and intended features) of where I have built my speculation.



Wandering and Surveying: the Names,
oil and acrylic on canvas,
2009,
160 x 100 cm / 63 in x 39 in

Literary Theory

There are moments when the inadequacy of our language seizes us, when language seems to fall apart and falling apart opens us to what transcends it. ... As language falls apart, contact with being is reestablished.

—Karsten Harries⁹

Is [reading, as an art] sweetness and light, as modern humanistic criticism from Matthew Arnold to M. H. Abrams tells us it is going to be? Is it the working through of the epistemology of its tropes, as modern deconstructive criticism from Heidegger to Paul de Man insists upon telling us? Increasingly I suspect that Abrams and Hillis Miller, when they debate interpretive modes, truly dispute only degrees of irony, of the human gap between expectation and fulfillment.

—Harold Bloom¹⁰

The human gap between expectation and fulfillment, the basic problem of the mediated nature of our experience, has been a perennial point of trouble which began as a philosophical problem long before "new media" entered the scene. We know nothing but what reaches us through our senses or from information supplied by others. There is no "direct" contact with any concrete reality as such. The epistemological anxiety over this state of affairs, as well as its exploitation in the form of ironic reiteration, is a mainstay of contemporary literary critical theories and the works of art inspired by them. This is Postmodernism's pride and its folly. Literary criticism accentuates the points where language (in its widest sense) falls apart. This *could* point toward contact with "reality" and toward the difficulty of the act — the beauty of what we call "stubborn fact." Beginning with such negatively framed epigraphs and comments, one would hardly suspect how important literary criticism is to my conjecture. I prominently utilize the idea of antithetical misprision from Harold Bloom and, like him, feel that I am both a member of and dissenter from literary criticism.

Bloom, the American literary critic and former professor at Yale University, is an ideal starting point for this discussion. His controversial theory of artistic influence is important to

⁹ Karsten Harries, "Metaphor and Transcendence," in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 87-88.

¹⁰ Harold Bloom, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; paperback, 1983), p. 31.

my theory. It is difficult to do justice to his marvelous yet labyrinthine theory in a short description. Nevertheless, I will attempt to quickly summarize what I find useful in his theory for my work, based on the full range of his publications. Bloom's theory of misprision is poststructuralist, yet in many ways an attack on the self-centeredness of other Poststructuralisms. Throughout his books and essays Bloom lets fly many well-aimed arrows of criticism at these thinkers. Inevitably they strike with deadly accuracy. For example, taking site on the field as a whole, Bloom asks rhetorically of "those problematics of deconstruction" if they "are not the death-throes of German Romantic philosophy?"¹¹ Shortly thereafter in the same book, Bloom asserts that modern deconstructive critics "truly dispute only degrees of irony"¹² He is capable of summing up Postructuralist theorizing and dismissing its (self-ignored) metaphor-model in an astute pair of sentences.

Deconstruction and other post-Heideggerian paradigms tend to the so-called linguistic model, which reduces to the very odd trope of a demiurgical entity named "Language" acting like a Univac, and endlessly doing our writing for us. I don't find this trope any more persuasive than the traditionalist trope of the Imagination as a kind of mortal god endlessly doing our writing for us.¹³

The solid core of Bloom's theory is the concept of an essential, antithetical agon of each poet-creator. Revisionism is vastly expanded and exalted to the primal fact of artistic creativity. *Agon* is Bloom's term for the conflict arising from the anxiety of influence. Each and every author or artist must wrestle with his or her precursor, the ones who inspired them to be writers in the first place. That figure may be singular, plural or a composite one. This is not an intellectual choice of "favorite paragon." One cannot choose this figure, rather he, she or they thrust themselves upon the would-be creator.¹⁴ This spar can be seen as a synecdoche of the struggle against pastness in its entirety. Since this method involves sharp opposition, Bloom calls it "antithetical." An important aspect of this strife is the purposeful misreading of

¹¹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹² Ibid., p. 31.

¹³ Bloom, *Agon*, p. 43.

¹⁴ Artist Jeff Hoke in the on-line comments and discussion of my dissertation perceptively reminded me that these precursors may not be limited to earlier artists, but also may include scientists, poets, and others depending on the individual creator's interests. This is certainly true of my own work, as well of Hoke's, which includes an imaginary museum in website and book form in which he unites many arts, philosophy, sciences and proto-sciences. See Jeff Hoke, *The Museum of Lost Wonder*, <http://www.lostwonder.org/>.

the precursor's works, which Bloom terms *misprision*. He takes this word from Shakespeare: "So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,/" (Sonnet 87).

"Misprision" for Shakespeare, as opposed to "mistaking," implied not only a misunderstanding or misreading but tended also to be a punning word-play suggesting unjust imprisonment. Perhaps "misprision" in Shakespeare also means a scornful underestimation: either way, he took the legal term and gave it an aura of deliberate or willful misinterpretation.¹⁵

Creators create themselves and their works by battling their fear of being a Johnny-come-lately. "Strong" authors, as Bloom calls them, attempt to occupy the position of each of their precursor-figures, thus actually forming a new and independent spot for themselves. This, according to Bloom, is a continuous process, even against oneself and previous versions of oneself.

The theory of misprision stresses the prominence of allusion and the trope of metalepsis. *Metalepsis*, also called *transumption*, is that figure of speech which plays a trope on another previous trope, often in an anachronistic or "frame-breaking" fashion. This trope-of-tropes becomes the tool for an allusive yet affirmative struggle of reversals, performed with purposeful discontinuity on a stage of one's own knowledge, with psychological and spiritual desire. The precursor's, and history's, presence is neither denied in feigned or sought out ignorance, nor granted a forfeit win through worship. It must be emphasized that for Bloom the work *itself* is central. It itself is the achieved anxiety of influence, not some relic of the same. He affirms "the self over language, while granting priority to figurative language over meaning."¹⁶

Bloom's controversial theory grants artworks a substantial bedding in the acts of individual creators, something which appears self-evident to me, yet has been expunged from most contemporary theories. Theorists such as Ricœur relegate artists to something akin to symptoms, expressions of societal sickness. I seek a way to include agency, the conscious contribution creators make, not only in their formal proficiency but also what they have to say, so-called extra-formal concerns. Artists are often active intelligences, expressing yet also critiquing the cultures of which they are a part. When I discovered Bloom, his work offered a

¹⁵ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. xii-xiii.

¹⁶ Bloom, *Agon*, p. 336.

new dimension of understanding for me, one that impeccably supplemented my later encounter with cognitive metaphor theory. Upon my discovery of George Lakoff, I realized that my hypothesis of the invention of a central trope could be best envisioned as the end result of a subjective contest with social and moral dimensions. In Lakoffian terms, my hypothesis is that a vocabulary of foundational cognitive metaphors is at work in the formal, aspects of the works of artists. One central trope is brought into being through a figurative vision of one or more aspects of the form. To Bloom's agonistic "why," cognitive linguistics wed the "how," when supplemented by my own ideas and those described in this chapter. However, I am jumping ahead of myself on the trail of my survey.

To return to Harold Bloom, not all poets, authors and other artists conduct this agonistic struggle fully or to its end. Those who do not are creators as well, yet ones whom Bloom terms "weak." More graciously, we could call them "less resolute." They can be engaging, but only interesting at best, not riveting, according to Bloom. At worst, they are the derivative contemporary equivalent of Academicians of art: faded reflections of previous, "strong" artists (again Bloom's terminology).¹⁷ Such incompleteness, perhaps even timidity, is often quickly rewarded nowadays, as many critics, curators, publishers, editors and others in power above creators are themselves similarly "weak" thinkers, or at least unrepentantly derivative, unwilling to do the appropriate antithetical battle with their *own* precursors. (These are field and role specific, such as various forms of criticism, earlier forms of exhibition, former publishing endeavors, influential past gallerists, curators, historians, and so on.)

I will not delve into the intricacies of Bloom's "revisionary ratios," and so on. Yet, I sense they would accord as well with novels and paintings as with poems.¹⁸ The fact of "agon" itself is his perspicacious discovery: the essential struggle with what is inherited; with the inherited precursor(s), probably composite, who inspired one to be a "poet" at all (read: novelist, painter, scholar, critic, curator, publisher, et al.), yet whom one must defeat to become a real artist and not a borrowed whisper of derivativeness. As a case in point, in his book *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom discusses his agonistic struggle with William Shakespeare, as well as that author's own agon with his contemporary Christopher Marlowe.

