

Sirpa Leppänen

The Mediation of Interpretive  
Criteria in Literary Criticism

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# The Mediation of Interpretive Criteria in Literary Criticism

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# ABSTRACT

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Summary

Diss.

The present thesis is concerned with the mostly implicit ways in which literary criticism suggests that certain interpretive criteria are relevant in the interpretation of a literary text. To explore and illustrate these ways a qualitative and in-depth analysis of two academic literary critical essays on *King Lear* with different theoretical and critical orientations is carried out. To provide a disciplinary framework for the study, a number of different approaches to the study of written language are examined. In addition, a number of reading models and models of literary interpretation are reviewed. On the basis of this review the hermeneutical orientation of the study is specified as one which considers the interpretation of written texts as a process of negotiation involving the text, the writer, readers and the situational, institutional and socio-cultural context. The review also provides evidence by which relevant analytical questions are specified.

The analysis is geared towards the description and tentative comparison of the linguistic strategies with which the critics imply a certain particular notion of the literary text, the literary author, the critic, the implied readers and the context and suggest that one, or a combination, of these entities has the decisive role in interpretation. A major finding of the analysis is that, despite apparently different theoretical and critical orientations, the critics rely on highly similar interpretive criteria and use highly similar linguistic strategies to suggest that the literary text is an embodiment of meaning and an active force constraining interpretation. This finding raises the interesting issue of whether literary critics share more generally their interpretive criteria and strategies, and, if this is true, what the social and institutional motives and uses of such discourse are. Another important issue to be considered is to what extent the similarity of criteria and strategies derives from language itself, from its metaphors for hermeneutic activity.

Keywords: literary criticism, interpretation, interpretive criteria, linguistic strategies

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G. Wilson Knight's essay '*King Lear* and the comedy of the grotesque' is reprinted by permission from Methuen, and Jonathan Dollimore's essay '*King Lear* and essentialist humanism' by permission from Jonathan Dollimore and Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Omistan tämän työn isälleni ja äidilleni.

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## INTRODUCTION

The present study is an exploration of the linguistic strategies that academic literary criticism uses to suggest, or mediate, to readers that a certain set of interpretive criteria is relevant in the interpretation of a literary text. Interpretive criteria in this context refer to the evidence by which readers decide what a particular written text is about.

Traditionally, academic literary criticism has not received much scholarly attention. However, there have been signs recently that this may be changing and that literary criticism, as one particular academic discourse, is becoming an increasingly attractive topic of research. For example, the linguistic, stylistic and discursual conventions of literary criticism have been examined critically by Ronald Carter and Walther Nash (1990), Trevor Eaton (1978), Paul Simpson (1990) and Susan Peck MacDonald (1990). Major concerns of these researchers have for example been the improvement of the quality and ethos of literary critical writings (Carter and Nash 1990:147 and Peck MacDonald 1990:56-7) and the demonstration of the ways in which such linguistic features as modality can affect and shape readers' assumptions of, and relationships with, literature (Eaton 1978:10 and Simpson 1990:91). In all of these approaches there is also a strong pedagogical undercurrent: because literary criticism is regarded as one means with which assumptions of and values attached to literature are conveyed to readers, its practices merit both close analysis and critical evaluation.

However, in spite of the profusion of literary critical writings nowadays, and the growing awareness in post-structuralism, or, more particularly, in recent stylistics of the power of institutional discourses on our beliefs and practices, the linguistic mediation of interpretive criteria

has not been studied systematically at all so far. And yet it could be argued that interpretive criteria - particularly as they are more often presupposed rather than explicitly asserted - are a powerful force that affects interpretation.

For example, if a critic implies that the meaning of a literary text is encapsulated within the text only, this clearly has the effect that readers' interpretations of the text are discredited and invalidated as irrelevant or even incorrect. Or, vice versa, if a critic persuades his/her readers that interpretation is nothing but the free play of their private imaginations, this radically marginalizes the role of the literary text by reducing it into a mere sensory trigger. In both cases the critic's interpretive criteria make interpretation seem an activity where interpretive power is given to some particular agent or entity and taken away from some other agent or entity. In this sense, interpretive criteria could thus be regarded as a set of ideological assumptions that constrain the choices readers have in the interpretation of written texts, and the ways in which they picture their own role as interpreters.

Major assumptions in the present study thus are that (1) literary criticism - in the same way as the interpretation of written texts in general - always relies on interpretive criteria, that (2) by using certain linguistic means literary critics mediate these criteria to their readers and that (3) this mediation is more often covert than overt in that critics generally do not argue explicitly for their particular interpretive criteria but use more indirect and implicit ways for suggesting them. Moreover, it is assumed here that (4) the linguistic means with which interpretive criteria are suggested are motivated pragmatically by the critics' respective interpretive criteria: hence they are referred to as strategies.

## **Aims**

The present study attempts to have an exploratory look at how two Shakespeare critics mediate their underlying interpretive criteria to their readers.

This apparently simple task involves, in reality, a number of steps. Firstly, it involves the specification of the general orientation of the present study. Building on a number of stylistic, linguistic and literary traditions of the study of written texts, the orientation of the study is specified as an approach which recognizes that texts are written and read in context, and which aims at a systematic, relatively replicable, but simultaneously positioned analysis of those texts.

