Literature as Societal Therapy: Appresentation, *Epoché*, and *Beloved*

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1 Introduction

Wolfgang Iser's theory of aesthetic response (*Wirkungstheorie*), related to but distinct from the more literary-historically ordered reception theory of aesthetics (*Rezeptionstheorie*), represents a significant phenomenological contribution to broader discussions of the relationship of philosophy to literature (Iser 1980). While agreeing with much of Iser's views on the act of reading of novels, in particular, I will argue that a greater appreciation for the literary *epoché* and for a systematic understanding of the role of transcendencies and appresentation in novel-reading would enrich Iser's own approach. Such appreciation would show the continuity and discontinuity between the novel's appresentational levels and make clearer its event-like character and its distinctive cognitive nature. On the basis of this discussion of appresentation, which will be exemplified by *Beloved*, a novel about slavery in the pre-bellum United States by Nobel-prize winning author Toni Morrison, I will extend Iser's theory by arguing that one possible function for literature might be to effect societal therapy, as *Beloved* exemplifies.

2 Iser's *Wirkungstheorie*

Distinguishing himself from Roman Ingarden, who undertook the different phenomenological task of examining the text as an intentional object constituted of quasi-judgments in contrast with everyday reality, Iser, like Schutz, emphasizes that the text pertains more to the sphere of intersubjective communication insofar as it

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brings about an effect that is not to be measured against a search for truth. The text produces an experience, rather than offers an explanation; provides instructions for the production of what is signified rather than denoting an object; and instead of simply deviating from the norm of everyday life, it deviates "into sense" (Iser 1980, p. 90). Locating the author at the artistic pole and the reader at the aesthetic pole, Iser, in good phenomenological style, correlates object and subject, text-structures and reader's acts, and envisions texts as mobilizing readers' uptake and providing an array of signifiers to be received by readers, with the result that the literary work must be taken for the product of the interaction between text and reader. The text by reason of its indeterminacy allows for a variety of reader actualizations, which, nevertheless, are constrained by undeniable features of the text. Though segments of the text often release the reader's passive synthesizing activity,[1] Iser develops an active, creative role for the reader whose "wandering viewpoint" becomes entangled in the text, selectively noticing details, supplying lacks, ideating meanings, altering its views as it critically progresses from one character's perspective and event to another, and assembling a systematized aesthetic object. In his view we are so "caught up in the very thing we are producing" (Iser 1980, p. 127) that it is as if we are living another life as we read (Iser 1980).[2]

Fiction requires greater activity than is necessary in everyday life insofar as the reader must bring into existence what is already given in life, and Iser examines those features that support such activity, in particular, blanks (*Leerstelle*), which spur the reader's imagination. Blanks function when the empty horizons attract thematization, when never-anticipated supervening segments cast a new light upon previous segments, and when the broken threads of the plot or the entrance of a different narrator compel a reader to seek seemingly missing connections and heighten the liveliness of one's reading. Likewise, what is merely said draws the reader's attention beyond what is inarticulately meant, just as what is revealed points toward that which is concealed, as what is explicit refers the reader to what is implicit. The interconnections the reader develops pertain to a polysynthetic sequence in which the meaning of the whole text, the aesthetic object, emerges, and the intention of the novel itself is fulfilled, as is exemplified in the case of Tom Jones, the example used by Iser, in which the reader is to "acquire a sense of discernment" (Iser 1980, p. 187) based on the ability to abstract from his or her attitudes and to grasp an "intended picture of human nature" (Iser 1980, p. 199). Finally, Iser resists the view that texts end up being reflections of a reader's self; on the contrary, the difference between the text and the reader plays a critical, instructive role insofar as the text focuses on the excluded possibilities and fringes

[1] See, Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens*, p. 168; the German is clear on these synthesizings.

[2] Each text, Iser observes, constitutes its reader (Iser 1980, p. 157). Though Ingarden's idea of "concretization" brought in the importance of the reader, the reader's role was a matter of "undynamic completion," filling in in imagination for example the color of a character's hair (Iser 1980, p. 178). Regarding Schutz's locating of literature within a communicative setting see Alfred Schutz (1982), "Meaning Structures of Literary Art Forms."

of the cultural system (if reader and author belong to the same system). If the author and reader are not contemporaneous, it is still the case that the differences between the text and the reader's cultural system are important since the text violates the norms of that cultural system, defamiliarizing what may be familiar to the reader, making visible the conditionality of her world, and promoting self-awareness (Iser 1980).