¹⁷ Idem, *Anxiety*, p. 5.

¹⁸ Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975; paperback, 1980). The author supplies an instructive chart of the steps of his theory on page 84. Part III of this book, titled "Using the Map," also offers the most stirring applications of his "dialectics of revisionism," "images in poems," "rhetorical tropes," "psychic defenses" and "revisionary ratios."

Marlowe was both a positive influence on the Bard, due to shaking off earlier moralistic conventions, yet also a negative one due to the fact that Shakespeare saw a way to improve on Marlowe by deepening the humanity and personal psychological factors of his characters, in opposition to Marlowe's, who tended toward caricature. In a similar fashion, Bloom discusses how Shakespeare was influenced by, yet overcame, the influences of Ovid and Geoffrey Chaucer.¹⁹ Although clearly inspired by Freud, Bloom can be pushed beyond the simplicity of most interpretations of Oedipal father-figure relationships. In truth, I see a clearer source for Bloom's thought in the Biblical account of Jacob's struggle with the angel (or God) than in the Greek myth of Oedipus. I explore this side-issue in a later short interlude.

Another literary theoretician who has served as an inspiration behind my thought is Mikhail Bakhtin, who, perhaps unfortunately, has been claimed by all. Theorists of every bent seem to find him a compatriot. This may be a result of "confusion," as Gary Saul Morson suggests in his essay "Who Speaks for Bakhtin?" due to Bakhtin's "peculiar, elusive, even weird biography and style, not to mention his breadth of interest."²⁰ However, Bakhtin is important because he invented several genuinely remarkable ideas; ones which are insightful and serve as necessary solvents for unproductive philosophical notions gumming up current theorizing. More positively stated, Morson goes on to assert that reading Bakhtin encourages us to make a "meaningful escape from an endless oscillation between dead abstractions."²¹ This is a better explanation of why he has such importance to me and so many others.

Bakhtinian notions which have helped inspire me include his sense of the living fluidity of expression; his concepts of heteroglossia, polyphonic form, and dialogic form; his insight that these may engender the liberation of alternative voices; and his presentation of the carnival as a suggestive metaphor.²² In Bakhtin's view, language is not a neutral static object (à la Ferdinand de Saussure). Language, especially creative language, is an "utterance," a social act of speaking, involving struggle, ideology, class, speakers and listeners. I see this as

¹⁹ Bloom, *Anxiety*, p. xi-xlvii.

²⁰ Gary Saul Morson, "Who Speaks for Bakhtin?", in *Bakhtin, Essays and Dialogues on His Work*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

²² There is some confusion concerning the actual authorship of the various texts often attributed to Bakhtin. Several are signed by others, yet seem to be presentations of Bakhtin's notions. Whether Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov served as "covers" for Bakhtin because of his difficulties under Stalin, or actually contributed to the works is in doubt. I will discuss all ideas, as is common, as those of Bakhtin.

describing the socio-political context of the development of artistic tropes. Therefore works of art are not "uni-accentual." That is, they are not limited to having simply one of a small range of possible meanings. Rather, *heteroglossia* defines the state of meaning in all discourse. By this, Bakhtin means that a multitude of voices naturally resonates within each utterance. This is the chief source of richness in all expression and, prescriptively speaking, should be emphasized and built upon by authors. Nevertheless, he believes, heteroglossia is generally suppressed, if unsuccessfully, in order for those in power to feel comfortable in their attempts to control others. Bakhtin supplies us with an artistic version of the philosophical necessity of accepting belief in the existence of other minds. Artists' works interweave multiple social points of view as well as being individual expressions. Likewise, a specific artistic trope is only possible within the confines of the time and place where it is created, thus it reflects the cultural and temporal dependency of all tropes, even Lakoff's so-called foundational metaphors, at least in their concrete manifestations. Any theory I fashion must too, then, be framed by context. Yet I see this frame like the walls of an arena. Within its confines lie the elements with which the thought-game can be played, both in and against the rules.

Heteroglossia may be envisioned as an unsystematic, almost chaotic struggle of a variety of voices. Likewise, the "strongest" artworks (to return to Bloomian terminology) are many layered and composed, yet often not truly systematically unified, I contend. I see this in the novels of James Joyce, some of Pablo Picasso's most important works such as *Les Femmes d'Alger*, and the early installations of Dennis Oppenheim such as *Early Morning Blues*.



Pablo Picasso,
Les Femmes d'Alger,
oil on canvas,
1907,
243.9 x 233.7 cm / 96 in x 92 in



Denis Oppenheim,
Early Morning Blues,
 room installation,
 mixed media,
 1977,
 dimensions variable,
 5 ft diameter aluminum record player, 10 ft diameter neon hotplate

Continuing this line of reasoning, Bakhtin both asserts heteroglossia as a foundational truth and promotes its exploitation in writing. This is approach I use in my dissertation as well. Bakhtin finds an exemplary version of heteroglossic literature in the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky. This author created what Bakhtin terms a new *polyphonic* or *dialogic* form. The various points of view which arise in a novel, within or between characters, are presented and utilized, but not hierarchically ordered. The invention of a unique self in art, of a central trope as I will discuss in following chapters, comes about through antithetical struggle, as I have repeatedly asserted, hence I am frequently tempted to use the term *dialectical* when describing it. However, this term suggests very ordered conflicts between simple pairs of contradictions, which then result in clear syntheses. The formation of artistic tropes, and creative thought in general, I find accurately described in Bakhtin's terms. An artistic trope is dialogically forged and used. It revels in the interplay of equivocal, interlocked meanings. There are multiple theses and antitheses yielding no synthesis, but rather the opportunity for even more conflict. Such struggle is subversive and liberating. Similar to Bakhtin, I will define my theory as being fundamentally true of the arts, and yet I am also propagandizing for its more conscious and proficient application.

Finally, Bakhtin's use of the carnival as metaphor is attractive, albeit perhaps too often cited. Bakhtin asserts that literature can undermine the dominant conventions and rules through jesting and unruliness. In our time such festivities have disappeared, been

commercialized beyond use, or have degenerated into exploitative, sexist, drunken sprees. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri envision plurality itself as a potential carnivalesque arena of liberation in their book *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, one resistant to neo-liberal globalization and homogenization.²³ I believe the spirit of the carnival, as Bakhtin imagines it, lives on in the creation and enjoyment of tropes. Raman Selden describes this spirit as "collective and popular; hierarchies are turned on their heads...; opposites are mingled...; the sacred is profaned. The 'jolly relativity' of all things is proclaimed."²⁴ In my theorizing, the carnival as trope is replaced by the trope as carnival. Borrowing a phrase from Morson in his essay "Tolstoy's Absolute Language" wherein he describes the novel in Bakhtin's eyes, we might say that all central tropes "are framed by an implicit 'for instance'".²⁵

The effect Julia Kristeva has had on my deliberation can be summed up in four words: the possibility of resistance. As I searched the field, it appeared to me that the dominant forms of contemporary theorizing such as Deconstructionism was pathographic, seeing art as simply a symptom, forever doomed to morbidly mirror the diseases of the society surrounding it. It had not perhaps been originally so conceived, but in art critical practice, that is what the followers of Jacques Derrida had made of his theories. Reading Kristeva's works encouraged me in my search for a location in the creative practice itself where an "opening" could occur, where dominant tropes might be disrupted as well as expressed. This effort was an integral engine behind the origination of my exploration of theory. In Kristeva I saw the first glimmer of hope. Her form of feminism privileges opposition through a "dispersed" subject/speaker. The inherent contradiction of the process of likening one thing to another in tropes is central to my thinking. Creators may thus be seen as those who anarchistically answer the domineering assertion of rules as the Other, as the perennial foreigner. Kristeva's philosophy can be used in this way to supplement the Bakhtinian notion of liberating alternative voices. What would those voices say? Within the often fatalistic confines of poststructuralist theory, she contrarily traces the necessity of an outlet. John Lechte describes Kristeva's rich estimation of poetics. "It is precisely one of the features of poetic language, for example, that

²³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin 2004)

²⁴ Raman Selden, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 2d ed. (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 18.