Secondly, on the basis of a critical review of a number of models of reading and models of, and approaches to, literary interpretation it can

at least be hypothesized that the interpretation of written texts could be considered a process in which there are a number of factors that can constrain interpretation and in which the meaning of the text can be negotiated in different ways. More practically, this means that one and the same text can be made to mean quite different things in different eras, cultures, communities, settings, in the interpretations by different readers, and even in different interpretive events by one interpreter. However, this is not to say that the text is a *tabula rasa* that can validly be made to mean whatever an interpreter may wish. On the contrary, the text has a great deal of power: it has power both to trigger and constrain interpretation. It triggers the interpretive process because it can be considered to communicate something that can become a message to readers. In addition, because it is written in a certain language, linguistic forms, style and genre, it has power to constrain interpretation. A change in the linguistic choices of the text can imply a change in its meaning.

The text's power can also be ignored, or resisted. For example, a reader may want to interpret the text from a certain ideological perspective, or from a more personal perspective. Alternatively, the text may be 'difficult' or avant-garde for which there are no interpretive strategies available but which forces readers to more or less 'write' rather than 'read' it. Finally, it could be argued that the situational, institutional and socio-cultural context also has a role in interpretation. The time and place, readers, reader goals and premisses, institutional expectations, norms and conventions, and more general socio-cultural assumptions and frames of reference can affect, constrain and even in some cases determine the ways in which a text is assigned meaning. What is important in this hypothetical view is that the interpretation of written texts is considered a dynamic, positioned and situated process in which interpretive power can be assigned in different degrees to the text, author, readers and context, but in which there is also something that remains stable - namely, the text.

To be fully acceptable as a hermeneutical position this view would obviously need to be tested with empirical means. However, even its tentative acceptance implies that, to be consistent, an analysis of interpretive criteria and their mediation in literary criticism would also have to include an analysis of what role the literary author's (socially reconstructed or assumed) intention, the critic's premisses and goals, the situational context, the literary critical context and the more general socio-cultural context has in the critics' interpretation. Mainly because of research economy, however, no such holistic analysis is attempted, but the camera angle of the present analysis is focused only on the critical texts and on the linguistic strategies that the critics use to suggest that a particular constellation of interpretive criteria is relevant in interpretation. It is important to

remember, however, that the view of interpretation as a situated process of negotiation underlies the analysis.

Thirdly, it is necessary to establish an adequate analytical framework within which the problem of the mediation of interpretive criteria can be examined. The review of existing hermeneutical models clearly points to the fact that there appears to be no unanimous agreement in either reading research or literary studies over what the ultimate criterion or criteria are in interpretation. Various, even conflicting solutions have been put forward. In terms of the analysis of the linguistic strategies for suggesting interpretive criteria this implies that the analysis has to take into account that (in theory) there are various kinds of interpretive criteria available to interpreters of written texts.

As a consequence, the analysis of the two essays is geared towards the identification, analysis and tentative comparison of (1) the strategies that literary critics use to suggest a particular notion of the literary text, of the literary author, of themselves as interpreters of the literary text, of their implied readers and of the situational, institutional and socio-cultural context, and (2) the strategies they use to suggest that one, or a combination, of these entities has a decisive role in the interpretation of the text. The analysis of these strategies is also considered a way of explicating the particular interpretive criteria that the critic relies on in his/her interpretation of the primary text.

## Data

The data chosen for the analysis are two academic literary critical essays on *King Lear*, G. Wilson Knight's '*King Lear* and the comedy of the grotesque' (1930), and Jonathan Dollimore's '*King Lear* and essentialist humanism' (1984). The main reason for selecting these two texts as data is that, while they are both written about the same literary text and with a roughly similar audience in mind, they clearly represent different traditions, eras, and critical and theoretical orientations. Knight's essay dates back to the time when literary modernism was taking its first steps. In his work Knight struggled to break away from the earlier Romantic tradition of character criticism which concentrated only on the discussion of the plot and characters' faults, virtues, fates and behavior. Instead, he wanted to emphasize the literary text as a complex two-dimensional, spatial and temporal, entity. Dollimore's essay, in turn, represents a radical recent development in Shakespeare criticism, cultural materialism, and one which has questioned and challenged many of the assumptions, values and ideologies of earlier criticism, and offered, instead, politicized, histori-

cized and gendered analyses of Shakespeare's plays, among others. In his approach the text appears to have, in theory, far less power than it has in Knight's approach. Because the traditions and theoretical backgrounds of the two essays are so different, they offer an interesting analytical challenge: to explore whether the different orientations of the essays are in any way reflected in the critics' linguistic mediation strategies and interpretive criteria.

The main motivation behind focusing on essays written about Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and not essays written on some other literary text by some other author, is, in turn, that this play clearly is a problem. This has been shown, for example, in the numerous essentially ideological interpretations, on- and off-stage, to which the play has been subjected in its history. It has generated, to mention only a few, Christian, humanist, existentialist, psychoanalytic, Jungian, humanist, feminist, New Historicist and cultural materialist interpretations.

What makes essays written on Shakespeare particularly interesting as research data is that the question how his work ought to be interpreted is a highly topical one. The recent radical approaches to Shakespeare have excited more traditionally oriented conservative critics to question and criticize their premisses. This disagreement has developed, in fact, into a veritable examination of the nature and limits of Shakespeare criticism, one indication of which was the heated 'Bardbiz' debate in the pages of *The London Review of Books*. This debate started in 1990, and went on for almost two years.

The present study can perhaps be seen as a somewhat less passionate and hopefully more analytical contribution to the current debate on the nature and limits of the business of Shakespeare interpretations. It can perhaps show something of the means and criteria with which critics have argued that Shakespeare's texts mean whatever they take them to mean.

