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Hermeneutics: A Literary Interpretive Art

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HERMENEUTICS: A LITERARY INTERPRETATIVE ART

by

DAVID A. REITMAN

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2019

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David A. Reitman

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Hermeneutics: A Literary Interpretative Art

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David A. Reitman

Advisor: George Fragopoulos

This thesis examines the historical traditions of hermeneutics and its potential to enhance the process of literary interpretation and understanding. The discussion draws from the historical employment of hermeneutics as literary theory and method presented in the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* with further elaboration from several other texts. The central aim of the thesis is to illuminate the challenges inherent in the literary interpretive arts by investigating select philosophical and linguistic approaches to the study and practice of literary theory and criticism embodied within the canonical works of the *Anthology*. The narrative begins in ancient Greece, traverses medieval and modern developments in the western literary interpretive arts and closes with a brief survey of twentieth-century writings that form a diverse mosaic of disaggregated literary theory and criticism from several perspectives. The thesis concludes with suggestions for improving the literary interpretive process and forecasts the continuing expansion of the field into new culturally informed topic areas in the decades to follow.

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Preface

The proposition of this thesis is that the traditions of hermeneutics as a literary interpretive art have been overshadowed within the larger disaggregated mosaic of literary theory and criticism. This thesis brings the historical traditions of literary hermeneutics back into the light and examines its potential to enhance the process of interpretation. While pursuing research in this area, I encountered *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* with Vincent B. Leitch as the general editor, a substantial compendium containing many of the canonical authors that the academy has curricularized. The book's introduction contains a section, "What is Interpretation?" (2). Therein the editors state, "highly competent theorists can propose completely different models of reading fuel[ing] continued theoretical debate about interpretation" (3). I thought I was on to something aligned with my inquiry. Why is this the case that there are so many ways to interpret a single piece of literary writing? I began to think that the study of interpretation through the lenses of literary theory and criticism would inform and enable thought-provoking ways of confronting the interpretive process with the potential for a deeper understanding of its issues and potential solutions for its challenges. The *Anthology* offers the reader a chance to canvass the historical foundations, principles and methods of western literary theory and criticism to address questions relevant to the arts of interpretation.

The *Anthology* is a particular kind of analecta, as the book title suggests. The first edition published in 2001 is a collection of the literature and philosophy of literary theory and criticism covering 25 centuries by 148 writers (and five main editors) who evaluate, study and discuss 185 works, largely from continental Europe, England and America. The *Anthology*, now in its third edition as of 2018, spans 2,672 pages from the introduction through the last excerpt, or the equivalent of 10 books at 267 pages each. In these terms, it is manageable to read the whole *Anthology*. Some claim that anthologies are superficial because they are made up of extracts. This argument may hold up for a professor of literature who prefers that students read, discuss and write about a complete novel for instance. However, for a field as vast and

divergent as literary theory and criticism, the *Anthology*, as conceived in its present form, is more than a collection of excerpts, and effectively presents the scope and breath of theories instrumental for the study of the western arts of literary interpretation. The institutionalized form of production, dissemination and after-market circulation of the *Anthology* as an accepted form of aggregated knowledge for broad consumption is meant to draw interest from those seeking an introduction to the field of literary theory and criticism. The *Anthology* is also a rich compendium of bibliographical information for the researcher, scholar and teacher wishing to explore one or more specific areas of study more deeply.

Not long after the *Anthology* was first published in 2001, the general editor of the *Anthology*, Vincent B. Leitch, provided commentary in *Theory Matters* on aspects of the design and development that went into the production of the *Anthology*, which is now in its third edition as of 2018. Leitch provides detail on such things as the headnote as its own genre. Each author in the *Anthology* is prefaced by a headnote that conforms to a 14-point protocol. Leitch describes the purpose of the headnote:

[To] set up for the uninformed reader a reading experience to come. In seeking to direct the reader, it typically links the text(s)-to-come with the author (a biography), her or his other work (an oeuvre), and a tradition or set of texts and topics defining a field of inquiry (a canon). (Leitch, *Theory* 45)

To facilitate a nimbler navigation of the book, the editors frame the *Anthology* as a whole for the reader with several indices by author, schools and main theories, as well as a 28-page introduction. Many of the selections contain clearly marked and organized essay formats that contemporary students will recognize from assigned readings that use similar formats. However, one should not assume that this formalized structure is necessary for the practice of literary theory and criticism. The *Anthology* contains several more esoteric readings. Leitch also explains the decision to annotate heavily for the benefit of undergraduate literature majors (the primary intended audience), and to create a narrative bibliography on each author in the *Anthology* for the benefit of instructors and graduate students. The *Anthology* is encyclopedic in

its ability to direct inquiring minds to well-vetted texts on the authors presented. Only those writings agreed upon by at least three of the editors made the final cut (Leitch, *Theory* 43).

A collaborative team of five main editors, each undertaking two dozen or more unsigned headnotes a piece, were selected for, among other attributes, their expertise in writing about specific canonical figures and schools of literary theory and criticism, and for their teaching experience. The influence of interdisciplinary engagement on literary theory is poignantly illustrated in the latter selections of the *Anthology* with respect to race, gender, body and cultural studies, among other topic areas. The professional and scholarly interests held by the editors of the *Anthology* as posted on university websites are varied and include: African American literature; American fiction; contemporary continental philosophy; contemporary U.S. culture; cultural studies; English and comparative literature; feminist theory; French poststructuralism; globalization; linguistics; medieval studies; modernism in the arts; nineteenth and early twentieth century American literature; philosophy; political theory; poetry and comparative poetics; postmodernity; slavery and abolition; the politics of literature and culture; and visual culture. Thus, it is clear that a comprehensive approach has been taken to organize and present western literary theory and criticism.

The *Anthology* economizes as a literary form, consolidating and condensing broad diversity into a single volume. The styles, trends and schools of literary theory and criticism from ancient Greece to the contemporary are decidedly Eurocentric. It privileges “standard works” in English (xxxv), which, of course, excludes works that were not written in English, or not otherwise translated into English. The selections are referred to as a “mosaic” of literary works rather than as “a string of isolated pearls” (xxxiv). By this analogy, the editors were not attempting to conform the selections along the lines of any specific theory or set of theories, but rather, they attempted to present the field of literary theory and criticism in its “kaleidoscopic layers” as Leitch mentions in *Theory Matters* (vii) where “monumental works appear to emerge at random” (36). For those familiar with a kaleidoscope of angled parts, the *Anthology* is less

geometrically partitioned and more like “geological formations with historical strata” (vii) representing layers of thought that overlap to varying degrees in some places, and that do not overlap at all in other places. We do not always find clear, distinct boundaries between theories and methods in the *Anthology* that one might imagine if the kaleidoscope were filled with triangles, squares and rectangles. The concept of disaggregation follows from Leitch’s comments on the diversity within the field of literary theory and criticism, as noted in *Theory Matters*: “contemporary theory has ultimately more to do with the proliferation of new territories than with the struggle over existing ground, which, of course, continues unabated” (39).

The *Anthology* as knowledge production is the product of seven years of scholarly labor intent on making student learning in this domain more accessible and effective through texts that are “readable and teachable” (Leitch, *Anthology* xxxvi), however, the complexity of the discipline is not masked with simplistic excerpts by any means. The meaning of literary theory and criticism is shaped by the contours and restrictions imposed by the editors within the *Anthology*. It conforms to educational purposes and expectations with extensive framing and organizing principles setting the anchor for what literary theory and criticism is today. Using the *Anthology* as a means of focusing on aspects of interpretation has potential to enrich anthologistic learning more broadly. If we consider that many contemporary college courses in the humanities are apt to use a collection of excerpts, short writings or specific chapters assembled by the instructor to support their syllabi, it gives credence and credibility to the notion that a good portion of collegiate learning today is anthologistic.

In *Theory Matters*, Vincent Leitch refers to the publisher of the *Anthology*, W.W. Norton, as “the granddaddy of university textbook publishers” (16). Stepping back to the origins of the company in 1926, William Warder Norton and his wife, Mary, hired a stenographer to transcribe lectures given at the People’s Institute of Cooper Union in New York City. More than two decades later, the scholar and literary critic, M.H. Abrams, was approached by Norton to discuss the concept of an anthology in the 1950s. Abrams went on to supervise and edit the

production of the first two-volume set of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* in 1962. Abrams continued as editor for the next six editions, and Norton recently published its tenth edition in 2018 under the editorship of Harvard professor, Stephen Greenblatt. Norton's initial mission to collect, transcribe and disseminate lectures presented at Cooper Union from the early- to mid-1900s has shifted notably to the collection, canonization and commercialization of literature for textbooks in academia. The underlying commercial motivations of the publisher, and to some extent those of the editors, can be expected to have some influence on how the history of literary theory and criticism is presented to the reader.

Jeremy Braddock discusses the genre of the literary anthology in *Collecting as Modernist Practice* that is present during the early 1900s in several nuanced forms. For Braddock, the anthology is as much an "aesthetic object" as it is a "communitarian text of cultural intervention" (Braddock 38). That is, the anthology is a form of cultural production. It requires someone with the time, acumen and sensibility of his or her surroundings to complete the work. The editorial choices on what excerpts to include and what to exclude from an anthology present perennial challenges, and 600 pages had to be cut from the *Anthology* to meet the publisher's page limit in the final stage of production (Leitch, *Theory* 52). In recognition of the effort required to organize and produce an anthology, the public often confers the status of a definitive source on the collection. This in turn earns social capital for the production. In this manner, the anthology is "deliberately interposed between reality and social consciousness" (Braddock 5). Braddock relates collecting fine art by individuals and museums to anthologizing literature for purposes of archiving, preserving and curating historical works, among other motivations. Norton would have been exposed to the turn-of-the-century literary collections Braddock is referring to of Native American, African American and Anglo-American writers by several independent publishers and established publishing houses operating in New York City during the first half of the twentieth century. As times have changed to produce anthological works, so too have significant changes occurred in the field of literary theory and

criticism that are more readily apparent with the opportunity to traverse its history through the centuries as circumscribed and abbreviated in the *Anthology*.

Introduction

This thesis traces the historical evolution of the art of interpretation known as hermeneutics through the study of literary theory and criticism as presented in the *Anthology*. On the one hand, the *Anthology* is limited in its ability to offer a comprehensive study of hermeneutics. On the other hand, the indexes and bibliographies partially make up for this shortcoming by giving the reader or researcher the information they need to obtain “standard editions or texts of the author, biographies on her or him, pertinent secondary sources, and bibliographies of the author’s writings” (Leitch, *Theory* 43). In this context, the editors of the *Anthology* emplot the history of literary theory and criticism by selecting and anthologizing excerpts that depict the expansion of literary and theoretical discourse from the poetry and rhetorical prose of the ancient Greeks to the disaggregation of literary theories and criticisms among dozens of more contemporary subdomains. The traditions of hermeneutics in the *Anthology* were firmly established by the early nineteenth century. However, representations of these traditions in the *Anthology* have attenuated to make room for the dispersion of novel and divergent variations of socio-cultural critique. The *Anthology* conveys this history by referring to the literary subject matter of the epic poets and tragedians in the beginning of the volume, and expanding towards the end of the *Anthology* with literary subject matter from studies of race, gender, feminism, psychoanalysis, and a host of other disaggregated subject areas drawn from literary reflections on the socio-cultural materiality of life. The proposition of this thesis accords with the view of the general editor of the *Anthology*, Vincent B. Leitch, that the domain of literary theory and criticism will continue its trajectory of dispersion in multiple discursive directions, as writers and literary theorists reflect on former traditions and find new ways to interpret, recast and reinvent those literary traditions in novel interdisciplinary ways.