²⁵ Gary Saul Morson, "Tolstoy's Absolute Language," in *Bakhtin, Essays and Dialogues on His Work*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 130.

it embodies contradiction."²⁶ Syntax, order and rules of form are turned topsy-turvy by pleasure, laughter and poetry. In this aspect of Kristeva's thought one can see that type of incorrigible play which occurs in metaphor-making — especially in those creative tropes which question, invert or criticize metaphors which are taken for granted in our culture. As I roamed through the various thinkers ideas, my thoughts increasingly crystallized around the individual creation of tropes as a potential avenue of resistance.

Acknowledging the historic and social situation in which any cultural entity is embedded must be an integral aspect of any useful theory of art. One school of literary theorists who accentuate this is termed either New Historicism or, alternately, Cultural Materialism. These thinkers remind us of the social contextuality of all thought, including their own. This is something which has not often been focused on in the discussions of various formalist and even deconstructivist critics, from the exclusively object-oriented theorists who dominated in the 70s when I was first studying art and art history through the solipsistic denials of meaning and agency in Postmodernism of the early 21st century. New Historicists assert that history is of primary importance, yet it is discontinuous and contradictory. It is in fact not an *it* at all — rather a *they*. History consists of multiple histories. As I develop my own theories, I feel it crucial to propose the necessity of multiple personal and social histories. Each person's history is invented. It cannot be viewed in a detached fashion, as it is rooted in desire. Furthermore, every individual history is actually an interwoven cable of multiple histories, each representing a contextual role or relationship of that human (class, gender, profession, geographical origin, social position, and so on). The strands twist about one another under the tension of the agon of that specific individual. By *person* I mean here creator, perceiver, critic, historian and more, even though I am emphasizing artists in this dissertation, for each of us is all of these and much else at one time or another.

In New Historicism, cultural objects such as literature and art are studied in context in order to recover as many contextual relationships as possible. Basing their thought heavily on the late works of Michel Foucault, these theorists in the U.S. tend to view the situation pessimistically. However, I would concur with their British counterparts, the Cultural Materialists, in interpreting it more positively. Each context itself is a precarious human

²⁶ John Lechte, *Julia Kristeva*, Critics of the Twentieth Century Series (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 95.

construct, not just the discreet objects situated therein. This is manipulable material, too. As both New Historicists and Cultural Materialists have pointed out, there are three possible responses to every authoritarian demand. There is not only the "yes, yes" of the good subject or vassal, but also the "no, no" of the bad subject or dissenter, and most importantly the third modality, the "not in that way" answer of the heretic. In a similar modality, one may see all three such responses in the development of creators' tropes. There is the good subject who reiterates the accepted metaphors of a time and place, pasting together available tropes. Depending on the circumstances, this can be culturally affirming or it can lead to academic doggerel or kitsch. Second, there is the trope created by the bad subject, which actively denies or negates metaphors generally taken for granted. Such a rebuttal also may lead in two directions. Either it is a stirring criticism suggesting new options of thought, or it results in a clichéd expression of simplistic nihilism. Finally, there is the third modality, which I seek to emphasize in my theory. This creator repudiates the unacceptable metaphors by questioning and bending them into surprises of new insight. Such authors tell us "not in the way commanded" and then carry on, showing us a new way to conceive of the experience under discussion.

Louis A. Montrose in "Professing the Renaissance," has described the New Historicism as the "poetics and politics of culture," and shown how this quickly leads to questions of political power and its effects on literature and art.²⁷ The Marxist Fredric Jameson is the theorist most rigorously analyzing the political aspects of culture, and he has originated an especially astute form of dialectical criticism. He attempts to view the individual, whether author or reader, within a larger context, particularly within social structures, while keeping an eye on the present and his own ideological position. Jameson has suggested that positions taken in postmodernism "can be shown to articulate visions of history, in which the evaluation of the social moment in which we live today is the object of an essentially political affirmation or repudiation."²⁸ According to Jameson, perceivers as well as creators of art works are clearly subjective, even fragmented and suppressed. Nevertheless, works of art and literature express the alienated condition of our time and yet also compensate for certain aspects of this loss through alternative offerings of fullness. This can be interpolated to be true

²⁷ Louis A. Montrose, "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 15-36.

²⁸ Fredric Jameson, "The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in The Postmodernism Debate," in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), p. 373.

of reception and interpretation as well. It is impossible to completely step outside the fact of our subjective perception, but works of art can assist us in rupturing the casings which continuously threaten to surround us — formed from the incrustations of our unquestioned assumptions. This action can bring about a widening of our subjective experience, an idea which meshes well with the philosophical theory of interpretation of Hans-Georg Gadamer, which is discussed below. It is also the aspect of Jameson's theories which I find most fecund.

Jameson has a strong sense of the urgency of concrete experience, however subjectively encountered it must always be. The form of literary works is always profoundly intertwined with the tangible. What is important is what a technique or structure can or cannot do, as engaged with the dominant cultural imperatives of its time and place. This is a fine observation that can be applied to visual art, especially painting, and the formation of individual tropes. The strength of a trope resides in what it can say or not say about lived experience. I agree with Jameson that reality is more than just a text. I feel his insight can be used to clarify one aspect of the confrontational interaction between artworks — the "text" — and subjective, yet not solipsistic, perceptions of palpable reality. As I studied Jameson's works, although I am inherently anti-formalist, I began to see that the concrete formal qualities of an artwork could be the site at which this clash transforms itself into a testing — in the service of meaning, that is of usefulness. Furthermore, the playfulness of a new trope helps rupture encrusted thought, and when it is broadly applied, supplies an example of a possible new fullness.

Jameson finds his ideas true of our understanding of narratives in general, as well as of the creation and formal presence of literature. Stories require interpretations and often our experiences are present in our mind as stories. Interpretation is thus one of our chief activities in life. Works of visual art likewise bring this to the fore by being necessarily open to various levels of reading, of construal. For Jameson, each interpretation is in some way true. Each explanation discloses a particular feature of the aesthetic object while evidencing a characteristic of society. I would add that it also reveals an attitude of acceptance, denial, or resistance to given interpretations. I realized that in my theory, I would attempt to describe how the elements of creative form in artworks are intertwined with material reality, as maintained by Jameson.

Various concepts derived from feminist literary theory have been partially surfacing in other contexts in this chapter up to this point. Feminist theory contains a wide, exhilarating range of approaches and concerns. Three specific considerations I find most valuable. First, many feminists concentrate on strategies of action. Although the majority of feminist literary critics also wield grand theories, they prefer to treat these as instruments applied to attain very specific goals. This is a pointed admonition for the recent art and literary worlds, especially for those of us who hypothesize gladly. Don't take your ideology for the very reality it seeks to describe or change! This reminds me that my interest is in constructing a theory, yet not an absolute one. Rather, one that grows from an appreciation of the nuts-and-bolts of production, and thereby endeavors to avoid too much abstracted absolutism. Second, the feminist concept of the located self is one of the great tools of thought in history. This is the elucidation of the fact that gender and the rest of one's personality are largely socially constructed, not solely biological givens. Each person consists of a web of locational connections. Returning us to my surveying metaphor, this idea shapes this chapter and my thought as a whole. Third, an appreciation made by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar is a key idea. They assert throughout their historic book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, that it is imperative for feminists to both partially comply with and yet contravene patriarchal literary standards.²⁹ There has been a backlash by those calling themselves post-feminists against certain elements of feminism they claim are misandrist and devious. Nevertheless, the qualities I find useful and have described are being constructively continued in the so-called third-wave feminists. As discussed in the section on Kristeva above, taken more broadly such strategies disclose the loophole through which resistance can come into existence. I find this loophole to be the play with tropes.

What still remains unrealized in criticism and theory, sadly, is Susan Sonntags far-sighted feminist call for an "erotics" of appreciation in place of a dry aesthetics. A philosophical wooing in this direction can be found in renowned art critic, art historian and psychologist Donald Kuspit's writings. In his book *Idiosyncratic Identities*, he formulated three vital necessities for rejuvenating art in our postmodern times, when "the avant-garde [has died] from entropic pursuit of novelty."³⁰ These requirements are: to find the heart of creativity in desire, to embrace idiosyncrasy, and to nourish one's yearning for healthiness. Kuspit has continued to promote and expand on these ideas in his recent works, including his

²⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1979).