## Methods

The present study is qualitative and exploratory in nature. It seeks to identify strategies typical of the two critics, and point out major similarities and differences between them, rather than validate with a quantitative analysis the number of different strategies used. A quantitative analysis would require that the different strategies would have to be aprioristically coded. As it is, no such classification exists, owing to the lack of previous studies of this topic. A qualitative analysis such as the

present one can, however, be considered one way in which such a classification can be arrived at.

A qualitative approach is motivated also by the assumption that an extensive, detailed and in-depth analysis that keeps intimately close to the texts provides a more sensitive means for deciphering the complex ways in which the critics suggest a particular set of interpretive criteria than a quantitative analysis.

However, the adoption of qualitative research methods does not mean that the analysis is a loosely-structured narrative focusing on certain subjectively and impressionistically selected details of the data. On the contrary: to make sure that the two essays can be analyzed in a relatively systematic, rigorous and replicable way, a stringent set of analytical questions is suggested. These questions focus on providing answers to whether, and in what ways, the critics characterize the entities - the text, author, readers and context - , on the one hand, and the ways in which they assign a particular interpretive function to one or a combination of the entities, on the other. To facilitate analysis, and to present the data in an unequivocal manner, the patterns of linguistic strategies are presented in a tabular form.

The reliance on a stringent set of analytical questions is considered a necessary arrangement, for only when the analytical steps are explicitly specified, can the analysis be properly evaluated, tested and replicated. An underlying assumption here is that replicability should be one of the major concerns of qualitative analysis. There is, however, a major restriction. This is that replicability is not taken to mean that the application of the analytical grid by some other analyst would necessarily yield similar results to those suggested in this study, or, even worse, the 'objective' truth about the data. Rather, it is assumed that the analysis itself is no more than an interpretation of the data. This is because analysts - in the same way as literary critics - may be differently positioned, their goals may be plural and even conflicting, and they may work under different linguistic, social, cultural, and ideological umbrellas. All this naturally affects their analysis, no matter how systematic and replicable it is. The replicability of qualitative research is thus a highly relative notion.

## **Structure of the study**

The present study is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 gives the general orientation of the study. This section is introductory in nature, and its main purpose is to show the position of the present study in relation to relevant developments within stylistics, linguistics and literary stu-

dies, and to account for the basic premisses of the present approach to language study. Chapter 3 is a critical overview of a number of models of reading and literary models of, and approaches to, interpretation. On the basis of the review, the hermeneutical position of the present approach is also tentatively specified. Building on the findings of the analysis of the hermeneutic models, Chapter 3 also proposes a hermeneutical model against which the phenomenon of the mediation of interpretive criteria can be examined. On the basis of the analysis of the models of reading and interpretation relevant analytical questions can also be specified: Chapter 4 outlines these and the methods used in the analysis. Chapter 5 gives a specification of the materials of the analysis. This involves a dual angle: it specifies the data from a literary perspective by giving a short introduction to the main trends in 20th century Shakespeare and *King Lear*-criticism, and from a stylistic and linguistic angle by presenting an orientative discussion of literary critical essays as a text type. Chapter 6 presents the analysis and comparison of the data. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the findings of the analysis on a more general level, takes a broad evaluative look at the study as a whole, and speculates about the implications of its findings with relation to future research, and about possibilities for applying its findings to teaching literature and language in academic contexts.

## **2 ORIENTATIONS: STYLISTICS, LINGUISTICS AND LITERARY STUDIES**

In this section I shall examine the relationship of the present study to various approaches within the field of stylistics; to certain developments within linguistics - within sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis, in particular -; and to literary studies. This account will also include a description of the central orientative tenets of this study towards the analysis of written language. This extensive, but rather general account is felt to be necessary in order to make the underlying interdisciplinary connections of the present study explicit, and to show how these connections have shaped the position of the present study. Many of the ideas raised in this section will later be reintroduced and elaborated on a more particular level.

### **2.1 The stylistic connection**

This section will account for different stylistic approaches to the analysis of literary language. In this context the field of stylistics is made to include two approaches, literary pragmatics and literary linguistics, which traditionally would not necessarily be considered stylistic.

Stylistics is a broad field of study which is concerned with the analysis of the linguistic features of particular texts. Traditionally the object of study for stylisticians used to be (highly valued) literary texts, but more recently stylisticians have also been interested in the analysis of less prestigious literary texts such as popular literature, and non-literary texts,

such as media and journalistic texts. Furthermore, as for example Wales points out (1990:438), stylisticians have not generally been satisfied with only the description of the formal features of texts, but have attempted to show what the relevance of these formal features is for the interpretation of the texts. In other words, stylistics (excluding the earliest structural stylistics) has tended to be functionally oriented.

The broadness of stylistics derives, not only from this abundance of different text types to be analyzed, but also from its interdisciplinarity. In Western stylistics the 1958 Indiana Conference on Style, and Roman Jakobson's famous 'Closing Statement' (in Sebeok 1960), in particular, are often cited as the revolutionary moment when the common ground of language and literature was explicitly formulated. From that pivotal conference onwards various interdisciplinary approaches towards the study of literary language began to emerge, stylistics among them.

There are various approaches to stylistics. A short account of some of these will perhaps be in place in order to clarify the differences of emphasis within the field. Particular attention will be paid to the extent to which each approach is interdisciplinary, how each of them perceives the nature of stylistic inquiry, whether or not it is scientific or objective, and what role they assign to context in interpretation.