The range, depth, variation and significance of the writers anthologized draws attention to the very act of interpretation itself as a profound and complex undertaking. This thesis limits its investigation to a subset of the writings that the anthologists circumscribe as substantively

influencing the evolution and development of western literary theory with relevance for the human interpretative process. This thesis does not cover all the anthologized works that influenced literary theory and criticism; rather, it covers a representative sample of the works to give the reader a sense of the range, depth and variation within the craft. Examining the nature, characteristics and language of western literary theory and criticism leads to insights on how and why the range and diversity exists in this domain. From that standpoint, a forward course toward balancing and navigating the literary interpretative process is charted from the perspective of the traditions of hermeneutics. This thesis explores the evolution of the hermeneutic tradition as a “strand of literary theory and criticism” as Leitch mentions in *Theory Matters* (76). What emerges through this process is also a recognition of several theoretical approaches to literature that discount certain tenets of hermeneutics proper, but nevertheless, retain complementary aspects for testing interpretive hypotheses of plausibility under conditions of ambiguity.

I will sketch out an argument that hermeneutics, as a mode of literary interpretation, provides a precursive approach to understanding the discrete excerpts within the *Anthology*, as well as that of the *Anthology* as a whole. In so doing, a sustainable foundation is developed for ongoing engagement with the evolving discipline of literary theory and criticism. The *Anthology* can be read with the typical approach in mind to gain an understanding of the historical emplotment of dozens of canonical approaches to the study of literary theory and criticism, including hermeneutics. The *Anthology* can also be read (i) to grasp the meaning of the whole *Anthology* in order to understand its parts, that is, the excerpted texts, and (ii) to understand the parts of the *Anthology*, its excerpts, in order to better understand the *Anthology* as whole. In this manner, while gaining appreciation for the literary theory and method of hermeneutics, this theory and method is itself used to interpret the *Anthology* as a whole and the parts from which it is constituted.

The structure of the sections in this thesis are organized as follows: The first section begins with an overview of the Greek origins of interpretation primarily from Plato and Aristotle, which sets a foundation for literary structures and formats that are sustained throughout the contemporary practices of literary theory and criticism. In the second section, I survey the structural formats of arguments developed by Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas that inform methods of contending with hermeneutic interpretation applied to biblical scripture, as well as Friedrich Schleiermacher who, together with Johann Gottfried Herder, articulate a secular hermeneutics that is foundational for establishing the hermeneutic method of E.D. Hirsch, Jr., in particular, during the twentieth century. My third section discusses the divergence of the art of literary theory and criticism across several discursive modes of discourse and subject areas, including linguistics, Formalism and New Criticism, New Historicism, phenomenology and reader-response. Concurrently with this disaggregation of literary discourse during the twentieth century, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., brought a new level of formalization to the traditional principles of general and secular hermeneutics. This thesis concludes with the general findings of my research on hermeneutics as a theory and method for interpreting literary theory and criticism as well as for interpreting the underlying literature from which the literary theories and criticisms are derived. The path thus taken illuminates facets of hermeneutics and the art of interpretation that have the potential for improving modes of contemporary communication and understanding in public and private discourse.

As the several authors and schools noted above suggest, the *Anthology* moves in surprising directions that confront the art of interpretation from numerous angles. It becomes feasible to understand (i) why there may be many valid interpretations for the same writing, (ii) why the interpretive process is challenging, and in turn, (iii) how it is possible to consider this diverse collection of literary theories as complementary to one another through the lens of the hermeneutic tradition. As a practical matter, the hermeneutical approach to literary theory and criticism may also be applied in daily life toward a clearer understanding of issues that arise

between contending parties responding to socio-cultural influences that shape the human experience and the history that is made from the lives of those who live it.

Conceptualizing Literature

Developing an enterprise from the cultural production of literary theory without a clear delineation of what *is* and *is not* literature has not restrained the proliferation of interest, nor the production of literary theory and criticism. The field is open to theorists and critics who have a wide birth and few constraints in fashioning, revising or extending literary theories and critiques. The editors of the *Anthology* note that “All who think critically have an opportunity to engage various theories of reading and to formulate their own views” (3). The qualification of writing as “Literature” moves forward at a steady although discursive pace that has eluded a hard-and-fast definition. Jonathan Culler suggests in his book, *Literary Theory*, that literature consists of “fine examples of the use of language and rhetoric...exemplary practices of writing and thinking...imaginative writing” (28). Culler’s parameters for what constitutes literature are appropriately general. I would posit that an overly defined definition of Literature may stifle the creative energy that continues to thrive without the need for definitive constraints. In Terry Eagleton’s book, also entitled *Literary Theory*, he observes, in part, that “Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language” (2), a position that ought to be easy to agree upon, and one that does not levy impermeable boundaries. The *Anthology* addresses the question by stating that “literature represents life” (4). In the context of the *Anthology*, life in literature includes expositions from (i) the “author’s inner being” (4), (ii) the outside encounters with the world, and (iii) the knowledge, insight and wisdom the reader of a textual work of literature may appreciate. All the authors noted above share perspectives of literature as representations of life. M.H. Abrams devised a heuristic that puts this neatly together in a three-pointed star. The work of literature is situated in the very center of the star while the three tips of the star point to (i) the

writer/author as the artist in “expressive theory,” (ii) the universe in “mimetic theory,” and (iii) the audience in “didactic theory” (Leitch, *Anthology* 4-5).

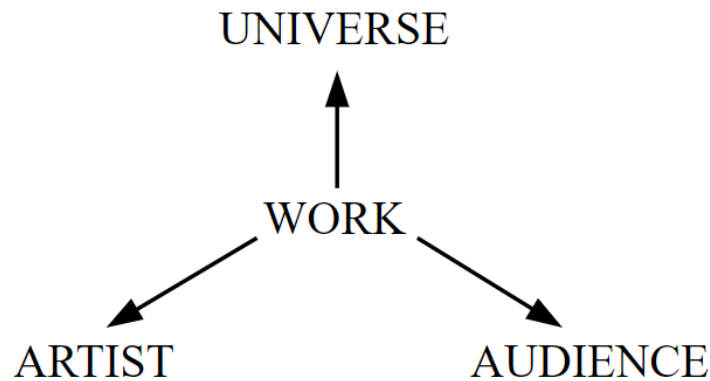


Figure 1. M.H. Abrams's Heuristic for Literature.

The heuristic in Figure 1 above facilitates visualization of the interpretive process from the literary work in the center reaching outward (5). In due course, the writer's work is read by others as the audience looking in and engaging with the thoughts of the writer in a phenomenological experience of interpretation.

Theory as Principle and Method

As is the case with the term Literature, the term 'theory' is also multifaceted. We can conceive of theory as a set of principles, a method or arrangement of thinking that explains a phenomenon from the literary language of life. Part of the diversity within the *Anthology* is owing to how this term is broadly conceptualized by the anthologists. Vincent B. Leitch comments on the conception of “theory as objective disinterested inquiry” in *Theory Matters* (viii), and offers an elaboration that is worth stepping through in some detail to grasp the scope and breadth of coverage this conception permits for literary theory. I have taken the liberty of segmenting a block interview response from Leitch into three sections where he likely paused to think and take a breath. Considered in this way, the three sections speak to the complexity, the

reach, and in an unexpected way, to the continuity of the theoretical constructs that guide the interpretive process across many specialized domains of examination.

When I define “theory,” I include not just poetics and aesthetics, but a whole set of other disciplines and subdisciplines...theory reaches beyond poetics and aesthetics and includes rhetoric, philosophy of language, the commentary tradition (exegesis), philology, and hermeneutics.

Theory also includes political theory and pedagogy. What might I mean by political theory? The role of literacy in society turns out to be productive of some interesting selections in our anthology, and not only from *Republic*. If one looks at Christine de Pizan, one discovers a fifteenth-century person complaining that women are not educated, not given the right to become literate, and not allowed to be familiar with literature.

We have several selections from related theoretical texts in which, for example, the issue of the vernacular surfaces, raising questions about hegemonic and minority languages and literatures. Education, pedagogy, language, and literacy, politics are all in certain significant ways part of the history of literary and cultural theory. They need to show up in anthologies. (75)

Criticism as Partisan Intervention

The term criticism also requires framing within the context of the *Anthology*. In everyday usage, the term may carry a negative connotation as the verbalization of displeasure; to criticize. In the context of hermeneutics, elements of this general meaning are substantially absent from the *Anthology*. The meaning of hermeneutic criticism for the *Anthology* subtly shifts to embrace the connotation of thoughtful examination of a literary work to ascertain its merits or shortcomings in order to acknowledge what may be missing for an accurate interpretation. Leitch summarizes the critique in *Theory Matters* as “a signed, partisan, interested intervention expressed in the name of a committed point of view” (45). The committed point of view for hermeneutics is the most plausible interpretation, not necessarily whether a work is done well or done poorly. To convincingly achieve balance in differentiating the pros and cons of a literary work as critique in this context, it is necessary to have a compelling grasp of that which is under

examination as well as that to which the examination is appropriately compared in the manner of judgment the critique employs. In the *Anthology*, the writers articulate their chosen subject matter for excavation to bring objects of interest from life and literature into the light of close examination by the reader. This process often reveals that which has been overlooked, neglected or previously ignored in relation to the subject matter of the inquiry. The purpose of this intervention is to allow understanding to emerge from the textual artifact unencumbered by potentially misguided or misinformed beliefs. Therefore, the purpose of criticism in the context of hermeneutics presented in the *Anthology* is to raise awareness of that which had been previously unknown or hidden from the common view.

Hermeneutics as Theory and Method

Hermeneutics is one of the many lenses through which literature may be interpreted grammatically, historically, philologically and comparatively. In *Theory Matters*, Leitch considers it “a minor strand of literary theory” (76). Hermeneutics has its adherents, but it is often overlooked among the many alternative paths the *Anthology* represents in twentieth-century literary theory and criticism, leaving the traditions of hermeneutics somewhat opaque, largely absent from the overt discourse the *Anthology* emplots as the history of the tradition, but not forgotten. The definition of hermeneutics from Merriem-Webster.com is “the study of the methodological principles of interpretation” (“Hermeneutics,” def. N.1). Leitch offers his perspectives on the term hermeneutics in *Theory Matters* as well. Again, we find the scope and breadth of its meaning is far reaching and worthwhile to consider in detail:

When I think of hermeneutics, I think of it broadly, so the representation of hermeneutics in the anthology, in my mind, would include people like Dante, Aquinas, Augustine, even Freud. (76)

On the one hand, Leitch describes a tradition of works that have been handed down across the ages, valued and prioritized with canonical stature by a society. On the other hand, Leitch

describes hermeneutics as “a minor strand of literary theory and criticism” (76) suggesting the presence of other dominant modes of literary theory and criticism. As a tradition of interpretation, it has been stable; as a strand of literary theory and criticism, it has been used broadly to interpret a wide range of literary forms. Leitch continues:

Hermeneutics is a tradition not limited to phenomenological hermeneutics. There is ‘general hermeneutics.’ Within general hermeneutics, one would situate biblical, legal, and literary hermeneutics as well as the phenomenological tradition of philosophical hermeneutics. (76)

These are very broad brush strokes that overlap with one another in practice and give a sense of the wide foundation hermeneutics creates for the art of interpretation. Leitch adds,

[I]n the United States hermeneutics, particularly twentieth-century hermeneutics, is a minor strand of theory and criticism, which is taught and written about largely by people who are coming out of the Catholic tradition. (76)

This thesis uncovers the meaning of hermeneutics as a tradition that has been handed down, and as a theoretical method that can be used to ascertain the meaning of a text, or the meaning of a collection of texts, such as the *Anthology*. As a theoretical method, it is flexible enough to adapt across a wide range of literary genres. The authors Leitch mentions have had significant influence within the genres of poetry, theology and psychoanalysis, and he further differentiates the application of hermeneutics across the categories of phenomenology, the Bible, law and literature. Various schools of thought have adopted predominant dispositions through which to interpret literature (Culler 87), and the concept of hermeneutics is simply to understand the parts in order to understand the whole, and vice versa, to understand the whole in order to understand the parts. The practice of hermeneutics begins with the philological tasks of confirming the origin of a text, and determining the initial language used in the time and place an author used it. Notably, this practice was of great interest to scholars of scriptural texts searching for the most authentic accounts of the Supreme Being.