3 The Literary *Epoché* and the Life-World of the Novel

Several of the features Iser discovers in the act or reading, such as not measuring the activity against a search for truth, living another life in reading, and being caught up in what we produce, indicate that a kind of literary *epoché* has been enacted, which, according to Schutz, involves entering another reality-sphere via a *Sprung* (leap), and in this reality-sphere, another logic, other norms, govern. Hence, he observes, "There is a logic of the poetic happening (*Geschehens*) which runs against (*zuwiderlauft*) that of everyday life as well as that of rational thinking" (Schutz 1948, pp. 935–936). One need not conceive that this *epoché* is to be enacted as formally or rigorously as the phenomenological *epoché* is supposed to be, for instance, but it can simply involve the change in attitude one undertakes in opening the novel and commencing to read. This is especially so since in reading, one will be drawing on everyday life[3] rather than prescinding from its presuppositions to build up the "world" of experience that the novel guides one in forming, just as one makes use of elements of one's everyday experiences in dreaming, for instance, which commences with the informal "*epoché*" of falling asleep (Schutz 1962a).

The analogous use of the method of *epoché* for reading is helpful insofar as one both to a degree turns away from everyday life and turns toward a new reality-sphere, or, as Iser puts, it "deviates into sense." The "turning away" from everyday life becomes evident insofar as one is aware at some level of horizonal consciousness that the characters, actions, and events of the novel contrast with those of everyday life insofar as they possess only the "quasi-being" that results from having undertaken what Husserl has dubbed a neutrality-modification, whose contents are taken as neither existing nor not existing (Schutz 1962a; Husserl 1980). Of course, as with the phenomenological *epoché*, one's turning away from everyday life permits entrance into a new reality-sphere which becomes the center of one's focus and engagement, as if living another life. Within the reality-sphere of novel-reading, the "quasi-being," the existential status of the characters and

[3]One perhaps ought to speak of the "world of working" rather than everyday life since literature, like dreaming and theorizing, is an activity within the world of everyday life, as Schutz's essay "On Multiple Realities" shows, however since Schutz in the just cited Goethe manuscript seems to equate everyday life with what should be the world of working, we will use the two terms interchangeably.

action, becomes irrelevant, however relevant such a consideration might still be to an inhabitant of the world of working, or to one inhabiting the theoretical reality-sphere, as Husserl does. If one fails to be aware of the *epoché* one has executed in opening a novel, one risks misunderstanding literature's cognitive nature, as we shall see below, and judging one reality-sphere by the standards of another as did Bertrand Russell when he notoriously claimed that the propositions in *Hamlet* were false because there was no such man. In addition, adopting the literary *epoché* supports the capacity of literature, with its differing normative standards, to place in question the norms of the reader's culture, since such questioning takes place not only at the novel's climax, but also from the very opening of the book, when one enters a reality-sphere distant from the world of working and opens oneself to the possible experience of being governed by different norms. Further, the literary *epoché* can dispose a reader for a therapeutic discovery of societal trauma that a novel might realize and that submersion in the pragmatic norms governing everyday culture hides and even denies (Russell 1962, p. 277; Gibson 2007).[4]

Readers through their imagination, shaped by the instructions of the author's textual schemata, build up a situation constituted by an interconnected set of images, what Iser calls a "parallel frame" to the system of everyday life, within which meaningful patterns form. This activity, which despite its representative function does not represent any empirical reality, constructs and enters into an imaginative life-world populated by characters acting through time in relationship to their physical world and each other. Paul Ricoeur recognized that reading consists in the creation of a fictive life-world when he claimed that a text is a "*proposed world* which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities" (Ricoeur 1981, p. 142). Similarly, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, insofar as he scatters throughout *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* novellae that serve as literary reflections on the main action of the novel, begins to assimilate that main action to a kind of life-world, parallel to the reader's life-world, in relation to which the entire novel serves as a literary reflection (Iser 1980; Harrison 2007).[5]

4 Transcendencies and Appresentation in the Novel

The *Leerstelle* that Iser takes to spur the readers' imagination and to draw their attention can be understood as various kinds of transcendencies that are appresented by signs and symbols constituting the life-world of the text. Just as in perception, the front side of an object appresents a horizon of experiences that can be

[4]John Gibson, in his book *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, argues that reading the novel is not a matter of making-believe that the sentences of the novel *are true*, rather, "we push aside the relevance of truth and belief when we appreciate literary content," see Gibson 2007, p. 169.