### 2.1.1 Linguistic stylistics

As is evident, linguistic stylistics is clearly linguistically oriented. A well-known recent representative of linguistic stylistics is Deirdre Burton's study of dramatic dialogue (1980), which is an application of the Sinclair and Coulthard model (1975) of classroom discourse to the analysis of drama dialogue. A Finnish example of this orientation is Liisa Korpimies's study (1983), which also applies the Sinclair and Coulthard model in the analysis of a drama text. A particularly important, and special representative of this approach is also Nils-Erik Enkvist's work (e.g. 1973a, 1973b). Enkvist has suggested a comprehensive theory of style on the basis of a notion of style as situationally motivated language use, and has pointed out the close connections between stylistics, rhetorics, sociolinguistics, and text and discourse linguistics (see e.g. 1985:20 - 22).

These practitioners of linguistic stylistics have primarily aimed at the expansion and development of linguistic theory, using literary texts as their data. They have paid a great deal of attention to the scientific nature of the methods of analysis, the objectivity and value-free character of the description of the linguistic structures or stylistic choices of the literary texts under analysis, and the general replicability of the analytical procedures. Linguistic stylisticians have not given literary discourse any special value by differentiating it from non-literary discourse. This is perhaps yet

another sign of their predominantly linguistic orientation; as Deborah Tannen has pointed out (1987:574) linguists have traditionally looked at literary texts to discover in what respects they are similar to non-literary texts, whereas literary scholars have done just the opposite and examined literary texts in order to find out what it is that makes them different from non-literary texts.

The disadvantages of linguistic stylistics also lie in its 'scientificity', as Carter (1989:5-6), among others, has pointed out. In Carter's words, it is naive to assume that linguistic analysis, however well modelled and rigorously executed, can result in objective interpretations. Furthermore, linguistic stylistics, through its mechanical characterization of the formal structure of a text, could be criticized for turning the literary text into a static and de-contextualized object, which, as Burton (1980:120) herself has commented on her own work, does not tell much about "functional relationships between the utterance and the much wider situation". In addition, the analysis does not say anything, as Talbot J. Taylor and Michael Toolan have pointed out (1984:65), about the stylistic effect of the text or about the relationship of the structures thus described to the/an interpretation of the text.

In sum, for linguistic stylisticians, interdisciplinarity - if it can even be called that - typically means the application of (a) linguistic model(s) onto the analysis of literary texts. Often, as Burton's and Korpimies's studies suggest, they do this for the purpose of testing and improving the model in question. Furthermore, in doing their formalist analysis they aim for objectivity, rigour and replicability. In these cases their object of analysis is, consequently, the text only; they are not at all interested in the social, cultural, historical, psychological contexts of literature. An exception to this is Enkvist's approach which explicitly argues for the interrelationship between style and situation.

### 2.1.2 Discourse stylistics

Discourse stylistics is a fairly recent development, and by no means represents a unified school (see for example the collection of essays in Carter and Simpson 1989). Its rise is closely related to the emergence of discourse analysis (cf. section 2.2.3) which, unlike earlier sentence-based and formalist linguistics, examines language use in its real context. The various approaches within discourse stylistics have nevertheless in common the fact that they regard utterances as having more than one function; that they deal with supra-sentential discourse; and that they, to a varying extent, see literature as social discourse.

Discourse stylisticians aim at detailed, systematic, retrievable and explicit analyses of literary texts. Very often their analysis relies on a par-

ticular linguistic model. Examples of models used are, to mention only a few, the Birmingham discourse-analytic models for spoken discourse, and systemicist, pragmatic and textlinguistic models. According to Carter (1989:15) discourse stylistics is more open to influences from literary studies than linguistic stylistics, which perhaps also makes it more explicitly interdisciplinary.

In the formulation given by Carter (1989:12-16) discourse stylistics is centrally concerned with context in two senses of the term. Firstly, discourse stylisticians examine texts at the level beyond the sentence ("the micro-context"), i.e. at the level of discourse organization in an attempt to trace the semantic structures of texts. Secondly, there are emphases within discourse stylistics which insist that it should also be concerned with the social and political, or "the macro" context of literature. More particularly, in this view, discourse stylistics should aim at socio-historical, or socio-stylistic analyses of texts. This focus derives both from linguistics, sociolinguistics and functionally oriented textlinguistics (such as is represented by Halliday), and from literary studies and post-structuralist thinking. Particularly Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's work (see e.g. Voloshinov 1930) on the social and political loadedness of texts, as well as Foucault's work on the historically determinate nature of discourse (e.g. Foucault 1972) are indispensable models for 'macro-contextually' oriented discourse stylisticians in their analysis of how meanings and interpretations are always discursively produced, rather than predetermined by some authority such as the text or the author (Carter 1989:16). This approach takes into account the fact that readers (which also includes stylisticians) necessarily read texts from a certain position which is socio-historically and culturally shaped.

Carter's assumption that texts are ideologically multi-accentuated and that their interpreters are necessarily positioned can perhaps be seen as way which could help discourse stylisticians solve what has been seen as the perennial problem in functional stylistics: the problem of giving criteria with which the function of a certain utterance or passage can be identified (see e.g. Toolan and Taylor 1984:60). Since his/her subjectivity and positionedness of interpretation is a given fact, the discourse stylistician does not need to attempt to assign a universal and determinate function to a text, but can point out that all meanings/interpretations are generated from a certain position. Nevertheless, this solution produces other difficulties, which Carter (1989:15) himself seems to be aware of when he writes in his introduction that this new emphasis on "contextualisation and wider parameters of discourse" may necessitate other, non-linguistic frameworks and concentration on non-linguistic goals "such as gender, class, and political power". This, in turn, would mean, as also James Bennett (1990:131) has observed, that the scientificity, rigour, repli-

cability and explicitness of analysis, which is so highly valued by Carter, would have to be compromised.