The Writer and the Reader

In the general sense for this thesis, interpretation is the conscious act of understanding performed by readers of literature. The act of reading is the precursor to the act of literary theory and criticism, and therefore, one must engage in the arts of interpretation to engage in the domain of literary theory and criticism. Under the general hermeneutic process, determining authorship, the language of origin, and its customary usage have substantive bearing on the meaning of a text. An author invests meaning into a work through language, and to understand how that meaning was invested at the time of writing is a significant component of interpretation. Whether a work is pleasing or useful is not under consideration at the initial stage in the general hermeneutic process. Moreover, the critical relevance of a work changes over time in relation to people, places and things, while the original meaning invested in the work by the author remains stable.

Hermeneutics, as a precursive mode of reader interpretation, seeks to understand the whole, the parts, the writer's meaning and the relative significance of a writing at the time, place and for the purpose it was written, as well as the changing significance of a writing when either the time, place or purpose warrants reexamination or reinterpretation. Seldom is this process conclusive, given that each life experience of the reader-interpreter, in totality, is unique from every other, and the interpretive process for the reader-interpreter is subject to those life experiences influencing a world view. It is the position of this thesis that only after establishing a concrete baseline of authorial meaning can the reader begin to assess the merits of a text through critique as to whether or how well a writing achieves its aim. The writer's meaning must be understood, remain intact and stable, while the significance of that writing, in any number of circumstances or comparative analyses, are the province of criticism and may vary considerably.

Section 1: Ancient Greek Orators, Rhapsodes and Philosophers

The *Anthology* begins with excerpts from ancient Greek philosophers that set the tone and structure of literary theory and criticism for the western tradition. Looking specifically at the texts presented in the *Anthology*, excerpts from Plato and Aristotle have two different perspectives towards poetry. Plato is concerned with writing that inures to the moral and political benefits of society, while Aristotle is concerned with whether poetry is written well or otherwise. Plato uses the dialogue format with Socrates as spokesperson, while Aristotle favors the narrative with rigorous ordering, categorizing, defining and explaining, which is the method that survives more prevalently than the dialogue in the contemporary academy, thus establishing itself as the predominate mode of examination on offer in the *Anthology*.

Laying a Foundation for Hermeneutics

The editorial decision to begin the *Anthology* with the Greek orator, Gorgias of Leontini, connects the poetics of Homer with the second piece by Plato, and is followed on by Aristotle. All three authors discuss the presentation and interpretation of poetry as a standard literary form. Leitch explains this sequence in *Theory Matters*. “*The Norton Anthology* starts with Gorgias, not Plato. The sophist view of discourse deserves reconsideration, and Plato needs to be recontextualized among theorists” (75). To break this down further, Leitch is a proponent of rethinking the traditional canon of great works in literary theory and criticism to include those works that extend this intellectual “mosaic” in fresh and insightful ways to represent the traditions as well as the diversity of the practice. For instance, Plato has a specific group of people in mind that he personifies with the figures of Gorgias as sophist, and Ion as rhapsode. These personifications help clarify the context within which Plato structures his remarks. Plato’s challenge to the qualifications and knowledge of the sophists and of the rhapsodes underpins the traditions of criticism. In Plato’s view, these individuals lack the true knowledge and wisdom of the philosopher who investigates meaning and interpretation.

The early western hermeneutic tradition, circa 400 BC, entails inquiry into the components of living, breathing speech and static, silent writing uniting in one and the same phenomenon of language. This notion is exemplified by Plato in the dialogues with Socrates and his interlocutors. The dialogue form itself as a literary device represents vocal speech in written form, and by this example, the nature of speech and the nature of writing share in the common unity of language. The combination of poetic imagery with a historical plot does not sit well with Socrates, however, who advises that “poets [are] representatives of representatives” (Plato, *Ion* 42). They are mimetically representing the work of Homer, in this case, who acquired content for epic poetry from oral and written traditions interwoven with imaginative storytelling. The result for the rhapsode is that the recitations are two generations removed from the original underlying source.

Plato’s argument presents distance from the source as distance from truth, knowledge and wisdom. The *Anthology* establishes a similar gap between the appearances of knowledge and actual knowledge as a persistent theme. Plato’s critiques of poets, orators and rhapsodes are addressing the character, behavior and professions of men whose livelihoods rely on rhetoric, memory and performative skills. The aims, purposes and use of epic Greek poetry take substantially different forms for the orator, the rhapsode, and the philosopher, all of whom are competent readers, writers and speakers, and yet, each finds a different interpretive utility in the same written works. Inquiring after the interpretations of ancient Greek legend, we find the power of words may yield truth, they may draw the reader into an illusion of truth, and literary interpretations may be subject to reversals by philosophical arguments. The *Anthology* begins to shape the mind of the literary theorist from the outset.

Theory and Method for the Dialectician

Continuing the examination of poets and writing in Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates complains, “it’s always been the poets who’ve composed untrue stories to tell people” (50). Fictions in

poetic literature, he contends, have negative implications, and the power of the written word is of concern when it possesses capacity for harm as well as for good. With the intentions of a remedy, Socrates offers his theory and method for the dialectician. We are guided by the editors of the *Anthology* to interpret the word, “dialectic,” as the use of logic “to investigate the nature of truth through critical analysis of concepts and hypotheses” (83). The essence of the first two recommendations from Plato’s *Phaedrus* for dialectics to achieve artful speech may ring familiar:

First, you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must know how to divide it into kinds until you reach something indivisible. (Plato, *Phaedrus* 84)

A demonstration of Plato’s essential recommendations are presented in the *Anthology* with two excerpts suitable to the task of literary theory and criticism from Aristotle. The first is from the *Poetics*, and the second is from *The Art of Rhetoric*. *Poetics* brings to the reader a formidable and familiar template for structural interpretation of a literary work, and *Rhetoric* develops a typology and context for using language to elicit human emotion as a mode of influence and persuasion. Aristotle’s deductive approach is foundational in several ways. The analytical interpretive process is rigorous; namely, the critic must research, organize, categorize, define and explain. Aristotle’s method categorizes from the general to the specific; defines key words in his categorizations; prioritizes the categories in order of importance; and includes commentary on (and critiques of) works held up against that standard. For instance, in *Poetics* Aristotle codifies the requirements for the genre of tragedy with the categories and priorities ordered as “plot, characters, diction, reasoning, spectacle and song” (95). This structural method is repeated by subsequent literary theorists and survives in the academy to this day. Aristotle follows the same structural format for *Rhetoric* within the following general framework:

The emotions are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments, and which are accompanied by pain and

pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites. (120)

The psychological effects of the emotions on judgment that Aristotle investigates and articulates are insightful for the interpreter who strives for the disinterested inquiry of the hermeneutic theorist. *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* thus establish a foundation for comparing literary works to a fundamental standard for critique.

The task laid out by the editors of the *Anthology* is investigating “the nature of truth” (*Phaedrus*, 83), and by his logical analyses Aristotle succeeds. The question becomes, what is logical analysis as applied to literary theory and criticism? Aristotle’s answer is elaborately drawn by knowing “how to divide into kinds until you reach something indivisible” (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 84). Aristotle painstakingly strives for indivisibility in *Poetics* with a multi-tiered grammatical hierarchy in logical sequence. For instance, ‘diction’ is ranked fourth in priority after plot, character and reasoning. There are an additional two subcategories totaling three levels in all. The first under diction is element (letter); and beneath this element are (a) the vowel, (b) the semi-vowel, and (c) the consonant (*Poetics* 107). Aristotle continues this explication with encyclopedic detail. Specific connections for hermeneutics are made in the delineation of the whole as well as of the parts, often in a series of opposites where a thing is (A) something tragic, for instance, or (B) it is not. Similarly, many of the excerpts in the *Anthology* shape literary analysis in terms of what a writing accomplishes, or what it does not accomplish, relative to an author’s aim. One can also observe in the work of *Poetics* the rhythm of an elaborate syllogism or enthymeme sequencing the logical rationale for the conclusion drawn or inferred. The primary strengths of Aristotle’s method for the interpretive process are its organizational structure of categorizations, and the use of syllogistic or enthymematic logic that builds to a conclusive understanding. Several selections in the *Anthology* are characteristic of this format serving the editors’ noted purpose of readability and teachability (Leitch,

Anthology xxxvi). Aristotle clearly details the whole and the parts of poetry and rhetoric, which are fundamental components for the building blocks of hermeneutics.

Traditions of Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Tropes

Building on the initial work of hermeneutics set forth by Plato and Aristotle, three notable authors, Horace, Longinus and Quintilian, carry the tradition forward at the turn of the millennium, circa 100 BC to 100 AD. The purpose of metaphor, in many of its forms, was explored as a necessity for the art of interpretation under conditions of ambiguity. These authors commend the understanding of literary tropes as integral to the art of interpretation. The forms and uses of tropes in well-composed writing are portrayed as artistry, while each author offers his own unique perspectives and emphasis.

In structuring their writing, Horace and Longinus focus on literary devices that were preexisting at the time the works were written, but for which they formulate their own descriptions, appropriate usages and critiques within the literary branches of prose, poetry and drama. Similarly to Plato, Horace puts forth instructions to a friend or acquaintance, Lucius Calpurnius Piso and his sons (Leitch, *Anthology* 124), for the do's and don'ts of writing poetry, and commends poetry for its social use and improvement of morality when he writes in *Ars Poetica*, "The path of life was pointed out in verse" (133). Like Horace, Longinus addresses his remarks to a friend, Postumius Terentianus (Leitch, *Anthology* 138), enumerating "The Five Sources of Sublimity" in *On Sublimity*, and chooses "notable diction" to situate and explain his unique perspective on Plato's metaphoric references to parts of the body; "the head [is] the 'citadel' of the body; the neck is an 'isthmus' constructed between the head and the chest," and so on (140-9).

Plato and Longinus provide steppingstones for metaphors that join the ineffable with the empirical, foreshadowing hermeneutics applied to the interpretation of scriptural phrases, such as "The Word became flesh." Quintilian goes further into the examination of tropes and their

ornamentation, hinting at pre-lingual phenomenology when he says in *Institutio Oratoria* that we “conceive ideas before we express them” (165). In most instances of metaphor, meaning is ambiguous. Often the literal meaning of a trope does not accord with reason, and it requires an interpretive process to discern the intended meaning. Hermeneutics will accommodate this need by allowing for and recommending that hypotheses are conceived for explaining tropes within the context of the whole text and of its parts to ascertain a plausible interpretation that is congruent. It is, in part, the interpretation of metaphor through the hermeneutic tradition that offers early Christian theologians a method for explaining ambiguous passages in the Bible.

Section 2: Principles for Ecclesiastic and Secular Hermeneutics

What began as a compelling interest among Christian theologians in the late fourth century to understand the words of God, became hermeneutic method for interpreting scriptural as well as secular works by the early nineteenth century. The elaboration of tropes in the preceding section added to the foundations of Plato and Aristotle for hermeneutics by setting out a framework for resolving ambiguity in the interpretation of scriptural texts. André Marie offers a contemporary summary of the spiritual senses in the article “The Four Senses of Scripture,” suggesting the continuing interest in the works produced by early theologians with regard to the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the anagogical passages of Scripture (Catholicism.org). While the excerpts in the *Anthology* are brief, the purpose of examining metaphor in Christian Scripture as a means of seeking truth from the word of God is made apparent within selections from certain major works of Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher who elaborate on and signpost the historical transition from the spiritual meanings found in Christian Scripture to the practice of hermeneutics for the interpretation of secular writings as well. While these theologians argue for the purpose of metaphor, in its many forms, as a necessity for conveying the meaning of

God's word, readings outside of the *Anthology* elucidate the central tenet of secularism developed by Johann Gottfried von Herder and further promoted by Schleiermacher.