[5]On life-world nature of novel, see Bernard Harrison, "Aharon Appelfeld and the Problem of Holocaust Fiction."

fulfilling or confirming or not, so signs and symbols appresent transcendencies, and, like perception, the appresenting element brings what it appresents within reach, thereby, to a degree, "overcoming" the transcendency (Schutz and Luckmann 1989).

The various types of transcendencies and their correlative signs and symbols operate in important, interconnected ways, of which the mere term *Leerstelle* does not take adequate account. At a most basic level, in the everyday-life experience of passive syntheses of association, an appresenting member, such as something perceived or recolled or a fantasm or fictum, "wakens" or "calls" forth an appresented element, without the control of the ego.[6] Hence in *Beloved*, the sign-simile "chokecherry tree," which Sethe uses to describe the scars on her back, evokes Paul D's memory of, and thereby appresents, his favorite tree pertaining to the former, temporally distant, happier times at Sweet Home, where he and Sethe were slaves (Morrison 1987). Though perceived trees remind us of remembered trees in everyday life, in this case it is the signs Morrison has arranged that end up appresenting Paul's remembered favorite tree – an experience that is given in the life-world being produced within the novel through the reader's activity and that exemplifies how appresentation overcomes what Schutz and Luckmann call the "little transcendencies" of space and time (Schutz and Luckmann 1989, p. 106).

Of course, appresentation is not only a matter of passive synthesis since signs themselves also function in more deliberate ways to depict significantly something else of which one can have fulfilling or confirming experiences. Hence when Sethe describes the scars on her back as a chokecherry tree, thereby appresenting them, Paul, two pages later unlooses her dress and see them, overcoming the little transcendency of space that signitive intending presupposes. That signitive intending itself brings what it aims at within reach, but does not overcome the spatial transcendency to the same degree as Paul's fulfilling experience of going and seeing what it appresented. Of course, since Paul's "fulfilling" experience of seeing Sethe's back is itself appresented by Morrison's signs, the reader is getting Paul's experience "second hand," as it were, making it possible for the reader to conjure up images that might covey the horror of seeing the scars even more than the actual seeing of them. This example also discloses the iterative character of signs insofar Morrison's written letters appresent the sign that Sethe uses to appresent her scars and that also appresents through a memorative passive synthesis Paul's favorite tree (Morrison 1987).

Of course, not every overcoming of the little transcendencies of space and time is so simple. For example, Sethe, disgusted with her husband Halle, who was exemplary in every aspect except that he never showed up the day when she and her children were covertly fleeing Sweet Home, takes his absence as a sign of betrayal.

[6]Of Sethe, in *Beloved*, it is said, "As for the rest, she worked hard to remember as close to nothing as was safe. Unfortunately her brain was devious," and various painful memories returned. See Toni Morrison 1987, p. 6.

Paul, though, informs her that he saw her husband after her flight sitting by the churn at Sweet Home with butter smeared all over his face. Paul speculates that he had been in the loft of the barn when the slaves' foreman's nephews had sucked the milk from pregnant Sethe's breasts on the barn floor and that, having seen the affair, he lost his mind. Sethe's mistaken interpretation is based on evidence available to her from her past spatio-temporal perspective, but since she had left Sweet Home she could neither have seen her deranged husband by the butter churn, nor from her angle on the barn floor, could she have seen her husband in the loft. Paul's signs appresent a past experience to which he had spatial access, which in turn makes plausible the hypothetical locating of Halle in the loft, thereby overcoming the transcendencies of space and time on the horizon of Sethe's past experience and "exploding" her mistaken belief, based on her limited perspective, that her husband had deliberately abandoned her. Sometimes signs, deployed by one party to a conversation, appresent and clarify spatio-temporally distant events that pertain to the vague and empty horizon appresented within another party's limited spatio-temporal perspective in such a way that the historical reconstruction of what actually happened depends upon intersubjective constitution (Morrison 1987).