³⁰ Donald Kuspit, *Idiosyncratic identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2.

critical essays on-line at *artnet.com*.³¹ I have learned from Sonntag and Kuspit about the necessity of including desire as an integral element. Desire clearly plays a role in antithetical strife, which is a form of competitive yearning. However, this struggle can be interpreted more broadly. Interaction with foundational tropes, as I discuss below, can be fertile ground for personal, idiosyncratic development, especially when questioning them, combining them in unique ways, or extending and elaborating them. I seek to develop a theory which in practice encourages unconventionality and manifests a desire for maturation on the part of the creator. Even if that maturity itself is not reached, the desire and will to achieve it is drive enough. The struggle to mature is a synecdoche of the will to reach psychological healthiness. In addition to leading us to a combined intellectual and sensual appreciation of literature and art, Kuspit's ideas could help us value "art that possesses a quality of desire that seems to undo the system from within, making it seem at odds with itself in unexpected subjective ways."³²

The next candidate for discussion may be construed as the suspicion and suppression of desire, hence the opposite of Kuspit's theory. Deconstruction has been the dominant influence on most postmodern literature and art, or at least on its critics. Therefore, every current theory must acknowledge this movement in some fashion; my analysis is primarily an attack on Deconstructivist fallacies and yet is colored by the movement as well. While its wittiest proponent has probably been Roland Barthes, the name which seems to pop up in most instances of art criticism is Jacques Derrida. I will not launch into a description of his work, as it has been discussed so extensively. In general, Deconstructivists concentrate on the relativistic indeterminacy of language, which leads them to doubt the possibility of any actual interaction with any "reality" outside expression itself (the "text" again). Furthermore, since every language structure is determined by its context, then every expression is suspect — it is seen as no more than the self-generated manifestation of an ahistorical, abstractly conceived hegemonic power. Critics can only hope to reveal the self-serving aspects of any utterance. This is the famous "death of the author," which pointedly does not include a similar "death of the theorist." In short, I feel they are trapped in the age-old problems of solipsism, blinded by their rediscovery of the fact that all awareness is mediated. As one aspect of their approach, many Deconstructivists in the visual artworld have denied any possibility or desire for meaning and ethics in art and literature, calling on practitioners of the arts to simply

³¹ *Artnet.com*, <http://www.artnet.com/>; archives at <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/authors/kuspit.asp>.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

concentrate on success. This places them squarely in the (also age-old) position of Socrates' great adversaries, the Sophists. "Nothing can be known, experienced or learned, but let us teach you about that." I see this as an especially malevolent strain of nihilism. The heyday of the hegemony of Deconstructionism seems to be slowly evaporating, yet there is little doubt that many postmodern artists still use these ideas quite consciously (e.g., David Salle, Barbara Kruger, most Neo-Conceptualists, etc.). At least, they can be said to work with Deconstruction as the principal component of their *Weltbild*. This, for example, results in the *Artforum* mode of criticism, a *mélange* of deconstructivist critical theory and quasi-Freudian psychoanalysis. Nonetheless, the technique of deconstruction can be a useful interrogative tool, particularly in the hands of feminists or queer theory thinkers. Disassembling potential, ignored, or suppressed "corruption" in cultural objects and texts can indeed be enlightening, although this notably works better with artifacts of commercial culture than with fine art and higher literature. My dispute with Deconstructivism, and my occasional use of deconstruction as an instrument, is incorporated into the structure of my theory itself and will come to the fore in various parts of this dissertation.

The final literary theory I will consider is the product of the novelist and media theorist Daniel Ammann. He has an inventive critical achievement in his identification of format as an important, intrinsic element of the formal and significative structure in all media. Format is only one segment of his complex analytical *Lesekompass* ("reading compass") in his essay "Pfade, Knoten, Leerstellen: Leserstimulation und textuelle Mitarbeit."³³ Ammann predicates three levels of orientation in interactions with communicative texts and objects. (He uses the word *text* in its widest sense, as entities being interpreted). The first of these is the *Instanzebene* ("level of activation"), which refers to the subject who interacts with the text, whether reader, viewer, author, artist, or community. Second, he posits a *Manifestationsebene* ("level of manifestation"), which consists of the text or other artifact being focused upon. Third, there is the *Implikationsebene* ("level of implication"): the background against which the text assumes form, such as the personal, cultural and social connotations and denotations of its elements for the author and/or reader.

³³ Daniel Ammann, "Pfade, Knoten, Leerstellen: Leserstimulation und textuelle Mitarbeit," in *Media Lesen: Der Textbegriff in der Medienwissenschaft*, ed. Daniel Ammann, Heinz Moser, and Roger Vaissière (Zurich: Verlag Pestalozzianum, 1999), pp. 10-34. All translations are mine, with discussion and the approval of Ammann.

The second of these levels has three subdivisions of its own: *Zeichen*, *Medium* and *Format*. The *Zeichen* ("sign") is the mark or series of indications of which one intends to construe a meaning — letters, words, drawn lines, electronic images, sounds, etc.; generally a system of these. *Medium* is the same word in English. By this Ammann means the tangible data-carrier, which is comprised of the material and the technology (as well as, perhaps, institution) in which the "manifestation" was created — a painting, a written book (*text* in the ordinary sense), sound waves, moving images, etc. Finally, *Format*, which can also remain the same word in English, denotes the *Aggregatzustand* (physical state) of the text, as Ammann describes it in this paper.³⁴ Format thus consists of the package of details of the particular data-carrier, the singular vehicle bearing that text — magnetic-tape cassette sound recording; middle-sized, easel, oil painting on canvas; square-bound, trade paper-back book; home, VHS videotape; DVD; mp3 encoding; and so on. The term *format* has several meanings outside Ammann's theory. *Format* often refers to computer discs, CDs, vinyl LPs, radio waves, projected slides, billboards, TV show genres, museum installations, and other such entities. All are explained well in his notion of format as the particulars of the holder and displayer of communication. While the listed examples are mostly media, according to Ammann's system, they are commonly discussed under the rubric of *format* because it is recognized that their importance lies in one or more of their specific characteristics, especially as these vary from earlier or more standard media forms. Format is truly these technical properties as pointed out by Ammann, not the medium in its entirety. The qualities which comprise format are those such as size, weight, scale, proportion, design, volume, duration, etc.

Format describes first and foremost the way in which information is stored or displayed on a data carrier, or how the content is constituted in a medium or through a specific piece of play-back equipment.³⁵

Ammann's insight, which I find applicable to visual art, is that the three elements of sign, medium and format are invariably present and inextricably intertwined. Furthermore, format as a concept had not previously been recognized for its importance and had not been extracted for analysis. Ammann's idea functions best as a re-reading of the relationship between the elements in those arts featuring what philosophers term the type/token distinction

³⁴ Ammann., p. 23.

³⁵ Ibid.

— novels, prints, poetry, multiples, etc. He radically and almost counter intuitively suggests that each token's potentialities reflectively leave tracks on the type itself. As an example, in the philosophy of art the term "work of phonography" has recently begun to appear to describe those pieces of music which exist solely or chiefly as manipulated studio effects, through multi-tracking and the like.³⁶ In his book *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*, Theodore Gracyk finds the definition of Rock music in its dedication to the priority of the recording; he maintains that live performances of this music generally nowadays imitate the studio-created version as closely as possible, thus displaying its preeminence.³⁷ Additionally, though, Ammann's theory of format is useful in reconsidering aspects of form in other sorts of art, such as those Noël Carroll calls template works (films) or one-of-a-kind works (paintings, drawings, direct sculpture), thus it is valuable for me. A traditional singular stone sculpture, for instance, is made of a specific marble (material) carved in particular ways (technique). However, it also possesses a certain size and scale in relation to viewers, and perhaps is intended for a specific location (cultural context) and makes use of anticipated light conditions (physical context); all of these elements are better understood in light of Ammann's concept of format rather than material or form in general. Examples of format becoming a chief element in artworks include Ad Reinhardt's black-on-black works which concentrate on aspects of painting which are unphotographable, Glen Gould's collage-like combinations of various recorded piano concert performances to make one track, David Mazzucchelli's drawings for comic books where the reproduction technology is anticipated (and where there is in fact no "original" outside of his layered production technique) — or, negatively, the occasional, unscrupulous practice of gluing drawings by famous artists on stretched canvas and claiming them to be paintings in order to demand higher prices. The last is a blatant misuse of format. It is a genuine Rothko, say, but a forged "painting."