However, there is a feeling of uneasiness here. It is no doubt difficult to find a balance between scientificity and contextualisation; between replicability and subjectivity; between rigour and political involvement.

Discourse stylistics is clearly more varied in its interdisciplinarity than linguistic stylistics: it adopts ideas from linguistics, literary studies and post-structuralism. It aims at detailed, explicit, systematic and retrievable analyses of whole, or large stretches of, texts. It often applies a particular analytical model to the analysis of texts. In spite of these hard-core linguistic orientations, discourse stylistics also aims at seeing literary discourse as context-bound: multi-functional, and socially, historically and culturally variable.

### 2.1.3 Literary Pragmatics

Literary pragmatics is another recent interdisciplinary approach to the study of the linguistic features of texts. As in the case of discourse stylistics, the disciplinary background of literary pragmatics is varied: it includes, for example, linguistic pragmatics, discourse analysis, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, speech act theory and stylistics. Literary pragmatics, like most of the approaches accounted for in this section, is not a homogeneous school of thought with clearly formulated tenets, methods and aims. Rather, there is a group of scholars with different (linguistic, literary) backgrounds who are interested in the interactive processes of writing and reading literature in real historical settings.

In his introduction to a collection of literary pragmatic articles, Roger Sell argues (1990:xiv) that literary pragmatics is neither a type of literary scholarship which borrows theories and methods from linguistics, nor a form of linguistics which uses literary texts as its examples. In practice, Sell writes (1989:16), this means that linguistic, literary and sociocultural considerations intermingle in the analysis of the texts. Sell does not specify, however, how these considerations are made to intermingle: it is not clear whether his literary pragmatics aims, in the model set by linguistic pragmatics, for example, at systematic and retrievable analyses, or whether it prefers more literary, and less 'scientific' methods of analysis. In this he differs clearly from the literary pragmatics, or as he refers to it "pragmalinguistics", represented by Richard J. Watts (1981). Watts aims at a systematic analysis of a narrative text with clearly specified analytical steps, and explicitly formulated theory of narratology based on various pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic approaches to the description of verbal communication.

What is common to the different strands and orientations within literary pragmatics is that they are concerned with the real interpersonal relationships and communication processes between the author, text and reader in real socio-cultural settings. In Sell's words (1989:15), the literary pragmaticist is primarily interested in "the pragmatics of the communication that takes place between real writers and real readers", and seeks to study this "by establishing relationships between literary texts and the contexts in which they are written and read, and by tracing these relationships along as many linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions as possible". In other words, as in some approaches to discourse stylistics, the context is an important notion; it is argued, for example, that in the same way as face-to-face communication, the writing and reading of literary texts are also "inextricably linked with the particular sociocultural contexts within which they take place" (Sell 1990:xiv).

The contextualist orientation of literary pragmatics comes out clearly in its view of the status of the text. In Sell's view, texts exist only after someone reads them. Before the reading takes place, the text is only "black marks on paper" (1990, personal communication). What this means is that the text is made empty - a *tabula rasa* - upon which the reader writes his/her interpretation of the literary text. In other words, the text itself does not exist, only the reader(s) and the context do. This is by no means a radically new claim; something very much like it has been argued by, for example, Stanley Fish. Like Sell, Fish (1976:479) regards the text as empty, and only a reader reading - and applying certain socio-culturally specific strategies of interpretation while reading - makes it communicative.

There are many problems related to this view, and both Fish and Sell have been criticized for it. (See pp. 76-84 for a detailed discussion of Fish's view.) However, one problem which specifically relates to Sell's notion of the polite text<sup>1</sup>, is that there seems to be a curious paradox between his notion of literary texts being simultaneously communicative, polite *and* empty. Even though individual and socio-cultural practices obviously shape the interpretation of literary texts to varying extents, it is difficult not to assign some power to the text also: there must be something in the texts which triggers a particular interpretation. There must be some politeness triggers in the text itself, on the basis of which its readers can interpret it as polite according to their socio-culturally shaped strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> In Sell's view (1990:221-2) writers can be polite in their texts in two ways: they can be selectionally polite, which means that they choose their topics and ways of expression so as not to violate the reader's positive and negative face (on 'face' see Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987), or they can be presentationally polite in that they strive to observe the co-operative principle at all costs thus making the text as helpful and understandable as possible.

As is the case with discourse stylistics the disciplinary background of literary pragmatics seems varied. There are within it approaches which leave the question of the nature of literary pragmatic enquiry open, but also those which strive for systematicity and retrievability of analysis. What is clear, in contrast, is the fact that literary pragmatics seems extremely context-oriented: it maximizes the importance of context and minimizes the role of text in both the writing and reading of literature. However, its contextualism, in the form represented by Sell at least, appears to be more conservative than that of discourse stylistics, for its focus seems to be more on the ways in which writers/readers generally conform in their writing/reading to the dominant norms and assumptions of their society, or in the ways they individually and idiosyncratically interpret a literary text, than on the ways in which they question or challenge the dominant ideological positions of their writing/reading.

#### 2.1.4 Literary Linguistics

If literary pragmatics leaves some of its basic assumptions inexplicit, literary linguistics, an approach which has become associated with the work done at the Strathclyde University, Scotland, attempts, in turn, to make all its underlying assumptions and disciplinary orientations very explicit.