Of course, this structure of appresentation of distant spatio-temporal objects or events draws the reader into the action of the novel in the way that the perceived object invites one to wonder about its concealed aspects. Further, what one sign appresents ends up appresenting something else, hence the reference to the chokecherry tree appresents Paul's favorite tree at Sweet Home, and the tree and the nebulous mention of Sweet Home appresent a vague horizon of the events and characters to be found there that the reader believes will explain the present from which they are remembered and that heighten the reader's increasing involvement in the reading, as Iser claimed that the *Leerstelle* do. Likewise Morrison's sign appresents Sethe's sign of the chokecherry tree that appresents the scars on Sethe's back that Paul sees, and those scars themselves appresent a whole sad story, a whole horizon, about which the reader now wishes to know. There may not be a closure, though, to a series of appresentations, and hence Paul's discovery of Halle by the churn appresents the hypothesis that he had seen from the barn loft his wife brutalized and lost his mind, but the tentativeness of the hypothesis appresents a horizon in which future information might undermine it.

Indeed, the fragmentation and rupture of spatio-temporal continuities that absorb the reader's interest but that at times can at best be only hypothetically reassembled gives the reader a taste of the experience of slavery itself. The fact that slaves ran off or were rented out, loaned out, bought up, won, stolen, or seized, prompts Sethe's mother to reflect poignantly on the seven children she had lost:

> Seven times she had done that: held a little foot; examined the fat fingertips with her own—fingers she never saw become the male or female hands a mother would recognize anywhere. She didn't know to this day what their permanent teeth looked like; or how they held their heads when they walked. Did Patty lose her lisp? What color did Famous' skin finally take? Was that a cleft in Johnny's chin or just a dimple that would disappear soon's his jawbone changed . . . All seven were gone or dead (Morrison 1987, p. 139).

Slave children appresented future horizons whose details were frequently never filled in (Morrison 1987).[7]

But if appresented, little transcendences intensify the reader's immersion in the text, the medium trancendencies do so all the more insofar as they present a boundary than can never be completely crossed, though one can "recognized the landscape on the other side in clear outlines" (Schutz and Luckmann, p. 110)[8]: the experience of other persons, which can never be directly experienced unlike the directly experienceable little transcendencies (Schutz and Luckmann 1989). These medium transcendencies are overcome only partially through signs that must be interpreted through interpretational schemes determined by the biographical situation and systems of relevances of the different interlocutors (Schutz 1962b). There remains, Schutz insists, "an inaccessible zone of the Other's private life which transcends my possible experience" (Schutz 1962b, p. 326).

These transcendencies are manifest from the start in *Beloved*, where, for instance, one finds Sethe making unclear references to the death of her much loved, 2-year-old baby and the child's tombstone and "ghost" (all of which appresent extensive horizons to be filled in) but, then, upon meeting Paul whom she hasn't seen in 18 years, when the topic turns to her family, she changes the subject. Similarly Paul promises that he would tell her anything he knew about her husband, but then, the reader becomes privy to his inner thoughts when the narrator intervenes, informing us, "Except for the churn, he thought, and you don't need to know that" (Morrison 1987, p. 8). Though the narrator enables the reader to overcome the transcendence of the characters' private lives in a way that the characters cannot do in relationship to each other, nevertheless that access yields often only vague appresentations with the consequence that the reader is in much the position of the other characters in relationship to the character whose thoughts are revealed, that is, both reader and other characters depend on the willingness of one character to communicate what he or she is thinking. Moreover, the contrast between what a character says and what he or she is thinking, which makes use of silences and even lies, appresents a content to which the reader has access through the narrator, but a content that in turn appresents horizons that entice the reader's interest. An interhuman drama, as engaging if not more so than the effort to overcome the little transcendencies, develops, in which the reader presses forward to find out (sometimes from the narrator) what secrets the other is concealing or when a character will reveal his or her inner private life to the reader or to other characters.[9]

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[7]See pages 23, 52, 142, 147. On this last page, Sethe's mother concludes that searching for missing loved ones was fruitless since "'you couldn't write to a man named Dunn' if all you knew was that he went West."