Those seemingly incidental aspects of form which constitute the format of pieces of literature and art must also be taken into account in any creation or appreciation of a work. This serves for me as a reminder that they are not transparent as is often assumed. Essential, then, to understanding a created object is whether it is envisioned for broadcast, internet, to hang in a specific light situation, has a particular size or scale, will exist in several formats

³⁶ Theodore Gracyk, mentioned in the following lines, appears to be the source of this term in its present sense, although it is now in wide use.

³⁷ Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996).

simultaneously, was intended for a specific context, utilizes aspects of its own reproduction, etc., or denies any of these. Thus, format is a newly discovered aspect of form, which like others mentioned (material, size, syntax, handling, brushstroke, vocabulary and so on), becomes fodder for tropaic development. It displays how all formal and technical components, even those yet unrecognized, can be either used to produce a metaphor, or integrated into a creator's trope under the rubric of pervasiveness, which I explore in individual artists and works in subsequent chapters.

Although various literary theories such as those I have discussed have been the prevailing creative force behind most recent aesthetics, the tide may be changing once again. Visual-generated tropes of thought are entering into a dialogue with the dominant literary and verbal metaphors of thought. W.J.T. Mitchell contends in his book *Picture Theory*, that a new "turn" — the "pictorial turn" — will supplant the study of cultural as we have known it under the sign of the "linguistic turn." He models his phrase after Richard Rorty's term for this dominance of verbal metaphor. This is amazing coming from Mitchell, one of the leading theorists today and the editor of *Critical Inquiry*, certainly one of the chief propagators of literary theories of the verbal-Deconstructivist bent. Although published 14 years ago and even now not yet clearly manifested, this is obviously good news for painters. Painters, even those seen as conceptually-oriented, are suspect for all the obvious reasons: sensuality, insufficient fashion consciousness, working with their own hands, non-verbal thought and so on. Novelists similarly create works which are too messy, not chastely intertextual enough, with their life-like dialogue, multiple characters, visual descriptions, mood evocation and — most frustrating — their continuous, frustratingly non-ironic pointing to life, even in and through the novel's own meta-existence. As Mitchell writes though, this turning away from a purely textual basis, from "linguistics, semiotics, rhetoric, various models of 'textuality'" will not be

a return to naive mimesis, copy or correspondence theories of representation, or a renewed metaphysics of pictorial "presence"....

... It is the realization that *spectatorship* (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of

reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that visual experience or "visual literacy" might not be fully explicable on the model of textuality.³⁸

In my conjecture, I endeavor to construct a tool not limited to the verbal metaphor of "text." Of course, my theory, as most, is clearly rooted in poetics, which had its origin in rhetoric and the analysis of purely verbal art. Literary and cultural theory, as shown in my discussion, is an influential context within which my theory attempts to interject itself, both to join in the discussion and to refute certain assertions. In his essay "Let the Fresh Air In: Graduate Studies in the Humanities," Ihab Hassan has made a good point about the place of theory in the study of literature in general.

Despite my objections and objurgations, I believe that theory has a place in the curriculum: a *skeptical place*. I mean that it must be approached with skepticism, and that it is itself a form of skepticism. Etymologically, theory derives from the Greek *theoria*, viewing or contemplation. But the intelligent eye also questions what it sees. At its best, then — as in the best of Derrida — theory is a mode of sustained interrogation. Interrogation does not mean deconstruction only; interrogation can proceed by models and metaphors, ways of probing reality by constructions of counter-reality. At its best, theory becomes a kind of quizzical poesis.³⁹

Contemporary Philosophy

Philosophy matters. It matters more than most people realize, because philosophical ideas that have developed over the centuries enter our culture in the form of a world view and affect us in thousands of ways. Philosophy matters in the academic world because the conceptual frameworks upon which entire academic disciplines rest usually have roots in philosophy — roots so deep and invisible that they are usually not even noticed.

— George Lakoff⁴⁰

³⁸ W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 11-16.

³⁹ Ihab Hassan, "Let the Fresh Air In: Graduate Studies in the Humanities," in *Beauty and the Critic: Aesthetics in an Age of Cultural Studies*, ed. James Soderholm (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), p. 195.

⁴⁰ George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things : What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 157.

The aesthetics half of this chapter begins on a more positive note than the subsection above on literary criticism, but the positions of the two entities are roughly similar in their influence on my thought. I have been more deeply involved with logic and philosophy for a longer time than I have been with literary theory; hence, although my work here can be seen as a form of literary and artistic theory, it bears the impress of much aesthetic conjecture. The contemporary philosophy of art has supplied me with essential concepts that I have used in my reasoning. The philosophers who interest me have more fundamental concerns than literary theorists — generally questions of ontology, epistemology, phenomenology, occasionally problems of metaphysics, politics, logic, aesthetic quality, and more.

George Dickie has pointed out an important distinction between the descriptive and the evaluative senses of the phrase "a work of art." This is especially important to explain when teaching and discussing art and art history and bears heavily on my theorizing. Eliding the two aspects Dickie mentions leads to many of the problems people have in separating judgments of quality from mere category decisions. In this dissertation, my theory will not directly engage the question of whether or not the creation of what I have subsequently come to call a metaphor(m) or central trope is an element in a descriptive, categorical definition of art itself. This could be a potential area of consideration in the future. Certainly, however, various theories of the ontology of art, and my reactions to them, color my thought, therefore I discuss them below. Nonetheless, I wish to concentrate primarily on the epistemological and evaluative. I am seeking a theory which gives insight into aspects of how great works of art are formed and how they refer to life beyond their formal boundaries.

Whereas Dickie is concerned with the definition of art itself, Monroe C. Beardsley's ontology concerns the definition of the philosophy of art. He asserts that aesthetics equals metacriticism, which in turn suggests new possibilities for theorizing. To me, a useful theory of art must be clearly both creator-based and object-based, while assuming an active perceiver.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (in certain of his so-called "later" ideas) must be acknowledged as a steady influence on my thought. I find two of his interlocked concepts highly useful: that of the game as an important metaphor, and his "family resemblance" concept for categorization. In *Philosophical Investigation*, Wittgenstein described his notion simply.

67. I can think of no better expression to characterise these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, feature, colour of eyes, gait, temperament etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way — And I shall say: 'games' form a family.⁴¹

The notion of the game has clear affinities with my discussion of metaphor development. The family resemblance concept can be used to best describe the divisions of the arts, not to deny art a definition as a whole. That is, it assists in our understanding of how painting, performance art, realistic novels, Dada, Matisse, conceptual statements, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, and Shakespeare can all be parts of one category titled "the arts." Envision each style or movement as a circle overlapping several other circles, but not all of them. Extend this three-dimensionally in order to include genres and disciplines such as the novel, the romance, abstraction, installation, and the epic. Each resultant sphere has close partners with which it shares certain qualities; there is a progression from any point on our constellation of intersecting spheres to any other, yet the spots farthest apart do not actually have any shared characteristics. I would not, however, like to extend this to the point of canceling the possibility of any definition of art. There may not be one shared quality that determines what is included in "the arts," yet perhaps there is some other unifying idea behind that category. For instance, there might be a function, action or cultural position in which all manifestations of art participate. In our time, I believe art's task consists largely of encouraging the activity of interpretation through trope-making, which increasingly subsists in the transgressive questioning of culturally-given tropes. In practice, whatever the definition of art may be in an abstract sense, individual works in the arts are conjoined through family resemblance.

The mere fact of its social "framing" has been declaimed recently as the defining quality of art, perhaps in order to oppose the anti-categorical prodigality suggested by Wittgenstein's notion. The philosopher and art critic Danto, who was mentioned above, has given rise to a new theory of the ontology of art, which is currently the most wide-spread and influential one. This is called the "institutional theory of art" and is the creation of George Dickie, who was inspired to develop it after reading Danto's works. Danto may be responsible for the notion, but he has continuously worked to distance himself from it, if rather unsuccessfully. Dickie's

⁴¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), quoted in R. A. Sharpe, *Contemporary Aesthetics: A Philosophical Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 28.

assertion is that an object becomes art through being accepted by those with power in the artworld. Thus, to generalize, art is defined by institutional acceptance, hence the name of the theory. There is, for Dickie, no essential quality which defines art as a whole. In a very watered-down and sociological form this belief has come to dominate much of the visual artworld, and has trickled into other fields, such as literature. Making works which illustrate this point has engendered some very mechanically vacuous art and criticism, which is probably the cause for Danto's distrust of the logical outcome of his own endeavors.