Ecclesiastic Hermeneutics

Augustine, Aquinas and Schleiermacher share the same purpose of hermeneutics for the interpretation of Scripture. Conceptions of thought by the authors of Christian Scripture (perhaps authored by God himself as many believe) that elude precise explanations in words are often written with metaphor capable of providing a directional understanding in lieu of literal precision. The hermeneutic task in this regard includes generating and testing hypotheses for the meaning of a trope that is congruent with the biblical text as a whole and comports with its parts. The temporal and the spiritual connect through this congruence for Augustine and Schleiermacher who are writing primarily with intentions of an address to readers. Aquinas, on the other hand, is writing primarily as an inner dialogue, and secondarily as an address to readers. As with the other authors in the *Anthology*, they are writing for the assimilation by others of their viewpoints.

Augustine is one of the authors Leitch refers to in connection with hermeneutics (Leitch, *Theory* 76). During the late fourth century and into the early fifth century, Augustine does not advocate for proof of God's existence, nor is he rigidly Aristotelian in the excerpts from *On Christian Doctrine* in the *Anthology*, but rather, he seeks to understand the parts of Scripture presented with tropes "as signs which signify something else" (188). The editors of the *Anthology* comment that "Augustine fashioned a theory of signification that would dominate Western hermeneutics for ten centuries" (186). Augustine iterates through a handful of tropes that he classifies as signs used to metaphorically describe biblical phenomenon. Using syllogistic formations of language, he explains the enigmatic in an empirical way that attains the proximate status of the plausible. He asserts that metaphor "is necessary to a solution of the ambiguities of the Scriptures, for when the sense is absurd if it is taken verbally, it is to be

inquired whether or not what is said is expressed in this or that trope” (191-2). He provides this example from Matthew 15.11, “What goes into the mouth doth not defile a man, but what comes out of the mouth, that defiles a man” (193). The allusion is to the heart of man, which is in itself an allusion to the conscience of man. Similarly, the allusion to vibrations of the vocal chords within the human body when reciting Scripture are interpreted as the word of God made flesh through that vocalized recitation “when it is spoken through a sound or through some bodily sign, it is not spoken just as it is, but as it can be seen or heard through the body” (195). Thus, the literary tools of metaphoric language are used to structure logical arguments to form rational, plausible interpretations of enigmatic Scripture that connect the spiritual with the temporal.

Augustine creates a bridge between our first-hand experiences with the world and the ineffable existence of God through literary mechanisms of language. To harmonize the literal with the figurative, Augustine focuses on the literary term, enigma, where the term is used to convey a means of attaining an understanding of that which is beyond our human comprehension. The enigma fills the space between thoughts and understanding that extends the borders and boundaries of interpretation. This sense of meaning beyond our present understanding that must find a way to be understood is a phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry the *Anthology* reveals. The notable hermeneutic in the excerpts from Augustine is the desire for understanding within the context of the whole biblical work. Judgment is suspended as to whether the prose or poetry of Scripture are aesthetically pleasing. Its aim is the most plausible interpretation of metaphoric passages within the context of the complete Bible. These foundational hermeneutic principles for religious purposes will carry forward into the foundations of secular hermeneutics for Schleiermacher and E.D. Hirsch, Jr., as well.

Thomas Aquinas was a thirteenth-century theologian with questions similar to those of Augustine about scriptural interpretation and the use of metaphor. In the *Anthology*, an excerpt from *Summa Theologica* by Aquinas differs from Augustine by making theological inquiries with

a highly structured form of dialectic that lays out a series of alternating syllogisms. Aquinas uses this method as a format to assist in determining the efficacy of using tropes for interpreting Scripture. He argues the negative position first, and then the affirmative counterpoint immediately follows. Aquinas presents a straightforward assertion,

Objection 1. It seems that the Holy Scripture should not use metaphors. For that which is proper to the lowest science seems not to befit this science, which holds the highest place of all. (243)

The response to the objection is also straight forward,

I answer that, It is befitting Holy Writ to put forward divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with material things. For God provides for everything according to the capacity of its nature. (244)

Aquinas engages in this written dialogue as a formal debate prevalent in the scholastic method that argues both sides of a position to sharpen the arguments to the degree that a concluding form of truth emerges. This is not the same truth as the absolute truth one might expect to find in applied mathematics when counting or comparing weights and measures. Rather, it is the truth of plausibility by use of Aristotelian reason and logic. This method also foregrounds the use of imagination to develop hypotheses, which can be logically tested for plausibility inside the horizon of reason. Aquinas, like Augustine, interrogates the use of metaphors to determine whether they are necessary and appropriate for the interpretation of Scripture.

Thus far, the theologians in the *Anthology* have shared common concerns for metaphor as a means of acquiring a deeper meaning from Scripture beyond the surface ornamentation metaphor offers secular poetry and prose. This object of inquiry was a consistent effort to interpret biblical meaning correctly, and to make that meaning available to the clergy for reconciliation of ambiguity. This same concept of uncovering the underlying meaning of a text applies to secular hermeneutics further discussed in the following section.

Modern Secular Hermeneutics

The *Anthology* continues to signpost the evolution of secular hermeneutic principles for the interpretative arts with an excerpt from the *Outline of the 1819 Lectures* by the German scholar and theologian, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, a principled hermeneutic practitioner, often referred to as the father of modern hermeneutics. For Schleiermacher, understanding the author, culture, language, genre and oeuvre in relation to the text are necessary for the proper interpretation of the writer's work. These are foundational tenets of the modern secular hermeneutic tradition. The process is iterative, from the big picture perspective to the nuances that make up that picture, and back again to the bird's-eye view. The hermeneutic foundation Schleiermacher elaborates is open and non-hierarchical. It privileges the writer's intended meaning of the text, an aspect of hermeneutics that is set aside by the Formalists and the New Critics in the twentieth century.

Stepping briefly outside of the *Anthology* to discuss *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, translated and edited by Andrew Bowie, Schleiermacher is interested in the philological excavation of authorial attribution for sections of the New Testament as a key task for general hermeneutics to uncover reliable evidence for the meaning of biblical passages attributed to the words of Jesus Christ. An example of Schleiermacher's general hermeneutic focusing on the original language an author employs in text contends with multiple translations of a single text over time:

[I]n the N.T. [New Testament] the new Christian spirit emerges in a mixture of languages where the Hebrew is the root in which the new was first thought; the Greek was, though, grafted on" (20). [T]he path to the vocabulary of the N.T. goes from classical antiquity through Macedonian Hellenism, the Jewish profane authors Josephus and Philo, the deuterocanonical writings and LXX [Septuagint] as the strongest approximation to the Hebrew. (25)

This hermeneutical concept of understanding a text's original language is relevant to literary theory and criticism in the *Anthology*. While the bibliographies in the *Anthology* occasionally cite authoritative translations that predate the nineteenth century, the primary sources of excerpts

translated into English were completed during the twentieth century from several European languages, including Greek, German, French, Italian and Russian, suggesting the initial meaning of an original author's text requires extraordinary scholarship to ascertain.

In the *Outline* excerpted in the *Anthology*, Schleiermacher insists on the writer's meaning of a text as a foundational objective of hermeneutics to promote the most appropriate textual interpretation. Interpretation necessitates a cycling back and forth between the grammatic syntax of the writer's language, and the intellections of the writer's thoughts. As Schleiermacher explains in the *Outline*, "every part must be handled as a discrete unit with equal respect paid to all other parts" (615). The interpreter's subjectivity should be withheld from the exposition during the general hermeneutic task. Specifically, "It is the primary task of interpretation not to understand an ancient text in view of modern thinking, but to rediscover the original relationship between the writer and his audience" (617). This task must be accomplished first, and "the exposition begins only after a successful identification of the text's original meaning" (619). This approach calls for the suspending of aesthetic judgment until later in the methodology. Interpretation in this context is not criticism, a key distinction raised by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., in the twentieth century. Hermeneutic judgment is used to discern the more plausible interpretation from the less plausible, particularly when there is potential for ambiguity of alternative meanings within the text. The differentiation between the hermeneutic principles set forth by Schleiermacher constitute and separate divisional layers within the interpretive arts that Leitch alludes to as "historical strata" in the preface of the *Anthology* (vii).

Schleiermacher stresses the need to comprehend the genre of a text to situate the reader within a gradually narrowing context from which authorial meaning emerges. As a method of categorization, genres of writing tend towards conformity within a set of traditional rules, styles, formats and purposes thereby providing substantive context for the meaning an author seeks to convey. The editors further describe Schleiermacher's methods in the headnote of the *Anthology* as balancing hermeneutics across four theoretical oppositions,

namely, “subject/object, finite/infinite, individual/social, and psychology/grammar” (612). Although the headnote is brief, and it does not go into detail, we may contextualize Schleiermacher’s perspective as the subject/object relating to the hermeneutical circle and its investigation of the general as well as the particular. The finite/infinite concept separates what remains in scope for consideration from that which is out of scope. The anagogical, for instance, is set aside in Schleiermacher’s method as out of scope due to its lesser degree of empiricism. The individual/social denotes the author as the individual, and the social as the society, history and culture within which writing emerges. Lastly, the psychology/grammar refers to the use of imaginative hypothesizing to evaluate the most plausible interpretation among contending alternatives where there is ambiguity in the text. When the meaning of a text is ambiguous, or there are gaps in continuity, Schleiermacher proposes temporarily supplanting discontinuity with hypothetical suppositions that may render an ambiguous reading plausible, based on how well-reasoned the parts of the text logically and empirically join together with the work as a whole. Schleiermacher refers to this mode of hypothesis testing as “divination” (625); the use of intuition and imagination to generate and test hypotheses. In true hermeneutic fashion, we interpret the term “divination” in the author’s context using the predictive sense of the word that relates to the most plausible interpretation, rather than the prophetic sense that relates to a more mystical connotation associated with foreseeing the future.

Schleiermacher further guides the interpreter against error in *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* by stating, “Misunderstanding is either a consequence of hastiness or of prejudice” (23). The fact that haste leads to error needs no explanation. However, the context for the word “prejudice” is “the one-sided preference for what is close to the individual’s circle of ideas and the rejection of what lies outside it” (23). This counsels for an open mind, and suggests the necessity for methods of verification (25), a perennial issue in modern literary analysis. The mitigation of prejudice, as Schleiermacher uses the term, will improve the art of interpretation, and therefore, less prejudice leads to greater understanding. Schleiermacher

recognized the challenge of hermeneutics as “an infinite task” (23), and as a consequence, the time-consuming, interpretive process may be “superficially learned or habituated or done to effect.” Schleiermacher encapsulates this meaning in the term “mannered,” and for Schleiermacher, “what is mannered is always bad style” (91). The critique here of style refers to misinterpretation that begets misunderstandings, and not whether parts of the N.T. are aesthetically pleasing or less so. The suspension of aesthetic judgment supports the principle of openness to alternative interpretations, particularly when applying divinatory hypothesis testing to reduce ambiguities.