[8]Schutz and Luckmann rightly observe that there is a social dimension involved in the little transcendencies, as I have shown, and that this forms a transition to the medium transcendencies, and I am here showing that transition, too.

[9]This interest is aroused particularly when characters speak pull back from self-revelation, when, for instance, Sethe in a conversation with her daughter Denver reaches "the point beyond which she would not go," or when Denver (Morrison 1987, p. 37) finds herself unable to ask her mother

This transcendency between interlocutors that signs to a degree overcome is exacerbated in *Beloved* by the fact that the secrets not communicated have to do with the trauma and cruelty of slavery. The narrator informs us, for instance, that Paul put his memories of the brutalization of people he loved in "the tobacco tin lodged in his chest" (Morrison 1987, p. 113) and by the time he arrives at Sethe's "nothing in the world could pry it open" (Morrison 1987, p. 113). Similarly, the narrator asserts that for Sethe "every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost" (Morrison 1987, p. 58). Overcoming the transcendency of the other when the other conceals the suffering of trauma requires a slow building of trust, spoken words inviting revelation, receptive facial expressions, even a caress – all of which Morrison presents so delicately and all of which begin to resemble the kinds of signals a psychotherapist might give to a client to promote the disclosure of trauma undergone and repressed (Morrison 1987). The conclusion of the book shows Paul and Sethe achieving a degree of mutual understanding since Paul "wants to put his story next to hers" (Morrison 1987, p. 273), something that has already happened insofar as the final two chapters carrying the main action of the novel (Chaps. 18 and 24) are narrated by each of them in the presence of the other, even though the early Chaps. (2, 8, 9, 15, and 16) carrying that main narrative were all narrated by different characters without Sethe and Paul ever being together on any of these occasions (Morrison 1987; Iser 1980).[10]

Finally, in the great transcendencies, the appresenting vehicle of meaning belongs to everyday life, but what is appresented pertains to an entire different province of meaning, unlike signs which appresent another's private life which belongs to the same province of meaning, namely everyday life, to which the signs themselves belong. In symbolization, a boundary is crossed and the "'other' reality is experienced immediately in intoxication, dream, mystical union" (Schutz and Luckmann 1989, p. 145). The idea appresented by a symbol, Schutz observes, transcends the experience of everyday life, and examples of what symbols appresent are such things as social collectivities, the cosmic order, a whole which transcends one's particular experience, or the numinous deity appresented by Jacob's stone. Schutz asserts, following Jaspers, that the symbol appresents vague transcendental experiences that are difficult to translate discursively with more or less precise denotations, something whose significance cannot be grasped in a rational way but rather must be existentially experienced (Schutz 1962b).

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about the murder for which she had been locked away (*Ibid*., p. 104), or when Paul, after telling Sethe, about how his experience of having a horse's bit put in his mouth and having to pull a cart behind him, suddenly stops, since "Saying more might push them both to a place they couldn't get back from." (*Ibid*., p. 72.)

[10]The climax of the novel, in which the foreman of the slaves and his nephews catch up with the fugitive slave, Sethe, and she beheads her two-year old daughter rather than allow that daughter to fall back under slavery, is narrated from the perspective of the foreman of the slaves and his nephews who regard Sethe with contempt and ridicule. This has a particularly chilling effect and accentuates the horror of the scene. Iser insightfully comments on the importance different narrator's perspectives, which are to be evaluated by the reader. On engaging the reader, see Iser, *The Act of Reading*, pp. 204–205.

To understand symbolic appresentation in *Beloved*, one needs to appreciate the structure of the plot. As mentioned, the early chapters involve various narrators tracing Sethe's flight from Sweet Home, her giving birth to her daughter Denver, and her eventual arrival at her mother's home, to which she is pursued by the foreman of the slaves and his nephews – a series of events each appresenting vaguely a future (which took place in the past that the narrating is recovering) and riveting the reader's attention. Upon their finding her, she, who had her breast milk stolen by the slave manager's nephews and then was beaten for informing the helpless woman governing Sweet Home about this barbarity, beheads another daughter (than Denver), 2 years of age and already at her mother's house, rather than allow that daughter to be subjected to life under slavery.