Danto has other ideas and purposes as well. One discerning perception he has made is that art, at least since Duchamp, has tried to become the philosophy of itself. Most of contemporary literature and art has indeed become, or at least integrated, its philosophy of itself. I am guilty of this too, in my paintings, writings, and to an extent in the theory I am developing here. Yet, I assert that this can work in other directions than those that now predominate. Unfortunately, many admirers of the institutional theory do not realize that this incorporation of philosophy into works of literature and art does not limit them to doubting their own existence. Philip Ursprung has effectively and surprisingly revealed an anticipation of this problem in his book *Grenzen der Kunst*.⁴² He discusses how the artists Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson, each in his own fashion, altered the dominant question "what is art?" to "where is art?", thereby challenging not only art production but also art history writing to transform ontology into a unique form of epistemology. Yet this entails a new set of epistemological questions, not the traditional one of "can we learn from art, and if so what?", rather "does art serve as a tool of understanding?", "is art a model of ever-expanding and inclusive interpretation?" and others. There are indeed many major questions and fields of philosophy besides ontology, and even within ontology there are many potential responses beyond cynicism. This popular, simplified institutional theory has been a kind of fuel refined from cynicism thrown on the bonfire of sophistry built by critics enamored of literary theorists. By basing my conjecture on interpretation through trope as thought process, I believe I can discover a vital function of art which includes as one element, but not solely, "framing" — as seen in the institution of the artworld. The social or cultural conditions in which literature or visual art is disseminated is one of many elements which could be utilized in the making of art.

⁴² Philip Ursprung, *Grenzen der Kunst: Allan Kaprow und das Happening, Robert Smithson und die Land Art* (Munich: Verlag Silke Schreiber, 2003).

According to Danto in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, aesthetics must be separated from art in order to re-enfranchise both. This, he feels, is the necessary activity to be conducted now that we have experienced "the end of art history." This end, though, is not the end of art, as it is often misinterpreted.⁴³ It is the death of the western-Eurocentric master narrative, that single simple march-of-history idea, which was taken for granted until recently. I fail to see this as a cause for despondency as so many people do, although their disquiet is understandable. History has ended only as a singularity. It has a new beginning as a plurality (although not truly pluralism, I argue), which again brings us to an expanded image of the "text" as a braided cable or rope of many strands.⁴⁴ Perhaps, this is a situation for rejoicing as we are finally beginning to see beyond our self-imposed limitations. Any such tale of dominance cannot end soon enough. It is simply the long, drawn-out result of post-colonial depression by once-and-not-future kings. This is the inevitable result of the pressure of realizing the existence of the rest of the world, including other peoples, other cultures, other continents, other sexes, other classes, other levels (i.e. "low" popular art), in short, the pressure of accepting others. Re-enfranchisement is important, but it must be "worked through" to come into existence; it cannot be merely announced or accomplished in gestures. We now have a conceptual consciousness which offers the opportunity for an antithetical misprision of the intellectuality and expansion of art Duchamp gave us against his own will. What we have experienced is the death of one major foundational metaphor. Let us try to replace it with more inclusive and charitable ones.

In his essay "Refining Art Historically," Jerrold Levinson has proposed a logical, historical widening of the Dickie/Danto institutional theory into an interpretive one emphasizing conscious tradition. He sums his theory up in one sentence. "In short, it is [the view] that an artwork is a thing (item, object, entity) that has been seriously intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art, i.e., regard in any way *preexisting artworks are or were correctly regarded*."⁴⁵ This is a promising re-reading of the institutional theory, subsuming it into a

⁴³ Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). In "The End of Art" chapter of this book, Danto clearly describes the end of history, rather than art itself: "When one direction is as good as another...." He feels that art will now be too free, as the institutions to which it is subservient "wither away" (both page 115).

⁴⁴ The idea of conceiving of and teaching art history as a braided rope rather than a (time) line in the usual fashion is a project critic John Perrault and I have both been working on for some time, both independently and in collaboration.

⁴⁵ Jerrold Levinson, "Refining Art Historically," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47, no. 1, (winter 1989), p. 21, italics in original.

wider and yet more personally delineated field. I would add that part of the definition of art is to explore this "regard" through tropes, that art seeks to defy previous definitions and redefine itself. Art has a metaphoric, agonistic ontology, which is procedural and functional: things made to be regarded and interpreted as art-as-before *and* not as-art-as-before.

By contrast with the institutional theory's literally circumstantial explanation of art, philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer offers an epistemological, process-oriented rendition. Gadamer has more bearing on metaphor, and thus on my theory, than one would at first imagine. He hardly discusses metaphor in his major works. Yet his ideas, especially the remarkable one of the "circle of understanding," have extensive implications for analyzing how our understanding operates through tropes. Joel Weinsheimer, in his book *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory*, maintains that metaphor is implicit in Gadamer's thinking.

I began my discussion of Gadamer by deriving the metaphoricity of understanding from his twin theses that language is fundamentally metaphorical and that language makes understanding possible. Clearly, Gadamer's emphasis on language owes much to Heidegger, but in this respect Gadamer is indebted to the later Heidegger of *Unterwegs zur Sprache* — not *Sein und Zeit*. Unlike [Gadamer's] *Truth and Method*, *Being and Time* situates the as-structure of understanding prior to language. For just this reason, it clarifies the thesis being considered here: namely that understanding is metaphorical. Beginning with Aristotle, metaphor has been assigned to the domain of rhetoric, and as a result, we have come to conceive it as a specific figure of speech, an identifiable form of language to be discriminated from other, nonmetaphorical forms. *Being and Time*, however, suggests that the as-structure of understanding operates in advance of language and therefore that the metaphoricity of understanding can be neither confirmed nor denied by the presence or absence of any particular figure of speech.⁴⁶

Gadamer's explication of the fundamental metaphoricity of understanding itself is valuable, both in his works and those of Weinsheimer, who has translated Gadamer and developed his ideas as they apply to literary theory. This is what lead me indirectly later to cognitive metaphor theory. Gadamer's chief work is *Truth and Method*,⁴⁷ Weinsheimer's are

⁴⁶ Joel Weinsheimer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 76.

⁴⁷ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, revised translation by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Seabury Press, 1989).

*Gadamer's Hermeneutics*⁴⁸ and *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory*. These books have profound implications on my thought. Gadamer terms his approach "philosophical hermeneutics." It carries on the tradition of hermeneutics founded in authors such as Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Ricœur. It can be seen as related, in a way, to the earlier religious hermeneutics through Luther heading all the way back to the origin of the word in Greek usage, meaning "things for interpreting." Yet Gadamer's version of this practice is overwhelmingly philosophical. It is a detailed, epistemological exploration of how understanding *itself* comes into being, not just an excavation of symbol-laden texts as one often pictures hermeneutics. I find Gadamer's ideas extremely important for correctly conceiving of the artistic process.

The two elements of Gadamer's philosophy which have the most relevance to my understanding of art are his assertion of the "limits of method" and his exposition of the "circle of understanding," with its component "the fusion of horizons." Gadamer accepts the fact that methodology, as specific strategies of interaction, is unavoidable, especially for science. Nevertheless, much in the same spirit that feminists harbor concerns about theorizing in the abstract, he points out that we must be self-consciously aware of the methods we use, for they foreclose potential avenues of perception as much as they open them. Most methodologies, such as that of the natural sciences as well as those of many artistic directions, claim to be the unique road to truth. Method is not transparent; it is opaque with prejudices — which word Gadamer uses to mean "pre-judgments" or "ideas-before-hand," not racial discrimination.

Bringing this principle to play on my own developing theory, it called attention to the fact that we must use such theories in art as tools, yet include a touch a self-doubt in their manipulation. I desire my theory to be an informative way to discover how creators achieve works which become irreplaceable parts of our lives. Great artworks, though, matter more than any theory; they are not illustrations of them. Each painting is larger than any of the explanations of it. My theory will be a model for use in understanding and creating works of art, which are themselves models for interpreting experience.

⁴⁸ Joel Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985).