In *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, Schleiermacher differentiates literary criticism as a form of judgment that follows interpretation and must rely on appropriate theory and interpretation in order to be an appropriate criticism. A finer distinction of the task of criticism is to “compare single products with their idea: that is the court of judgment” (158). A further delineation is drawn between the “comparison” of details with other details, and bringing such comparisons of product, idea and detail together to form one doctrine (158). Schleiermacher is referring here to scriptural doctrine, but the same method is also applicable to his secular hermeneutics. There remains a substantial hermeneutic requirement Schleiermacher shares with all of his predecessors discussed thus far in this thesis, which is that one must ultimately come to cohesive determinations about the ability of a literary work to reach its aims. In his words, “I must be able to say what belongs to perfection and I cannot do this until I have formed the aggregate of perfections into a whole” (161). Moreover, specific errors and misunderstandings of an initial reading within the borders of one's own perceptions can be hard to detect when a reader interprets a text from his or her own base of knowledge, rather than interpreting from the perspective of the author. This is similar to Schleiermacher's use of the term prejudice, but as a subtly different issue, it beckons a different solution. To comport with the perspective of the writer, Schleiermacher advocates knowing as much as possible about the writer to see the work through the writer's eyes. Biographical information is therefore relevant for this interpretive

process, and accordingly, every author in the *Anthology* is prefaced with a brief biographical sketch in the headnotes.

For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics is a comprehensive approach using Aristotelian categorization and ordering to establish requirements for critical analysis that “must include the work in a specific genre, attribute a specific purpose to it, and then the question is: to what extent does it achieve its purpose, and is it appropriate to its genre?” (161). Schleiermacher, as both an ecclesiastic and a secular scholar employs the principle of “secularism” set forth by his predecessor, Johann Gottfried von Herder. Michael Forster’s article “Johann Gottfried von Herder,” describes secularism as the “rejection of unwarranted allegorical interpretations,” and asserts that scholars ought to treat Scripture “as the works of human authors and apply exactly the same interpretive methods to them as are applied to profane texts” (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Forster’s article lists several philological achievements accomplished by Herder as a result of his secular interpretive approach:

Herder’s commitment to applying normal interpretive methods, including his readiness to discover falsehood and inconsistency, enabled him to treat the authors of the four gospels as individual human authors rather than as mere mouthpieces of the deity, to perceive inconsistencies between their accounts, to establish the relative dates of the gospels correctly for the first time (Mark first, Matthew and Luke in the middle, John last and late), and to give a broadly correct account of their genesis in oral sermon and of their likely relations to each other. (Forster, *SEP*)

Secularism is not construed in this context as the breaking away from the views of Augustine and Aquinas, who treat all allegories in Christian Scripture as signs for the conveyance of God’s truths. Rather, it is an alternative analytical approach that considers the word of God in Scripture written by men for the purpose of arriving at the most plausible interpretation of the work. Schleiermacher follows the secular approach, which allows hermeneutics to operate in the temporal and in the ecclesiastical spheres of interpretation. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., discussed below, adopts this position in the twentieth century as well.

Thus far the *Anthology* traverses the historic traditions of hermeneutics from the western perspective as it emerged from Greek philosophy, developed through medieval theological

assimilation of tropes as a necessity for understanding Scripture, and advanced through the eighteenth-century Enlightenment period by German philosophers for scriptural and secular interpretation. Through the foregoing historical periods, the evolution of hermeneutics acquired a formidable complement of theoretical and pragmatic followers as the bibliographies for these authors in the *Anthology* indicate. The historical employment of hermeneutics in the *Anthology* is firmly established by the 1850s in Western Europe. However, by the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, the *Anthology* depicts the literary interpretive arts branching out in several diverse directions that begin to overshadow traditional hermeneutics in order to accommodate other modes of interpretation and subject areas within the space allotted to a single anthological volume.

Section 3: Twentieth Century Disaggregation of Literary Theory and Criticism

The second half of this thesis reflects the compression of time and the expansion and discursive trajectories the *Anthology* undertakes. The following section touches briefly on several influential writers of the twentieth century to convey this progression, but by no means covers them all. The steady march that built the foundations of hermeneutics as an interpretive art finds itself in an increasingly crowded field of alternatives. The subject matter from poetry and prose remains from the former traditions of the early Greeks and medieval theologians, and modernized general and secular hermeneutics is retained in the work of E.D. Hirsch, Jr. However, a lengthy list of new categories and schools of literary theory are presented within the *Anthology* in succession. In support of Vincent Leitch's thesis of topical disaggregation in the field, the editors of the *Anthology* include dozens of interdisciplinary works of literary theory occurring in tandem and branching out in new directions. What begins as a historical progression adequately measured in centuries grows increasingly more diverse with each decade. The editors of the *Anthology* select from a wide range of subject areas for excerpts covering elements of the classic traditions of literary interpretation and hermeneutics to

exemplify an array of interests and the vitality of discourse for novel paths through the socio-cultural materiality of the twentieth century. The following subsections of this thesis will touch on a selection of works that made substantive contributions to the literary interpretive arts. The first two subsections draw from the academic disciplines of linguistics and philosophy. These are followed by a brief discussion of the literary schools of thought categorized in the *Anthology* as Formalism, the New Critics, New Historicism, phenomenology and reader-response.

Linguistics Contributes to the Hermeneutic Tradition

In keeping with the theme of a mosaic of excerpts, the *Anthology* shifts to the work of a linguist that opened the field of literary interpretation in a new direction. Much had been said about the importance of understanding the specific language, genre and context an author uses to effectively and accurately interpret a literary work. In 1916, a theory of general linguistics would have a direct influence on how these forerunners of the interpretive arts would be linguistically conceptualized going forward. The desire to formulate scientific method into the development of a foundation for the object of interpretation encounters Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist and semiotician. His thesis is that language is made up of arbitrary cultural assignments pairing written signs with material objects and conceptual ideas; the written sign and that which is signified. The method Saussure employs is the elaborate division of linguistic detail towards the indivisible, as Plato recommends in *Phaedrus*.

Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, excerpted in the *Anthology*, connects to and extends the hermeneutic traditions of Augustine and Schleiermacher. Recall that Augustine developed a "sign theory...for interpreting texts allegorically" (Leitch, *Anthology* 186), and Schleiermacher reinforces the necessity to understand a writer's meaning of a text from the original writer's point of view. Saussure posits that language is the arbitrary assignment of "concept and sound-image," which he refers to as "signified and signifier," respectively (964). It is this arbitrary assignment of meaning to the sound-image that requires knowledge of a writer's

linguistic, grammatic and syntactic usage to accurately (or plausibly) interpret the meaning of a text. Saussure's theory of arbitrary cultural assignment of meaning makes it possible for multiple plausible interpretations to emerge from the same text between different culturally informed groups. Saussure is also considered in the *Anthology* as a predecessor to the literary theory of structuralism, which is, in part, a philosophical viewpoint suggesting that each individual structures its representation of reality using language refracted through the individual's interpretive engagement with the natural environment and the many and varied elements of culture that the individual inhabits. By the same token, this theory suggests that individual communities may adopt world views that are independently shaped by the ability of language to represent perspectives on life and literature that conform to the cultural assignments of meaning within discrete communities.

The purpose of Saussure's linguistics as it relates to interpretation is that it is the link that joins thought to sound, and by extension, it joins thought and sound to writing. Saussure expresses the thought-sound concept heuristically in the excerpt from the *Anthology*:

Language can also be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front and the sound is the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time; likewise in language, one can neither divide sound from thought nor thought from sound; the division could be accomplished only abstractedly, and the result would be either pure psychology or pure phonology. (967)

Saussure conceives of a "word" as the "center of a constellation; it is the point of convergence of an indefinite number of co-ordinated terms" (976). The implication for the science of interpretation is that words are assigned meaning arbitrarily by custom and consensus of the social group; the community allows and accepts a meaning to exist in the association of the sound with the image. Meaning assigned to language is therefore communitarian, and meaning is as diverse as the number of languages and communities in the world, reinforcing the need to understand the language of a text as it is used by the writer, as Schleiermacher recommends. Theorized as such, language does not easily transcend cultural differences. From Saussure's perspective, the theory of sign and signified is obligated to refer to its cultural anchor.

By refining the study of general linguistics into the “two-sided psychological entity” (964), of sign and signified, Saussure changes the scope of interpretive inquiry under consideration. On the one hand, he is not concerned with the speech act as Plato and Aristotle are in discussing poets, rhapsodes and orators. On the other hand, Saussure enlarges the field of interpretation to include factors of linguistics and semiology. For Saussure, speaking is the execution of language after meaning is already assigned to sound and image. While vocalized emotion through speech, vocal timber, pace, and symbolic interaction of body language are also significant carriers of sound-image in every-day speech, formal recitation, or song, these elements are not connected with Saussure’s *Course* in that manner. This position does not contemplate the speaker’s tone, intonation and pace, for example, that are part of sound and therefore part of the sound-image that carries culturally assigned and accepted meaning within a homogeneous community.

Saussure’s interpretation of meaning attached to the innate function of language is pivotal for hermeneutics. Under Saussure’s theoretical framework, it becomes reasonable, rational and plausible to infer that language attaches to the structures we encounter in the world with the concrete tangibility of “realities that have their seat in the brain” (961). The more complex conceptual ideas of thought become, the more challenges the interpreter encounters as well. In Saussure’s view, “language [is] the most complex and universal of all systems of expression” (965). Theorizing the sound and the corresponding sound-image through Saussure’s linguistic-semiotic lens becomes documentable fact, derived from a process that is repeatable by independent investigation, and approaches a more objective and scientific literary study. Saussure’s heuristic of thought as sound and image is also useful for determining gaps in understanding. If one is unable to form a clear image or referent for the sound, that is the internal voice of the literary text during the phenomenological process of reading, there is the potential for unclear, multiple possibilities of meaning to unfold. Where this is the case,

phenomenological hermeneutics theorizes conscious mental activity during the reading process that this thesis will briefly discuss under a separate subheading.

Philosophical Hermeneutics Contributes to the Interpretive Tradition

The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, connects to and extends Saussure's concept of arbitrary cultural assignments of signs and significations. If language is constructed arbitrarily, in the Saussurian context, for Heidegger, the fundamental experience of life unfolds for the individual in relation to language, which is the main ingredient through which life is intelligible. In Heidegger's "Language" within the *Anthology*, the poem by Georg Trakl, "A Winters Evening" is discussed and explains these thoughts in rather enchanting ways (1125). First, Heidegger performs a light structural analysis of the poem. Second, he asserts, "Language speaks" (1127) by bringing "man and his world into conscious existence" as the editors of the *Anthology* suggest (1120). For example, Heidegger makes the point that it is language that is naming the silent snow falling on the window, and the bells long tolling at vespers in Trakl's poem:

Window with falling snow is arrayed,
Long tolls the vesper bell,
The house is provided well,
The table is for many laid. (1127)

By this verse, Heidegger draws the reader's attention to the language that is calling these things forth into conscious existence that would not otherwise make an appearance in its absence. This is an essential concept Heidegger articulates separately from the *Anthology* in the book, *Being and Time*, and of interest for its unique way of describing the relationships of language to his existential construct of Being. Heidegger conveys the idea that people experience life with two or more separate relationships to language by invoking the philosophical concept of two different kinds of "Being" in the world; the authentic and the inauthentic. Both exist side-by-side within each individual, and each individual is unique. The authentic self may be characterized

as the personal self we believe ourselves to be naturally. The inauthentic self is construed as the public self whom we allow ourselves to be shaped into for adaptive purposes within our communitarian societies with its rules, customs, traditions, languages, and most importantly for hermeneutics, its established signs, significations and referents. Language is capable of moving between and among these two conceptions of “Being.” This complicates the interpretive process for the reader assessing authorial intent. Biographical information about the writer may be of little use if the writer is explaining perceptions that are separate from what the reader-interpretor might otherwise infer from biographical information. This position supports the Formalists and the New Critics who set aside biographical information as less important for the interpretation of a literary text. On the other hand, from the hermeneutic perspective, a sense of the influential moments in a writer’s life helps inform the meaning the writer invests in their written works.

The following is one explanation of the Heideggerian duality of Being from an entry by Michael Wheeler posted on the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* website within which one can see the novel use of language Heidegger constructs for the exchange of meaning. Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*, and Wheeler uses this quote to respond in the *Stanford* article:

Authentic Being-one's-Self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the “they”; *it is rather an existentiell modification of the “they” as an essential existentielle.* (*Being and Time* 168. Italics are from the 1967 edition.)