This symbol of a mother beheading her child rather than allowing that child to be enslaved serves as a crystallizing moment. Though readers have been horrified by earlier mentioned acts (stealing the milk, the scars on Sethe's back), the interest in building up the life-world of the text may not have allowed a space for focusing on such horror, which remains horizonal. But when this symbol appears at the climax of the novel's action, a Gestalt shift takes place, building up the text's life-world comes to a halt and the horror and cruelty of slavery come to the fore. In addition, the active pressing forward to find appresentational fulfillment yields to passive awe or contemplation, as one feels oneself standing face to face with a symbol appresenting an incomprehensible trauma that gathers together and sums up all the horror appresented in all the other events of the text. The previous appresentational threads, bringing into reach distant times and places, overcoming the boundaries between persons, and driving the reader forward to find out where the story leads, are all ingredients in the build-up of the life-world of the text and they take place *within* that life-world. But with the appearance of this symbol, a new kind of appresentation supervenes, insofar as it appresents something beyond the life-world of the text, a "great transcendency," on the level of the cosmos, an entire social collectivity, or the theophany appresented by Jacob's stone. With the emergence into prominence of this symbol, the life-world one had been building up suddenly is drawn together and *itself* becomes a symbol, appresenting something beyond itself: the utter cruelty, horror, and destructiveness of the institution of slavery, the disclosure of a trauma of unspeakable proportions. And the fact that my attempt here to express in hyperbolic language "what" the crystallizing symbol of *Beloved* appresents still falls far short of capturing that "what" simply indicates how correct Jaspers and Schutz are when they state that a symbol is not something to be grasped in a rational way but to be experienced existentially.

Different kinds of appresentations, which correlate with different transcendencies and different semiotic mechanisms,[11] point to a dynamics within literary texts that Iser's undifferentiated use of the term *Leerstellen* cannot sufficiently reveal.

[11] We have discussed signs and symbols particularly. The passive synthetic appresentation of the "chokecherry tree" pointing to Paul's favor tree at Sweet Home, since the linkage is not a regular one and since the appresenting element is a sign, is not quite an "indication," though it functions

There is a continuity of appresentation, in which an appresenting element, from memory-evoking stimuli to signs between persons to the events of the narrative foreshadowing an indeterminate future, leads readers continually to surpass their present positions. This process of continually crossing the boundaries beyond which various transcendencies lie prepares the ground, disposes the reader as it were, for that moment when the textual life-world one has been building up *itself* will come to appresent a reality beyond that life-world (whether it does so through a single crystallizing symbol like that of *Beloved* or not). At the same time, the appresentation of the great transcendency of the meaning of the novel is discontinuous with the other appresentations that prepare its ground insofar as it interrupts the continual bringing within reach, including the passage through the narrative, in which readers feel themselves to a degree in control of the transcending action. In this final appresentation, readers find themselves faced with a transcendency that they seem not to control but that calls upon them to experience it existentially, to contemplate it, to be shocked or puzzled by it. The experience of the symbol appresenting the novel's meaning (which could be the whole novel itself) is the beginning point of rational dissection that follows on the reading of the novel, that moment when, as Paul Ricoeur has expressed it, "the symbol gives rise to thought" (Ricoeur 1967, p. 348). The appresentations that are the engines of eliciting the reader's involvement in the novel's action bring the reader to the point where that action unexpectedly appresents beyond itself. Although we are so used to reading novels that we may not notice it, at the heart of novel-reading, there is a structure of surprise when the appresentatively constructed novel itself appresents the novel's great transcendency.