Gadamer's hermeneutic circle of understanding is one of the great insights in philosophy — and difficult to condense. Weinsheimer describes it as an "infinite dialectic — that is, the circle — of part and whole, in which the whole undergoes a perpetual enlargement through the fecundity of the exemplary particular."⁴⁹ As I see it, according to Gadamer's account, each instance of understanding conforms to a pattern similar to the following script: A perceiver encounters an experience (object, event, book, idea, etc.) This perceiver necessarily and unavoidably carries into this action prejudices, which are conditions that are the results of history, culture, society and previous adventures. He or she projects these prejudices imaginatively onto the experience in order to begin to attempt to understand it. Anders Engstrøm would say that this is a proposition.⁵⁰ Such a projection involves, in my terms, tropes. These are not propositions themselves, but the act is proposal-like: that is, these preconceptions are offered to the mind for contingent consideration. Such pre-judging is not right or wrong, it simply is. There is no perception "objectively" outside it and no perception so "subjective" as to be ahistorically independent of it. The perceiver's notions-in-advance are bounced off what is experienced, thus tested by application. Inevitably, they fall short of fully encompassing the experience; they may even be found to be completely false. We humans, therefore, (may) learn something with each interaction, each testing of a trope. Gadamer calls the desire for this understanding a "passion" rather than a process. The entire package of one's viewpoints is envisioned by Gadamer as a "horizon." Through the circle of understanding, one's horizon is matched to another horizon. Thereby, horizons are fused, each is widened. In the alien or foreign horizon, one must find oneself, i.e. some aspects of one's own horizon. This allows the perceiver to come to be "at home" in the new, expanded horizon. Likewise, one must find elements of the alien in oneself to accomplish any understanding. We cannot avoid ideas-in-advance as much as put them under the pressure of the desire to interpret and learn through experience. This is an exegesis of lived encounter. In the creation of works of art, artists continuously phenomenologically "throw" themselves, in a Heideggerian sense, into new encounters. We test the particulars of our horizons against the whole of experience ("reality"). The particulars of an incident, of each new artwork, test the whole of each of our horizons.

⁴⁹ Weinsheimer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 55-56.

⁵⁰ Anders Engstrøm, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor Revisited," *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1999: 53-61.

Gadamer's circle of understanding, described in *Truth and Method*, has clear consequences for interpretation in general, but also for understanding art.

Anyone who wants to understand a text always performs an act of projection. He projects in advance a sense of the whole as soon as an initial sense appears. Likewise the initial sense appears only because one is already reading with certain expectations of a definite meaning. In working out such a fore-projection, which is of course continually revised, consists the understanding of what is there.⁵¹

A similar, complementary hypothesis was proposed by Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, in an expansion of the ideas of Pragmatic philosopher John Dewey. As I mentioned in the "Prelude," learning can be seen as a recurring course of action centered on open-ended assessment. One learns, tests, corrects and re-tests, adjusting ones knowledge even to the extent of allowing amendment of the initial aim itself, thus forming a double-loop of learning.⁵² The arts involve hermeneutic circles-within-circles, an idea which meshes well with what I have called the questioning of metaphors. The circle of understanding is how we put the tropes we already bear into application, finding them useful or inadequate. This then elicits the creation of more effective ones. There is one prominent doubled-circle for creators. There is the hermeneutic circle of understanding the experience of life in general and another intertwined circle of understanding the possibilities available in ones media, tools, process, and other aspects of form. For most authors and artists these two are indivisible. In his sonnets, Michelangelo, for example, could not see his love for Vittoria Colonna except through his love for stone carving. I wish to develop this doubled-circle within a cognitive theory of trope.

In some coteries it is disputed if my next thinker of choice is truly a philosopher or not. Cornel West is a professor of Afro-American Studies and of Religion, yet he contributes one of the most stirring political philosophies now in discussion. He, in turn, doubts the relevance of much of the literary-critical thought now being idolized. West has said in an interview with Anders Stephanson in *Art and Philosophy*, that "the linguistic model itself must be questioned. The multi-level operations of power within social practices — of which language

⁵¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, quoted in Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, p. 166.

⁵² Chris Argyris and David A. Schön, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

is one — are more important." ⁵³ His work revolves around questions of power and inequities in society. West's philosophy has been a central inspiration behind my thought. West supplies ideas which meld well with my notions and allow the examination of ways in which trope may be used in questioning foundational reasoning and subverting harmful metaphors.

West calls his approach "prophetic pragmatism." This term describes his philosophy well. West is concerned with hopeful analysis, the prophetic, and realistic action, the pragmatic. Prophetic pragmatism "promotes the possibility of human progress *and* the human impossibility of paradise." ⁵⁴ Prophetic thought, according to West, can be broken down into four basic components: discernment, connection, tracking hypocrisy, and hope. "Discernment" means being historical and analytical; "connection" is his word for cultivating empathy with others; "tracking hypocrisy" is the demand that humans, especially intellectuals, be self-critical and not self-righteous; "hope" is his call that we face our contemporary, generally accepted misanthropic disbelief in humans as a challenge. ⁵⁵ In this light, one can understand West's controversial Left Christianity (many in the political Left do not like his Christianity, many Christians do not care for his social politics). His involvement with progressive African-American churches is instrumental to the extent that he finds in them "resources for sustenance and survival." He is a genuine believer as well, stating that he finds "Christian narratives and stories empowering and enabling." ⁵⁶

West is an adamant critic of nihilism, especially because of its current, fashionable acceptance by many creators and scholars. His clear-sighted accounts of this phenomenon in the interview in *Art and Philosophy* demonstrate where his hopefulness merges with his pragmatism.

[N]ihilism is not *cute*. We are not dancing on Nietzsche's texts here and *talking* about nihilism, we are in a nihilism that is *lived*. We are talking about real obstacles to the sustaining of a *people*. ⁵⁷

⁵³ Cornel West, interview with Anders Stephanson in *Art and Philosophy*, ed. Giancarlo Politi (Milan, Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1991), p. 155.

⁵⁴ West, *Prophetic Reflections: Notes on Race and Power in America*, Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism, vol. 2 (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1993), p. 10; all italics in quotations from West are in the original.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-6.

⁵⁶ *Idem*, *Art and Philosophy*, pp. 160-161.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Reality exists in what West repeatedly calls "brutal fact," especially for those without much power such as disadvantaged minorities.

[T]here is a reality *that one cannot not know*. The ragged edges of the Real, of *Necessity*, not to be able to eat, not to have shelter, not to have health care, all this is something that one cannot not know. The black condition acknowledges that.⁵⁸

It is mandatory, then, that we hope against all hope. Creative and theoretical activity must be foregrounded against a background of the tragic. "Culture is, in part, convincing people not to kill themselves....," West has written in *Prophetic Reflections*, continuing that "the question becomes, then, as cultural critics and as cultural artists, how do we generate vision and hope?"⁵⁹ One answer I came to, inspired by West, is that we could do so by building new tropes to live by, ones which criticize inadequate cultural metaphors, but additionally point to wider vistas of inspiriting desire — metaphors of operativeness for "existential empowerment."⁶⁰ I thus began to see West, and many of the others mentioned above, through the lens of metaphor, although I encountered their work before I discovered cognitive linguistics.

One function of art which has continually resurfaced in this chapter and underlies all my art theories is that art is the creation of opportunities for imaginative, tropaic interpretation. Robert A. Sharpe's version of this idea is of such centrality to my thought that I already have had to apply it several times in the discussions above before properly presenting this philosopher. In his book *Contemporary Aesthetics: A Philosophical Analysis*, Sharpe offers a profound, elegant definition of art which is able to account for its complexity and contrariness.⁶¹

Works of art are not merely objects *of* interpretation. Many objects are objects of interpretation. Works of art are also created or presented as candidates for the peculiar form of interpretation described [in his book]. As good a conclusion as any is the slogan, 'Works of art are objects *for* interpretation.'⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 161.

⁵⁹ West, *Prophetic Reflections*, vol. 2, p.4-5.

⁶⁰ Idem, *Art and Philosophy*, p. 168.

⁶¹ R. A. Sharpe, *Contemporary Aesthetics: A Philosophical Analysis*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

⁶² Ibid., p. 185, italics in original.