Firstly, literary linguistics is explicitly interdisciplinary: it both sets itself apart from, and relates itself to certain traditions within linguistics, literary criticism and stylistics. It keeps itself separate from decontextually-oriented linguistics, generative linguistics in particular; it discards traditional literary critical methods and theories as unsystematic and inexplicit; and, finally, it criticizes traditional stylistics for reducing texts to machines and for claiming that by studying the machine you understand its effect on the reader. In contrast, it joins forces with those branches of linguistics which look at language in context; it approves of literary criticism in its pursuit of literary value and pleasure; similarly, it approves of the variants of stylistic analysis which focus on the interpretation and reception of texts. Literary linguists also see that linguistic analysis of literary texts has a great deal to gain from recent post-structuralist theory which argues that meanings and interpretations are "radically unstable in that they allow for a multiplicity of finally indeterminate understandings which linguistics - except in institutionally marginalized forms - is unwilling to countenance" (Fabb and Durant 1987:2). For literary linguistics there is then no determinate, universally valid and objectively verifiable meaning in the literary text.

Secondly, literary linguistics is very explicit about its aims. It is interested in the cross-connections between language, culture and society; in the comparison of literary discourse with non-literary and media dis-

course; in the development of skills in analysis and problem-solving; and in the curriculum development and improvement of teaching methods. Furthermore, literary linguistics hopes to invest, in the long run, in the development of historical stylistics, which would be concerned with the arrangement of knowledge of the history of language, social, intellectual and political history in order to make a systematic analysis of older texts possible. It also hopes to concentrate on the analysis of the language of modern communication media, in particular, on the analysis of the relationship between the sound and image. Finally, it is also interested in exploring the cognitive aspects of literary interpretation. (For more details, see Durant and Fabb 1987:224-241, and 1990, and Mills 1989:25-36).

The above list of aims also reveals the important role that context has in literary linguistics. It must be noted however that, unlike both discourse stylistics and literary pragmatics, which also emphasize the role of socio-cultural context in literary writing/reading, literary linguistics does not delimit itself only to this aspect of context. An equally important aspect for literary linguists is the cognitive context, which means the psychological operations of literary interpretation.

What literary linguistics appears to be doing is to challenge older traditions of mainstream linguistic, literary and stylistic analysis, and attempt to open up new and modern avenues for what they refer to as the linguistics of writing, which would be critical of earlier theories, models and methods, and very explicit about its own assumptions about language and literature, and the relationship between the two. In doing this it does not hide its positionedness: some literary linguists (see e.g. MacCabe 1981) have been very open about their political standpoints.

To sum up, literary linguistics is very eclectic and explicit about its interdisciplinary orientations. It relies on contextualist approaches in linguistics, as well as on interpretation-oriented literary studies and post-structuralist theory. It aims at systematicity and rigour of analysis, but at the same time, it acknowledges its own positionedness. For literary linguists, context, both its socio-historical and cognitive aspects, is a vitally important area of study. In many respects, literary linguistics thus resembles discourse stylistics. In spite of this, it has been very critical of stylistics in general (including also discourse stylistics), pointing out their inexplicitness and uncriticality as far as their underlying interdisciplinary assumptions are concerned.

### 2.1.5 Literary stylistics

The term literary stylistics is taken from Carter (1989:7) who hopes to distinguish older forms of stylistic analysis from newer developments, which are more explicitly linguistic or discourse-oriented. By the choice of

the term, Carter also hopes to emphasize the connections of this approach to literary critical techniques of textual analysis, in particular to those of New Criticism.

The best-known representatives of this form of stylistics are perhaps Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short. In their work there is also an explicit interdisciplinary undercurrent: in the introduction to their *Style in Fiction* (1984:5) they note, for example, that

one major concern of stylistics is to check or validate intuitions by detailed analysis, but stylistics is also a dialogue between literary reader and linguistic observer, in which insight, not mere objectivity, is the goal. Linguistic analysis does not replace the reader's intuition . . . ; but it may prompt, direct, and shape it into an understanding.

In other words, literary stylistics aims at validating and specifying subjective responses to a literary text by linguistic analysis. The underlying assumption here seems to be that linguistic analysis can be a kind of discovery procedure which anchors elusive and intuitive interpretations onto the solid bedrock of the text.

Leech and Short are very selective in choosing their linguistic methods. Taylor and Toolan (1984:60), for example, trace the influence of (at least) pragmatics, generative syntax, Prague school functionalism, quantitative stylistics, speech act theory, structuralist poetics, discourse analysis, and French semiotics in their work. This eclecticism is perhaps one of the features of their approach that makes their work attractive to students of style - their approach is a reasonable introduction to several possibilities for using linguistics in the analysis of literary texts.

Furthermore, one of the advantages of their work is also that their analysis proceeds systematically and hierarchically from the analysis of lexical choices, through syntax, through figures of speech, to cohesion, and to situational context (at least in passing, see Leech and Short 1984:80). The analysis is thus multi-levelled and primarily text-centered.

In its multi-levelledness and eclecticism, literary stylistics differs from linguistic stylistics, which, as was seen above, only concentrates on the application of one particular linguistic model to the analysis of literary texts. Unlike formalist linguistic stylistics, but like functional discourse stylistics, it assumes that utterances have multiple functions. What differentiates it from discourse stylistics, (and from both literary linguistics and literary pragmatics) is that even though it mentions situational context as one dimension worth exploring in textual analysis, it in practice excludes extra-textual, and socio-cultural considerations as forces potentially shaping interpretation. Instead, as also Carter (1989:7) points out, for literary stylisticians the text still has supremacy over social, cultural, or ideologi-

cal constraints, a position which can perhaps also be seen to reflect the influence of New Criticism.