5 Conclusion: The Cognitive Content of Literature

Schutz's approach to literature, which emphasizes existential experience rather than rational analysis and depends upon a literary *epoché* that places one within a different reality sphere than everyday life or rational thinking, is particularly appropriate for *Beloved*. Just as the novel shows the growing trust between Sethe and Paul that enables them to share the traumatic events that they have undergone and that until they are shared serve to keep them isolated from each other, so one could read the novel itself as leading readers by gaining their trust through story-telling to an existential experience of the trauma of slavery prior to any rational analysis of it. Present day "rational" analysis of slavery in the United States often issues in divisiveness, insofar as the call from some quarters for "reparations" or "apologies" is met with fierce opposition by others or insofar as some descendants of slaves and others argue that the effects of slavery call for rectifying affirmative

similarly to one. There could be marks and indications in a novel, though they themselves would have to be appresented by the signs articulated by the text's author.

action and opponents reject such action claiming that they bear no responsibility for slavery since they never owned slaves. One could argue that present day "rational" debates about slavery are symptomatic of a society in need of societal therapy, of a society that has suffered from a trauma that has never been faced up to and that needs to be somehow experienced in all its affective horror, as a first step in psychological, societal healing and as a necessary stage prior to subsequent rational interpretations of its significance. Morrison's book, then, could be seen as an effort to lay bare a trauma in the depths of the United States' national psyche, and, the book would fulfill that purpose if it were approached in the way Schutz presents literature. Indeed, conceiving literature as trying to effect societal therapy by allowing readers to re-experience an underlying, repressed trauma also fits well with Iser's opinion that the literary text almost invariably takes for its dominant meaning "possibilities that have been neutralized or negated by the system" (Iser 1980, p. 72) and the "penumbra of excluded possibilities" (Iser 1980, p. 72). The text, as Iser puts it, "begins to activate that which the system has left inactive" (Iser 1980, p. 72).

The appresentative approach to literature developed here can also help resolve current questions regarding the cognitive content of literature. For instance, John Gibson has argued that in reaction to views of literature that might see its cognitive purpose as authoring propositions about the world, much as Russell did when he claimed that that *Hamlet* is full of false statements because no such man existed, a post-structualist position has developed that the text has nothing to do with reality, that its work ends at its own boundaries. Gibson's plea for a humanist position between these extremes that understands fiction as revealing something about reality can be answered by the view that a work of literature appresents a great transcendency, another reality, beyond the structure of the work itself, which, however, leads the reader through appresentative moments to that point. The disclosure of this other reality, though, we have argued must be a matter of existential experience and not rational analysis, though such analysis, which makes possible a diversity of interpretations, might be undertaken in relation to, that is, subsequent to, that existential experience, when one adopts a different attitude toward the text than that of the literary *epoché* that brackets rational analysis. Several contemporary authors, such as Peter Lamarque, Noël Carroll, Catherine Elgin, Luca Pucci, Wolfgang Huemer, and David Davies converge with this view of Schutz's and Japsers's. Though they admit that cognitive factors are inevitably involved in reading (e.g. following up appresentational references), they believe that literature puts us only in a *position* to obtain propositional knowledge, that it only facilitates knowledge, that it captures experience in its transition to language, or that it makes possible an emotional knowledge able to be conveyed in propositions (Gibson 2007; Lamarque 2007; Carroll 2007; Elgin 2007; Pocci 2007; Huemer 2007; Davies 2007). To be sure, it is always possible to slip into theorizing about an existentially experienced text, to abandon the literary *epoché* and examine the text theoretically, but such reflections, so close to the text being read, perhaps represent an enclave within the act of reading itself that the literary *epoché* inaugurates. This paper itself, however, and Iser's book represent higher levels of theorizing, insofar as, for example, Iser's discussion of the theme of *Tom Jones*, a paradigmatic text for him,

sounds quite rationalized, e.g. that it conveys an "intended picture of human nature" (Iser 1980, p. 199) or its purpose is seeing to it that that "the reader is to acquire a sense of discernment" (Iser 1980, pp. 186–187). It is no wonder that theoretical statements about the theme of a novel always fall short of the reading of the text and that they feel flat or trivial in comparison with that reading (Gibson 2007).

There is one final problem in that my development of the theory of the role of appresentation in literature seems limited to one book, namely Morrison's *Beloved*, and one can wonder how generalizable the conclusions drawn here are with reference to other literature. The analysis presented here is certainly generalizable, in my opinion, to other novels with which I am familiar, and my convergence with Iser, Schutz, Jaspers, and Gibson, and other authors who draw on other paradigmatic texts makes the position articulated here plausible. But if the theory itself contributes toward clarifying Morrison's Nobel-prize winning work, as I think it does, that in itself is highly significant.

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