The uniqueness of Sharpe's insight is that artworks are objects presented for *multiple* interpretations. Great works may even call for continuous, midrash-like re-interpretation by readers and even from their own creators, which helps explain why writers and artists sometimes change their minds about what a work means after it has been long completed. Sharpe's philosophy suggests the essentiality in all art of a multiplicity of interlocked metaphorical readings, and the greater the abundance converging in the work, the more wonderful the work

Cognitive Linguistics

While reading Paul Ricœur's *The Rule of Metaphor*⁶³ and the wonderful short collection *On Metaphor* edited by Sheldon Sacks,⁶⁴ I realized that the study of the creation of meaning through tropes within the larger field of metaphor studies was indeed the path my thoughts had brought me down. In examining as many sources as I could find, which was not then all that extensive, I discovered *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.⁶⁵ In this short book, I found a lucid, well-written portrayal of metaphor and its significance to our thought processes and therefore our lives. Although now a classic, the text was then rather fresh. In fact it still is in many ways, as it has revolutionized metaphor and linguistic studies but hardly has had an impact on fine art yet. The ideas of cognitive metaphor studies, as they are now known, present in that book and its follow-ups are even actively resisted in the literary and artworlds, when they are known at all — as is also often true of the notions of Harold Bloom, my other major influence. (It has been pointed out to me that I am lucky that I am not a 20-something wishing to teach in a major Anglo-American or French university, as my choices of scholars are too controversial.)

Metaphors We Live By made me aware that I was not interested in "figurative language" — or its visual equivalent — in the simple rhetorical sense, nor for purely formal reasons, nor for its deconstruction, but rather for the way this conception manifested itself in a lucid systematic process, one which could integrate all my other discoveries in those thinkers

⁶³ Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

⁶⁴ Sheldon Sacks, ed., *On Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁶⁵ Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980; paperback, 1981).

described above, others unnamed and my own extrapolations. The authors Lakoff and Johnson and their colleagues, especially Mark Turner, went on to write a variety of books, all of which I found exciting. Each expands upon particulars of cognitive metaphor theory or other aspects of cognitive linguistics. These include *Philosophy in the Flesh*,⁶⁶ *More than Cool Reason*,⁶⁷ and many others including the very recent book, *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*.⁶⁸ *More than Cool Reason* delves into specific literary texts (e.g., Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death," Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 and, most remarkably, William Carlos Williams's "The Jasmine Lightness of the Moon"), which suggested to me the prospect of comparable considerations of visual art. The implications of cognitive metaphor theory spread far beyond the initial authors' presentations. Lakoff, Johnson and Turner may be most valuable for pointing the way, practically insisting that others extend their notions and apply them to other questions and fields. Lakoff and his colleagues started a series of major breakthroughs in understanding tropes. Especially in the last few years, major cross-disciplinary communication has been cultivated concerning the connection between "poetics" and thought in general. Such a large portion of research is grounded in cognitive psychology that some even call this new outlook on the mind a "cognitive revolution." The literature on the subject has exploded.

Lakoff and other researchers of cognitive metaphor point to a wider cultural application of metaphor as a thought process, one which underlies even language itself, thus is not dependent on it. This is the portal allowing us to explore other rooms in the architecture of thought, not just the windowless library which too many poststructuralist literary theories seem to take for the whole building. It is metacritically meta-formal, emphasizing cognition and content. Analysis of the process of art-making as a cognitive process offers opportunities for uniting a hermeneutics of suspicion with a hermeneutics of appreciation, leading to one of discovery. I see in it a great opportunity for understanding art history and the process of art-making.

⁶⁶ Idem, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

⁶⁷ Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁶⁸ Turner, ed., *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

There continue to be developments within cognitive metaphor theory, such as its coordination with the mapping of the cerebral cortex and most importantly for me, conceptual blending. Gilles Fauconnier in collaboration with Mark Turner created this theory, which ideally supplements Lakoff's theory of metaphor.⁶⁹ I will be referring to it in later chapters. I began to apply many tools from cognitive metaphor theory to visual art such as "image mapping" and "image schemes." I also find it instructive to see where the vocabulary of "foundational cognitive metaphors" is at work in the formal, technical, and stylistic aspects of the works of artists.⁷⁰ Yet the basics of cognitive metaphor theory are most important to me. Under the inspiration of Lakoff, Johnson and Turner, I made the personal discovery which is the foundation of this dissertation, that artists create for themselves new metaphors to live by, which readers or viewers can then also use to think with and live by.

Useful Trope

Then there is the story of the two detectives in the Chicago Police Department. One was a naive realist who believed literally in the copy theory of representation. The other was a sophisticated irrealist who believed in the relativity and arbitrariness of representation. Both detectives, it seems, had to be fired from the force: the realist, because he didn't see any need to arrest a suspect if he already had a mug shot; the irrealist, because once he had a mug shot, he started arresting everyone in sight.⁷¹

This joke illustrates well the state of literary and art criticism for some time. I have used this chapter to locate my theory within this situation, mapping the distances between my notions and a variety of philosophers and literary-critical theorists. In addition to these cursorily delineated links, the theory of central trope is grounded in cognitive metaphor theory. Metaphor theory offers a path out of the two "prison houses", or misuses, of language described above in Mitchell's joke. What Th. Emil Homerin has written of metaphor and naive belief in the context of religion holds for the arts as well.

⁶⁹ Gilles Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002; paperback, 2003).

⁷⁰ "Foundational metaphors," "image-mapping" and "image schemes" are important in all the publications of George Lakoff and his co-scholars. Foundation metaphors were brought to the attention of a wide public first through the book *Metaphors We Live By*. The best short descriptions of image-mapping and image schemes are in Lakoff and Turner's *More than Cool Reason*.

⁷¹ Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 345.

When a myth or belief is no longer accepted as a literal account, whether due to a period of crisis or cultural transition, it may be recast in a new form, humanizing and assimilating more primitive dimensions by the symbolic and evocative nature of metaphor. The primary symbols of a culture are then perceived and colored by the individual consciousness receiving a specific complexion over long periods of time, and their multiple, often subtle, meanings lend themselves to those religious and poetic usages whose function is to establish man's meaningful existence in a seemingly indifferent world.⁷²

Certain assumptions may, following Homerin's assertion, become more useful, not less. Art works which were previously viewed as "inspired oracles of an ecstatic saint" may now be interpreted as "profound descriptions of humanity's existential state."⁷³ This is not a loss, except perhaps of naïveté, but rather a gain in understanding.

In the next chapter I present the theory that I coalesced out of all my concerns, all my wanderings and my surveying of useful contemporary theories. Following chapters continue to investigate the theory and its application, testing it and thereby perhaps even altering it, in a series of double circles of interaction with artists and artworks, including my own. My theory, which I now call metaphor(m) or central trope, I believe, is true for all the arts, literature, visual art, music et al., yet I will be discussing visual art principally. The human, artistic gap between experience and its interpretation is art's proper focal point. The distance between our desire to connect and the complex impossibility of transparent communication or unmediated perception allows tropaic mistakes of wonderful richness.

⁷² Th. Emil Homerin, "Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44, no. 2 (1985): 174.

⁷³ Idem, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fārid, His Verse, and His Shrine*, Studies in Comparative Religion (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), p. 96.

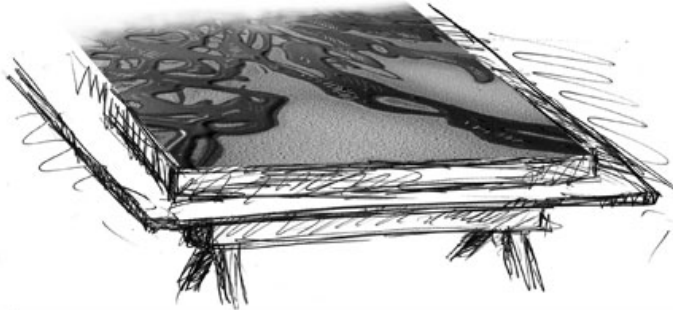
CHAPTER ONE: THE SEQUENCE

I call this chapter "Wandering and Surveying: Links to Literary Theory and Contemporary Aesthetics."



As I wrote, I retraced my search through a variety of contemporary literary theories and aesthetic philosophies, "tying them in" to my personal perceptions concerning art. This is, then, "a survey of the literature," wherein I attempted to locate my developing theory within the world of theories, using surveying as a handy metaphor — "locating" my ideas in relationship to already documented theoretical sites.

You have read the result. Now I am in the process of completing the Cover painting which appeared at the beginning of this chapter and another, larger painting charting the content of this chapter. It will follow this comic art sequence.



I am also drawing this comic! After critiques from my professors, I will put this all up on-line, as before.



Here are drawings of many of the theoreticians I discussed.



Next will be a description and presentation of where this wandering and surveying led me: Chapter Two, "The Theory of Central Trope: Metaphor and Meta-Form."