In sum, literary stylistics represents yet another eclectic interdisciplinary approach. It strives for a systematic and detailed linguistic analysis of literary texts, which it sees as a means of validating subjective responses to texts objectively. It is not so much interested in the contextual constraints of interpretation, but takes the text as the primary constraint on meaning and interpretation.

### 2.1.6 Summary

This overview has shown that stylistics is an interdisciplinary field of study, but that within it there are different emphases and orientations, and different perceptions of what interdisciplinarity entails. At its most simple, interdisciplinarity is an application of a linguistic model, as a kind of hypothesis, to the analysis of (a) literary text(s). At its most ambitious, interdisciplinarity means a critical and eclectic application of various interdisciplinary concepts, ideas and methods. Certain sub-fields appear to take their interdisciplinarity for granted, never questioning the validity of the notions or models applied to the analysis of literary data. For others, interdisciplinarity, at its best, involves a critical scrutiny of both the assumptions of stylistic enterprise and of the disciplinary source from where ideas are adopted, and an explicit statement of the assumptions of the approach chosen.

The overview has also shown that these different approaches to stylistics have different emphases in terms of the ways in which they see the nature of stylistic enquiry. These orientations range from strict claims of objectivity of analysis, through claims of linguistic analysis as an objective validation of initial subjective responses, to a recognition of the positionedness of any stylistic description and analysis.

However, it seems that claims of objectivity are rapidly getting outdated. Most stylisticians nowadays agree that stylistic analysis, in the same way as literary criticism, necessarily includes a subjective and intuitive element. The stylistician is, it is usually argued, someone who is not a 'pure' and objective, computer-like processor of a text, but someone who is a 'contaminated' interpreter of the text. As Geoffrey Leech (1985) puts it, rather than stylistic analysis resulting in value judgements, it assumes them as an accepted "prejudice". This does not mean, however, that stylistic analysis is necessarily vague and impressionistic. On the contrary, it often aims at rigour and replicability. For example, Carter (1989:14) recommends the construction of models of analysis, a familiar notion in linguistics for stylisticians, for the purpose of improving the replicability and validity of textual analysis.

On the other hand, there are also stylisticians for whom the quest for scientificity implies a certain narrowing and distortion of stylistic analysis. Dillon (1982:75), for example, notes that it is perhaps "the model of science, evidence, proof and validation" that has caused difficulties in stylistic analysis: linguistic analysis cannot be a discovery procedure for finding interpretations, nor can it be a proof or validation of an interpretation. Instead, Dillon suggests, the aim of stylistic analysis should be similar to that of art appreciation. Formal analysis would thus be a specification of the analyst's own initial response and a means for sharing it with others. Dillon's view could perhaps be criticized for overly emphasizing stylistic analysis as essentially a private and personal experience. In other words, in Dillon's view there is an assumption that all analyses are equally valid and plausible, and that therefore there is no need to make sure, by means of a retrievable analytical procedure, that they can be questioned and tested. However, if it is assumed, like in the present study, that stylistic analyses are more than accounts of personal responses to texts, and that texts have certain power to constrain interpretation and analysis, then one of the major concerns of analysts should be to make it possible that their analyses can be subjected to a critical evaluation.

Stylistics is clearly orientating itself away from decontextualised analyses. Earlier approaches, linguistic stylistics, because of its reliance on decontextualized models of analysis, and literary stylistics, because of its concentration on the text-immanent language of texts, in particular, almost totally exclude contextual considerations. In contrast, all the more recent approaches are more or less contextualist in orientation: for them texts are never analyzed or interpreted in a vacuum but embedded in and in interaction with social reality. Furthermore, the emphasis laid on context seems to be in reverse proportion to the decrease in claims of the need for objective and value-free analyses of written texts. As we have seen, this can be an interesting position to be in, as it can open up new and dynamic perspectives for scholarship. But it can also be a precarious position, because it may involve an uncritical and extensional application of concepts, methods and approaches of other disciplines, an uncertainty of its own identity and status as a discipline. In this field of tensions we also find the present study.

The development of stylistics can also be seen to reflect the developments within its mother disciplines. For example, the shift in stylistics from formalist analyses of literary texts to functionalist and contextualist studies, reflects the corresponding shift of focus in linguistics, from Saussurean structuralism to discourse analysis and pragmatics, for example; similarly, it is compatible with the shift in literary studies from formalism and structuralism to post-structuralist emphases on the role of socio-

culture and ideology in interpretation, and on plurality, change and variation of meanings.

Finally, what the present study gains from stylistics is specifically its eclectic interdisciplinarity: its hopefully critical application of concepts and methods suggested in stylistics and linguistics. What it also gains from recent stylistics is the explication of its basic assumptions, and the assumption that systematic and retrievable analytical procedures are essential for making the evaluation and testing of the analysis possible, as well as the acknowledgement that systematicity of analysis is, nevertheless, no guarantee for objectivity. The analysis is considered colored by the analyst's goals, and background. More practically, this means that the present study reflects the perspective of a Finnish female student of English, whose academic background is in the 'smörgåsbord' of English studies (a little literature, a little linguistics, a little cultural studies), and who looks at English language and literature from more or less an outsider's perspective.

As is perhaps obvious by now, like recent stylistics, the present study is also contextualist in its orientation. It explores the ways in which in literary criticism the critic relies on the text, author, readers, and context in the interpretation of a particular literary text.