Wheeler explains:

So authenticity is not about being isolated from others, but rather about finding a different way of relating to others such that one is not lost to the they-self. It is in Division 2 of *Being and Time* that authenticity, so understood, becomes a central theme. (Wheeler, *SEP*)

Heidegger creatively invents language of the “one-self” and the “they-self” to signify two personas in the same individual. With this novel philosophical viewpoint, Heidegger alludes to a mode of interpretation that supports the concept of structuralism. With its innate facility for

language, the mind is capable of structuring and assigning meanings to the relationships we hold with the world around us. This may be understood as a purposeful organizing principle of sense-making for the “shapeless indistinct mass” of thought Saussure refers in the *Anthology* as a “vague uncharted nebula,” until such time as language structures those thoughts into an intelligible existence (Saussure 966-7). Moreover, inherent in Heidegger’s proposition is that language structures thought for adaptive purposes of comportment to one’s circumstances. Robert Cavalier characterizes this Heideggerian notion of adaptation in terms of comportment in the article, “Lectures on Heidegger’s *Being and Time*”:

[A] self-understanding of Human Being [that] finds itself in a situation, comports itself to possibilities and does so for the most part in its everyday concerns and activities.
(Cavalier)

The implications of Heidegger’s mode of thinking brought philosophical hermeneutics to the fore as part of the historical emplotment of the art of interpretation the editors of *Anthology* sought to express. While not an idealist assertion that nothing exists outside of the mind, it does suggest that comprehension of the external world is that which our internal minds make it out to be through language; an inculturation of beliefs and perceptions of a communitarian reality that receives meaning by agreement of the member constituents. Heidegger provides an avenue for subsequent literary theorists to explore ways in which both the private and public selves interact and respond to cultural environments. Reflections of this kind are present in literary critiques within the *Anthology* that contend with cultural mores of race, gender, sexuality and psychoanalysis that emerged during the latter part of the twentieth century.

This section of the thesis briefly touched on the unexpected directions that the *Anthology* takes in moving from the general hermeneutics of Schleiermacher to the general linguistics of Saussure and the philosophical hermeneutics of Heidegger to support the claims that (i) a definition of literature is difficult to pin down, and (ii) that the field of literary theory and criticism is expanding into novel areas as laid out by the editors of the *Anthology*. One would expect therefore that the theories of interpretation would also move in numerous directions in an effort

to accommodate as broad a collection of alternatives as might be articulated. It is within this non-linear environment that hermeneutics presents its best opportunity as a point of departure and reference for addressing disaggregation in the field. The next section in this thesis is a retreat away from philosophical hermeneutics while maintaining connections to linguistics that shape another theoretical branch of literary interpretation from the schools of Formalism and the New Criticism.

Formalism Specifies the Text Alone as Sufficient for Literary Interpretation

During the turn of the twentieth century, several influential literary theorists and critics known as the Formalists shared an overarching disposition to move away from the immense and immersive scope of the philosophical, phenomenological and author-centric paradigms established within the traditions of general and secular hermeneutics that had evolved for more than two thousand years. The Russian Formalists were among the first in the *Anthology* to take a concrete turn toward an exclusive focus on the text alone for the interpretation of literature in the early 1900s. The relevance of the writer's intentions in producing a text were removed from consideration, and the text in-and-of-itself came to dominate Formalist methods of literary interpretation. The editors of the *Anthology* capture the crisp attitude of this literary moment; "knowledge and meaning derive solely from what can be empirically observed" (1065). The *Anthology* excerpts a 1926 essay by Boris Eichenbaum, "The Theory of the 'Formal Method,'" where Eichenbaum argues for the Formalist movement's "passion for scientific positivism" (1065) characterizing this shift among certain literary theorists, and articulating the Formalist's "rejection of philosophical assumptions or psychological and aesthetic interpretations" (1065). This position sets aside certain hermeneutic elements of Schleiermacher and philosophical elements of Heidegger, but it retains linguistic elements of Saussure for a more scientific approach to the study of literary poetry and prose.

The Formalist system focused the field of literary study on the elements of poetry and prose that constitute sound, pattern, repetition, rhyme and form for study and analysis. As the editors of the *Anthology* instruct, this paved the way for the New Critics of the early twentieth century that “were calling for an ‘intrinsic’ literary criticism based on close reading” (Leitch, *Anthology* 1241). The pedagogical practice of close reading is still very much alive in American universities today. The editors of the *Anthology* explain that John Crowe Ransom was instrumental as “the central figure in the institutionalization of the New Criticism, the formalist theory and practice that dominated U.S. teaching and literary criticism in the mid-twentieth century” (1105). Ransom’s polemic in the *Anthology* is from his work entitled, *The World’s Body*, “Criticism Inc.” Therein, Ransom expresses displeasure in his assessment of the state of academic English departments in 1938:

It is really atrocious policy for a department to abdicate its own self-respecting identity. The department of English is charged with the understanding and the communication of literature, an art, yet it has usually forgotten to inquire into the peculiar constitution and structure of its product. English might almost as well announce that it does not regard itself as entirely autonomous, but as a branch of the department of history, with the option of declaring itself occasionally a branch of the department of ethics. (1112)

For Ransom, the art of interpretation was in need of a literary criticism that was “more scientific, or precise and systematic” with a focus on the work itself (1109), and less concerned with extrinsic influences. The author-centric modes of interpretation, practices and pedagogy that preceded New Criticism shifted toward intrinsic literary criticism of the work itself as a subdiscipline within the remit of English departments. The editors of the *Anthology* confirm the realization of Ransom’s efforts over subsequent decades in American universities where undergraduate English departments included literary criticism with specializations across discrete periods such as the Romantic and the Gothic, while continuing to employ methods of close reading as a core mode of pedagogy. By abstaining from consideration of all that resides outside of the text, literary analysis is no less rigorous nor less interesting, but it does circumvent a substantial volume of meaning in the process that general and secular

hermeneutics will otherwise accommodate. New Criticism is, in effect, a method of subdividing aspects of literary study for the intended purpose of “precision and clarity” (Ransom 1106).

Several years after Ransom published “Criticism Inc.,” William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley added directly to the argument. As the editors of the *Anthology* summarize with respect to the New Critics, “analysis must center on the text itself: the critic’s task is to examine its linguistic structure and its aesthetic unity as an autonomous object” (Leitch, *Anthology* 1371-2). In the Wimsatt and Beardsley excerpt entitled, “The Intentional Fallacy,” they state, “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a literary work of art” (1374-5). It is noteworthy to point out that while the Wimsatt-Beardsley critique sets aside authorial intent in favor of the text alone, this critique is made with reference to “the critic’s judgment” (1374). This is compatible with Schleiermacher’s separation of critical judgment from the judgment that is necessary to form the most plausible interpretation of a text. The most plausible interpretation of the text must precede the critique. This is precisely the approach taken by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., further discussed below. Where the hermeneutic traditions expressed by Schleiermacher require comprehensive examination of the text from extrinsic as well as intrinsic perspectives, the Formalists and the New Critics claim, in part, that only the intrinsic analysis is necessary and available.

Reappropriation and Repurposing of Modern Secular Hermeneutics

By the early twentieth century, the art of interpretation through hermeneutics must contend in a crowded field of alternatives with the New Critics predominating in the academy and the close reading method prioritized as the preferred standard for analyzing texts. The aforementioned theoreticians and institution builders were not the only scholars at work pruning and shaping the landscape of twentieth-century hermeneutics. Another pair of pragmatic Americans were converging the theoretical with the practical to develop models that instructors, and others, could more readily put into practice for analyzing and interpreting literary works.

Notably among these scholars are E.D. Hirsch, Jr., an educator, and Hayden White, a historian. Amidst the dispersion and variation of twentieth century literary theory and method, classic hermeneutics makes a stand with the work of E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and retains its relevance among the alternatives.

The Aristotelian method visibly survives, and combined with general and secular hermeneutics, Hirsch advances the hermeneutic tradition to a new standard of formal clarity. The excerpts by Hirsch from *Validity in Interpretation* in the *Anthology* begin from the point at which the general hermeneutic process of philological determination of attribution is resolved and develops a procedure for learning as much as possible about the writer's meaning of a text while acknowledging that the significance of that meaning may change for one or more readers from time to time. Hirsch enlists the Aristotelian method of order, categorization and definition with detailed explanations for each part of his method. The logic of the argument is presumed to be irrefutable; namely, the writer's meaning of a text is the only meaning intended. What it means to another reader is the text's significance.

Like Schleiermacher, Hirsch's approach requires substantial time and effort to accomplish the task he sets before the interpreter. While Hirsch's theory is among the most discernable methods of ascertaining a plausible interpretation of the writer's work, it could provide a clearer distinction between an author's personal attitude and that author's subjective stance. These are two categories in Hirsch's theory that ought to be less similar to one another and more distinct, or combined into one category. That said, Hirsch presents a clear, straightforward approach for the art of interpretation. At the center of Hirsch's theory from the excerpt in the *Anthology* entitled, "Objective Interpretation," is that the writer's meaning of a text is the true meaning, and that interpretations of a text alone, without due consideration for authorial intent, cannot form a complete basis for the true literary meaning of the writer's text. Hirsch explains:

I defined textual meaning as the verbal intention of the author, and this argues implicitly that hermeneutics must stress a reconstruction of the author's aims and attitudes in order to evolve guides and norms for construing the meaning of his texts. (1695)

To accomplish this hermeneutic, Hirsch recommends a detailed analysis for discovering the writer's themes and assertions that form the most unified and coherent interpretation of a text, inclusive of the authorial intent. Hirsch summarizes this position, in part, as the distinction made between the meaning of a text and its significance:

The object of interpretation is textual meaning in and for itself and may be called the *meaning* of the text. The object of criticism, on the other hand, is that meaning in its bearing on something else (standards of value, present concerns, etc.), and this object may therefore be called the *significance* of the text. (1686, italics are from Hirsch.)

For Hirsch, in order to accomplish this hermeneutic task, the interpreter "must familiarize himself with the typical meanings of the writer's mental and experiential world" (1694). One can readily see the connection between Schleiermacher and Hirsch as it relates to familiarity with a writer's genre and oeuvre to aid in the interpretive process.

Hirsch further distinguishes between the writer's "inner horizon" where he posits the most plausible interpretation of the writer's meaning is located, and the "outer horizon" described as a separate sphere adjacent to and intersecting with "the domain of criticism":

The horizon which grounds and sanctions inferences about textual meaning is the "inner horizon" of the text. It is permanent and self-identical. Beyond this inner horizon any meaning has an "outer horizon"; that is to say, any meaning has relationships to other meanings; it is always a component in larger realms. This outer horizon is the domain of criticism. But this outer horizon is not only unlimited, it is also changing since the world itself changes. (1695)

To interpret and to criticize are therefore separate and distinct tasks for Hirsch as they are for Schleiermacher. It follows that the reader must first undertake interpretation of the contextual elements of a text to discern the most plausible and probable "inner horizon" of meaning while addressing the task appropriate to criticism secondarily. Moreover, where the Wimsatt-Beardsley interpretive approach disavows authorial intent in favor of the text alone, it does so with reference to "the critic's task" of judging how well a text achieves its aim (Wimsatt 1372). Thus, Hirsch maintains the two horizons of textual meaning, the "inner horizon" for authorial

intent (which does not change), and the “outer horizon,” which is the intersection of the writer’s meaning and the commentator’s criticism (which may change).

How is it possible to know whether the “inner horizon” of meaning has been attained? Hirsch recommends verification of a close interpretation by invoking context, coherence and the writer’s logic: “it is a sense of the whole meaning constituted of explicit partial meanings, plus a horizon of expectations and probabilities” wherein the context invoked must be the most probable to establish verification by coherence (1704). Weight is also given to the writer’s “relative emphasis” which “excludes alternatives” (1699) that do not align closely with the writer’s emphasis. Hirsch states, “The interpreter’s primary task is to reproduce in himself the author’s ‘logic,’ his attitudes, his cultural givens, in short, his world” (1707). These concrete parameters bring a new level of formality to the process of verification. As Hirsch states, “In hermeneutics, verification is a process of establishing relative probabilities” (1703).

Hirsch incorporates an Aristotelian method of organizing, categorizing, defining, and explaining a workable method into five categories summarized as follows: (i) Language: This refers to the linguistic foundation that must be present in a written work; namely, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, the elementary building blocks of spoken and written languages. (ii) Genre: Identification of genre manifests “a general horizon for its meaning” (1694), providing the conceptual framework within which to situate the writer’s inner horizon of meaning. Consistent with Schleiermacher, genre informs the rules, styles, forms and purpose of literary work. (iii) Cultural attitude: This necessitates a survey of the time, place and social conditions within which the author took pen to paper. (iv) Personal attitude: This also necessitates a survey of the writer’s oeuvre for consistency in interpretations across works. (v) Subjective stance: “The interpreter needs to adopt sympathetically the writer’s stance” (1705). This is the most nuanced aspect of Hirsch’s scheme owing to its subjectivity. Hirsch, like Schleiermacher, recommends a comprehensive approach to render context for “a sense of the whole meaning” (1704). This process describes a substantial effort on the part of the

interpreter, making the point that hermeneutic interpretation cannot be accomplished in a superficial manner. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Hirsch does not contend that there is a single correct interpretation, and to confront this issue we turn to the historian, Hayden White.

Emplotment as Interpretative Theory and Method

Recalling the concept of plausibility for the interpretation of text, Schleiermacher employed hypothesis testing, Hirsch formalizes the method with a five-step-procedure, and Hayden White offers the concept of emplotment. Perhaps one of the most plausible theories in the *Anthology* to address the question of why there can be many different interpretations for the same literary work, White provides a useful framework within the literary theoretical construct of New Historicism. Emplotment explains why there can be an indefinite number of historical narratives covering the same series of historical facts:

[E]vents might be emplotted in different ways without violating the imperatives of the chronological order of the events (however they are construed) so as to yield alternative, mutually exclusive, and yet, equally plausible interpretations of the set. (1723)

White uses a schematic made up of a list of placeholders that stand for variables an author ascribes with the historic events of the narrative history they choose to assemble. Like Hirsch, White uses a combination of narrative and Aristotelian methods in his writing. I would suggest that while the theory is explained from the perspective of a historian, the concept of emplotment is a useful heuristic for other disciplines that, similar to history, formulate multiple alternative interpretations from the same set of facts. The familiar nature-versus-nurture paradigm is one example. Emphasis may be given to one or the other position as a means of explaining successful outcomes in relation to a formal criteria such as academic proficiency on student examinations at various grade levels.

The diversity of historical narratives covering the same historical events are made plausible through the model of interpretation White sets forth in his essay, "The Historical Text

as Literary Artifact” excerpted in the *Anthology*. White’s structural approach for historical narratives enlists the following schematic notation:

(1) *a, b, c, d, e, ……………, n.* (1722)

In White’s schema, each letter is a placeholder for an event in the writer’s selected historic chronology. The key aspect of White’s thesis is that the same array of events may present several valid interpretations by emphasizing and adhering to different themes for each interpretation. White provides an example relating to histories of the French Revolution by three separate authors:

Burke decodes the events of the Revolution which his contemporaries experience as a grotesque by recoding it in the mode of irony; Michelet recodes these events in the mode of synecdoche; Tocqueville recodes them in a mode of metonymy. In each case, however, the movement from code to recode is narratively described, i.e., laid out on a time-line in such a way as to make the interpretation of events that made up the “Revolution” a kind of drama that we can recognize as Satirical, Romantic, and Tragic, respectively. (1726).

The emphasis of interpretation on the Satirical, the Romantic or the Tragic, in Whites example, are similar to the “relative emphasis” which “excludes alternatives” that Hirsch recommends (Ibid. 1699), and which are denoted by White in his adjusted schema below with capital letters. The lower-case letters in the scheme denote the selective “recoding” of facts that make up sequential parts of the historian’s storyline that align with this capitalized emphasis, and each sequential emplotment may produce a different interpretation reflecting the historian’s chosen emphasis and recoding of the historical facts:

(2) *A, b, c, d, e, ……………, n.*

(3) *a, B, c, d, e, ……………, n.*

(4) *a, b, C, d, e, ……………, n.* (1722)

In White’s terms, the author-historian “emplots” their narrative on a timeline with a view to explaining a sequential set of factual, historical events using thematic choices and perspectives from which to recount the history they want to tell. The touchpoint that connects White’s theory with hermeneutics is its inclusiveness of alternative views, allowing for the feasibility of several

distinctly different narratives to emerge from the same set of historical facts where the author brings to the work “different notions” of a historical period “because they had different kinds of stories to tell” (1715-6). The relevance for hermeneutics as it relates to the interpretation of an author’s literary work is a recognition of the literary artist’s emphasis, and interpretation of the parts consistently aligned with an interpretation of the whole work. In this context, White and Hirsch offer complementary propositions for the interpretive artist.

Phenomenological Hermeneutics and Reader-Response

Continuing with the theme of disaggregation of subject matter in the domain of literary theory and criticism for the art of interpretation, the *Anthology* introduces a mode of hermeneutics that has always been present, and which will remain present in this domain by definition. We move now to a discussion of phenomenological hermeneutics. Context for the term phenomenology from David W. Smith is instructive. “Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view” (Smith, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). The conscious activity of interest for hermeneutics is the phenomenology of language transmission that takes place in the mind of the reader during the interpretative process. The writer and the reader manifest thoughts independent of one another through the textual object. The writer crafts sign and signification using language and referents most closely associated with the untactile, invisible, “two-sided psychological entity” of the linguistic sign (Saussure 964), and transfers the incorporeal into the tangible persistent state of the written object. By the same token, the reader’s reconstruction of the writer’s work during the reading process necessarily transfers the tactile persistent object of the text back into the reassembly of meaning in thought. The differences that separate the connections between author and interpreter, writer and reader, speaker and listener are those of degrees of physical separation in time and place, which the materiality of the written object transcends.

The writer of literature uses the same faculties of language to assemble a text's meaning that are required by the reader to interpret. The words sound internally as writing or reading occur, and construction of meaning is transferred by the writer as one-way, asynchronous thought into text and re-animated in a serialized order by the interpretive faculties of the reader. This transmission is necessarily constrained by capacities of both writer and reader. A writer is limited by the linguistic constraints of the language chosen to express the meaning as conceived. The reader is equally limited by the constraints facing the writer, and in addition, by the reader's own constraints, particularly if elements of the writer's text are foreign to the reader in language, history, cultural, genre, subject matter, and so on.

The *Anthology* references three notable authors (among others) that privilege the readers' interpretation of literary text as an instrumental component of hermeneutics; George Poulet, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley E. Fish. These three literary theorists connect to and extend Saussure's theory of the concept and sound-image, and Heidegger's theory of language calling one's world view into Being. In this respect, the *Anthology* discloses a legitimation of the reader's first-person perspective. Georges Poulet and Wolfgang Iser explore phenomenology of reading in two texts in the *Anthology* with relevance for hermeneutics. First, Poulet exemplifies the need for understanding the spheres Hirsch denotes as the "inner horizon" of the author and the "outer horizon" of the critic. Poulet discusses this issue relative to the literary criticisms of Jacques Rivière, Jean-Pierre Richard, and Maurice Blanchot in the *Anthology's* excerpt from Poulet's "Phenomenology of Reading," where he notes that criticism may become detached through "rigorous intellectualization" inhibiting an interpretation of the text:

[T]his criticism seems not so much the equivalent of the perceivable world, or of its literary representation, as rather its image crystallized through a process of rigorous intellectualization. Here criticism is no longer mimesis; it is the reduction of all literary forms to the same level of insignificance. (1328)

What may be observed on one end of the critical spectrum is the "extreme detachment" from an accessible reality and away from meaningful understanding to "a consciousness ceaselessly

confronting the hollowness of mental objects” (1328). Inference can be drawn where Poulet cautions against literary criticism that does not remain connected to the writer’s inner horizon of meaning, and all that that entails through rigorous hermeneutics. I posit that Poulet’s criticism of detachment need not be the case for the dialectician who wishes “to investigate the nature of truth through critical analysis of concepts and hypotheses” to borrow again from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, before entering upon the critic’s task (83).

Further to the discussion of the phenomenology of reading and its connections to hermeneutics, a work outside of the *Anthology* by Wolfgang Iser entitled, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” suggests that reading is a process of selective decisions from a “spectrum” of possible decisions that the reader makes during the process of reading in order to acquire meaning (285). For Iser, this notion of a spectrum of possible choices is “borne out by the fact that a second reading of a piece of literature often produces a different impression from the first” because different interpretive decisions were made by the reader during each separate reading process (285). In this context, readers make different connections along the spectrum of possibilities each time the same work is read over. I would add that reader impressions differ among and between independent readers in response to the personalization every individual reader brings to the interpretive process, which this thesis discusses in conjunction with the practical implications of reader-response under the next subheading.

Poulet adds to Iser’s discussion from the reader’s point of view; “When reading a literary work, there is a moment when it seems to me that the subject *present* in this work disengages itself from all that surrounds it, and stands alone” (Poulet, “Phenomenology” 1332). This observation accords with the moments when a reader metaphorically loses themselves in the text, and the material world seemingly vanishes from the cognitive space it typically occupies. Poulet also remarks on the formalistic merits of “the objective elements systematically arranged, to a certain power of organization,” calling attention to an analysis of the work’s structure, order

and logic that guide the reader (Ibid. 1331). Poulet and Iser refer to specific, extemporaneous interpretive judgments taking place as the words on the page pass through the reader's mind and are figuratively cast into the ocean of personal experience. In an instant too quick to measure, recognitions form and attach to meanings that strike tones and chords across the spectrum of the reader's understanding. What is likely taking place in the mind of the reader is a vast diversity of textual interpretations that shape and alter judgments, and form aesthetic attachments.

Like Poulet and Iser, Stanley E. Fish is interested in the interpretive process from the reader's perspective in his essay, "Interpreting the *Variorum*," a work prepared in three stages between 1973 and 1975. Fish asserts that the views of the Formalists and the New Critics are substantively flawed, relative to assumptions of meaning embedded solely within the text. Fish posits that the experience of reading is an interpretive process beyond the text that requires an "extraordinary number of adjustments" on the part of the reader (2077). Fish discovers "experiential (that is, temporal) structures" in a text that are only revealed to the reader as he or she engages in the serial process of reading (2078). It is during this extemporaneous serialization of reading that meaning begins to take shape in the reader's mind relative to the literary elements of language employed by the writer. The reader makes decisions about ambiguous words and phrases as they appear within the structure of a phrase or sentence, altering the interpretation that a reader makes in substantive ways. For Fish, "analyses generated by the assumption that meaning is embedded in the artifact—will always point in as many directions as there are interpreters" (2073). Moreover, Fish suggests that the reader may form a bias for a particular literary theory, such as Formalism or New Criticism, and thereby find attributes of a preferential theory in a text because the reader has called these designations to the fore. Fish remarks, "I 'saw' what my interpretive principles permitted or directed me to see" (2082). In this regard, like Hayden White who uses the concept of emplotment to set out a series of historical narratives, the literary theorist may emplot a textual analysis in conformance

with a theory. Each literary theory is therefore capable of rendering a formative, factual interpretation that tracks to the principles of the selected theory so employed.

Practical Implications of Reader-Response

Phenomenological hermeneutics implies that there are hidden processes of intellection taking place in the minds of every reader, and every reader is unique. Reading is a linear activity, and therefore the meaning is acquired over a spatial dimension of time. The object of concern for hermeneutics is where multiple interpretations are likely to result from multiple readers of the same text. A demonstration of the implications for the phenomenology of reader-response appears in a 1962 study by Paul B. Diederich, "Factors in Judgments of Writing Ability." The object of the study was measurement centered on student evaluations mathematized and reducible to a ranked letter grade or numerical score, a practice that remains with increasing rigor and extraordinary influence on the interpretation of expectations for student success in economic, social, public and private engagements. The unnumbered pages of the Diederich study describe the purpose and expectations as follows:

The purpose of this study was to serve as a stepping stone toward closer agreement among judges of student writing at the point of admission to college by revealing common causes of disagreement. It was expected and found that more than half the variability in grades of a large number of judges on the same set of papers was due to "error" (random variation) or the idiosyncratic preferences of individual readers. (Diederich)

What are "idiosyncratic preferences" if not demonstrations of the unique phenomenology of reading that every reader experiences, not the least of whom are those most accomplished in the art? Diederich goes on to explain,

It was not the purpose of this study to achieve a high degree of unanimity among the readers but to reveal the differences of opinion that prevail in uncontrolled grading—both in the academic community and in the educated public. (Diederich)

The lack of unanimity in the Diederich study of uncontrolled grading reveals a statistically indeterminant relationship between experienced readers and critical evaluation of writing for the

53 expert readers involved in the study who read and ranked 300 student essays. What is notable is that fully 101 of the essays out of the 300 were ranked at least once into each of the 9 categories the readers were assigned to use. Moreover, no single paper out of 300 received less than 5 different rankings by all 53 readers. As stated in the Diederich study abstract, the object of interest for the dependent variable, student essay rank, was determining the “common causes of disagreement” among the readers using the explanatory independent variable, educational department of the reader. As a result, the descriptive statistics provided above on the range and magnitude of disagreement are available in the appendix of the study.

The explanatory independent variable, educational department of the reader, does not necessarily inform how each reader approaches the evaluative process during uncontrolled grading of student essays. Nevertheless, analyzed in this manner, Diederich determined that less than half of the variation in grading was statistically related to the readers’ disciplinary field of study (about 31% overall). English department professors were more homogeneous in their grading, while other academic departments were less homogeneous. For the 69% of the unexplained variation in grading for which the Dieterich study finds no correlations, I posit that using the reader’s predominant mode of literary interpretation as an additional independent explanatory variable may explain a significant portion of the remaining unexplained variation in grading on the dependent variable, student essay rank. That said, it should be expected that some random variation in the outcome of the dependent variable, student essay rankings, will persist when interpreting complex, conceptual essay content due to the literary interpretive challenges present in written language and the ambiguity posed by reader-response theory.

The purpose of exploring the Diederich study for hermeneutics and the art of interpretation is three-fold: (i) to highlight a connection to Stanley Fish and reader-response theory, (ii) to support the notion of subjectivity in the reading process, and (iii) to introduce the reality of numeric information entering into narratives, ostensibly to remove ambiguities inherent in language when dealing with complex concepts and ideas. In this context, numeric

information involves empirical outcomes that can be counted and assigned a discrete value in the base-10 numbering system using the symbols 0 through 9 in combinations. These numeric symbols are an extraordinarily powerful set of signs. The use of identical signs and significations that share consistent agreement across social and cultural boundaries of the literate and numerate world is an often overlooked linguistic phenomenon inherent in the ubiquitous adoption of the base-10 numbering system. Ranking a single, observable numeric value, relative to the midpoint of a cluster of single numeric values, quickly identifies the least favorable position and the most favorable position among the group of observations with mathematic precision. However, statistical methods are, at best, partial interpretations of representations of life due to the exclusion of many valid factors of interpretation often omitted from or incompatible with statistical procedures.

For the art of interpretation, the power of numbers to communicate unambiguously is relevant. There are many phenomenon in the realm of literary theory and criticism that cannot necessarily be counted, whereas the social sciences are producing literary texts, in the broad sense of the term, within the fields of psychology, sociology and education, among others, that include statistical analyses of empirical observations of interest. For hermeneutics, numeric information is a formidable presence in these domains, often extraordinarily convincing, with interpretations of referents and methods known primarily to the specialist, generally accepted by the layperson, and subject to the challenges and opportunities this thesis describes. Similar to the way New Critics surpassed predecessor theories in popularity and shifted pedagogy to the method of close reading, the influence of statistical rankings for interpretive purposes may gradually surpass perceptions of value in narrative explanations that do not include an empirical component statistically quantified, particularly in the social sciences.

Diederich includes the academic community and the educated public among those for whom the Educational Testing Service results have relevance. From the linguistic perspective, the implications would also extend to the illiterate who may lack the grammatic skills to read and

write proficiently, but who do not often lack the innate faculty of language pre-existing grammatic skills. By engagement with interpretation of verbal language containing the same concepts and sound-images that are subject to the interpretive challenges faced by the literate public, the illiterate are apt to have substantially similar variation of interpretation as well.

Observations and Conclusions

The *Anthology* as an embodiment of historical traditions of literary theory and criticism makes good on its aim “to ensure the ongoing dissemination of theory” (Leitch, *Theory* 15). The traditions of hermeneutics as theory and method are documented in the *Anthology* at judicious touchpoints; however, it requires a careful reader to situate this minor strand of theory within the larger context of the *Anthology* as a whole, and with that vantage point, to determine value and applicability to modes of literary interpretation that serve as a precursor to understanding literary theory and literary criticism. By tracing literary theory and criticism, as shaped by the “cultural intervention” Jeremy Braddock refers to in connection with anthologies in general (38), and specifically through the canonical production of the excerpts in this thesis from the *Anthology* published by Norton, with its ability to cover 25 centuries in a single volume, it is possible to assess the aims of the *Anthology* and to use the practice of hermeneutics to facilitate understanding of the complex literary terrain it embodies. While anthologizing is sampling by design, with the intentions of sifting the archive for its most salient content, with respect to the *Anthology* discussed in this thesis, it is limited to providing the reader with an introduction to, and the central ideals from, many writers within a circumscribed field. Notwithstanding the limitations of the *Anthology*, one can appreciate the complexity inherent in literary interpretation through the foregoing examination of (i) the separate definitional meanings of the terms literature, theory, criticism and hermeneutics, as well as (ii) the contextual meanings of these terms when they are elaborated upon within the excerpts cited, or applied to interpret portions of the works canvassed in this thesis.

As surveyed in this thesis, Aristotle set the formal structure for western academic writing that stands the test of time and propagation through the works canonized in the *Anthology*. The method of categorization, prioritization, definition and syllogistic logic is pervasive and persuasive. From the ancient Greek reflections on poetry, to the branching out of the medieval theological interpretive interests in tropes, to the Enlightenment era parochial and secular hermeneutics of historical, philological and documentary comparisons, hermeneutics culminates in the *Anthology* with the formalized secular hermeneutics of E.D. Hirsch, Jr., in the twentieth century. In tandem with the development and evolution of hermeneutics, this thesis canvassed a diverse portion of concurrent twentieth century literary theories and criticisms from the *Anthology* that demonstrate disaggregation in the field across a wide range of subject areas including, linguistics, philosophy, Formalism, the New Critics, New Historicism, phenomenology and reader-response.

The *Anthology* presents these historical trends in literary theory and criticism as a continuum along the trajectory of disaggregation, and it sets expectations for increased invention of new subject areas altogether, as well as new modes of discourse that expand the historical traditions. Examples from the latest 2018 edition of the *Anthology* include affect studies in sentimentality and trauma; popular culture in music, fashion, sports and gaming; and biopolitics of resistance, surveillance, gender and disability, to name one seventh of the diversity shown on the “Twenty-First-Century Theory Map” (Leitch, *Anthology* 3rd ed. 34-35). As a comprehensive compendium, the *Anthology* as a whole equips the professional and the amateur alike with the literary frameworks for a life-long engagement with the discipline of literary theory and criticism.

While no single theory or method can be expected to suit every circumstance, I posit that the combination of E.D. Hirsch, Jr.’s, refinement of general and secular hermeneutics for literary theory and method, and Hayden White’s theory and method of emplotment, will accommodate an introductory foundation for interpretation of many (if not most) propositions of literary theory

and criticism, as well as the underlying literature upon which the literary theories and criticisms are based. For instance, using the five-category procedure Hirsch sets forth with language, genre, cultural attitude, personal attitude and subjective stance, the traditions of the hermeneutic interpretive process become a workable solution in a structured format that is repeatable by multiple investigators of the same literary work. The differences of interpretation that will likely result from different interpreters will be partially explainable using Hayden White's theory of emplotment. In addition, as it concerns the critics task, differing critiques of the same literary work can be partially explained by the use of different theories and methods of criticism applied to the same literary work. Together, these assessments provide a cogent rationale for the primary aims of this thesis to gain a more substantive understanding of (i) why broad variations of interpretation are found among commentaries and critiques of canonized literary works, (ii) what factors contribute to the challenges inherent in the interpretive arts, (iii) how diversity in the field of literary theory and criticism can be complementary and inclusive, and (iv) what practical means are available for improving the interpretive process.

By delineating interpretation as distinct from criticism, it is possible to understand hermeneutics as the precursor to literary criticism, capable of remaining connected to the writer's inner horizon of meaning, and yet distinct from the text's variable significance in relation to the outer horizon of criticism (Hirsch 1695). This method results in the formation of a framework against which a text may be judged on how well it meets its aim, and how its aim is accomplished through the writer's use of literary exposition. At the same time, this method guards against Schleiermacher's notions of prejudice and superficiality, as well as Poulet's criticism of the critique that errs in reducing "all literary forms to the same level of insignificance," or otherwise "confront[s] hollow mental objects" (1328). These are neither the aims of the literary interpretative artist nor the aims of the literary critic.

Moreover, the process of hermeneutics in reader-response theory plausibly explains why a single student essay can receive nine different rankings by 53 readers in the Diederich study.

Recall that for Diederich, less than half of the variation found in rankings of student essays were statistically explainable as coincident, or correlated, with the readers' academic department. It is plausible to hypothesize that a proportion of the remaining unexplained variation in rankings of student essays corresponds with the literary-theoretical and critical methods independently used by the readers involved in the Dieterich study. A future study might evaluate this hypothesis by asking each reader to select from a list of alternative interpretive theories that most closely associate with their own predominant interpretive process. Statistical correlations can then be tested for significance to determine the strength of the relationships, if any, between the predominant mode of reader interpretation and essay rankings.

A solid foundation in literary interpretative theories and methods prepares individuals for continuing engagement within the domain of literary theory and criticism as readers, writers, and potentially, as teachers. Moreover, as a skillset, the hermeneutic method leaves no stone unturned in formulating congruent and cohesive interpretations, not only for studying literature, but also for studying the life represented in that literature. The attentive reader will acknowledge gaps in the congruity of hermeneutic findings applied to a literary work, signaling the ambiguity inherent in language and prompting the appropriate mitigative steps towards greater clarity. The rigor that must necessarily be applied to the general and secular hermeneutic processes moderates the potential for misunderstanding or misjudging, and enables the writer and the orator to guide dialectic discourse towards the nature of truth, thereby improving the abilities of students, researchers and teachers to augment learning, improve understanding and communicate more genuinely with others inside and outside of their respective areas of expertise.

On balance, a substantive fluency in the arts of literary theory and criticism, as a skill set, is well-positioned to be of service to public and private enterprise where social relationships are strengthened through the knowledge and understanding of alternative world views. As such, literary theory and criticism serves to advance the social functions and roles of education

in the western academy that inure to the benefit of the student and to the society at large. While the *Anthology* cannot be all things, it can provide a substantive contribution to the material cultural production interposed between the reader and the writer, and the societies within which they live.

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