## 2.2 The linguistic connection

### 2.2.1 Sociolinguistics

Recent stylistics has sometimes been described as having a strong sociolinguistic undercurrent (see e.g. Enkvist 1985:21). Like sociolinguistics, stylistics is increasingly tackling the task of investigating variation in written texts (see also Carter 1989, Burton 1980, Crystal and Davy 1969 and Turner 1973).

It is customary in linguistics to divide the field into two: into system and use. This dichotomy, as is well known, derives from Saussure's influential distinction of *langue* and *parole*, which has dominated western linguistics in one form or another for almost a century (see de Saussure 1916/1974). This basic dichotomy has further been emphasized by Chomsky's corresponding (but not identical) notions of competence and performance (see Chomsky 1957 and 1965). What is essential in this traditional view of language is that language is believed to have an unchangeable and decontextualised core grammar or system of rules, which is logically detachable from discourse and precedes discourse, and which is shared by all those who 'know' the language; and a dimension of varia-

tion, the actual uses to which the system is put. The popularity of this view meant that for long the study of the system of language was more important, relevant and prestigious than the study of the variation of language usage.

Recently, however, dissenting voices have been raised against seeing language this dichotomously. One of these voices belongs to Paul Hopper, who, instead of claiming a complete system of language as existing prior to usage, argues that the system of language, or grammar, is

a vaguely defined set of sedimented (i.e. grammaticized) recurrent partials whose status is constantly being renegotiated in speech and which cannot be distinguished in principle from strategies for building discourses. In other words, from this perspective, grammar is provisional and incomplete and emerges in discourse. (Hopper 1988:118).

Hopper's solution is interesting in two respects. First, it solves the problem in Saussurean-Chomskyan theories of language which assume that the system itself does not change. The system of recurrent strategies is, in Hopper's view, in a constant flux. Second, it claims that system and use are closely interrelated; so closely, in fact, that it is perhaps impossible to differentiate between the two at all.

This view of language is in fact taken, in the present study, to be more relevant for the analysis of the interpretation of written texts than the more traditional *langue-parole*, competence-performance distinction. The main reason for this is that the orientation of the present study is not so much toward what functions linguistic forms appear to *have* in certain socio-cultural settings, or what interpretations certain written texts appear to have in certain socio-cultural settings, but toward what functions/interpretations *emerge* in certain socio-cultural settings as the outcome of complex social and cultural processes. For the purposes of the present study, the difference between these two positions is felt to be important. The first one gives a rather static picture: interpretations are looked at as something that unproblematically point out what the text 'contains' or 'foregrounds'. In contrast, the second view emphasizes the dynamic nature of the process of interpretation and the complex causes and forces triggering and constraining it. This view comes actually quite close to the sociolinguistic one, according to which language use is considered socially motivated (see also e.g. Wardhaugh 1987:6, Gumperz 1982:29).

What this position implies then is that it is assumed here that in interpretation, there is no one (absolutely) correct interpretation and a number of variant and incorrect interpretations. There are only interpretations, which arise out of different socio-cultural circumstances and which negotiate potentially different values to the text, author, reader and context. As will later be seen in more detail, this position is not to be taken,

however, as a complete negation of the power of the text. However, the text obviously has a great deal of power to constrain and direct interpretation: this is because, it is written in a particular language and linguistic forms, and because it can be taken to mediate (at least some of) its author's premisses and goals to readers.

Another respect in which the present study could also be seen as sociolinguistic in its orientation is its view of the interpretation of a written text as a dynamic and multi-componential event. It can be seen as an event in the sense that it takes place in a certain setting, as a reader, with his/her own assumptions and strategies of interpretation, comes across a certain particular text. In terms of analysis this means that, in case we wanted to characterize a certain interpretation of a text, we would have to specify what the characteristics of and relationships between the components of the interpretive event are, very much in the same way as speech events are interpreted in sociolinguistic and/or ethnographic analyses (see, for example, Hymes 1967, 1972; Gumperz 1982; Saville-Troike 1982, for these traditions)<sup>2</sup>. As will later be seen, the idea of interpretation as an event comes out in the present study both at the theoretical level, in the present hermeneutic position which assumes that the interpretation of written texts can be considered a process of negotiation and in the analysis of the critics' mediation strategies in which it is assumed that there are various kinds of interpretive criteria potentially available to critics.

The sociolinguistic connection of the present study is thus two-fold: on the one hand, it comes out in the present emphasis on the emergence of interpretations as the outcomes of complex socio-cultural processes; and, on the other, in the assumption that the interpretation of written texts can be regarded as events involving the text, author, readers and context. What these two views have in common, furthermore, is that they both are essentially contextual in nature - both of them reach out of texts and point to the importance of context as a source of information on what is meant in spoken/written discourse.

### 2.2.2 Pragmatics

What links the present study to pragmatics is, firstly, the assumption, voiced by Jeff Verschueren (1987:5), that pragmatics could be seen as "a *perspective* on any aspect of language, at any level of structure", which

centers around the *adaptability of language*, the fundamental property of language which enables us to engage in the activity of talking which consists in the constant making of choices, at every level of linguistic structure, in harmo-

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<sup>2</sup> In literary studies this kind of orientation is by no means a novelty, which can be seen in, for example, the growing interest in reader response and reception studies.

ny with the requirements of people, their beliefs, desires and intentions, and the real-world circumstances in which they interact.

Language use, not only talking but also writing, it could be argued, can be regarded as pragmatically motivated. Moreover, this pragmatic motivation shows "at every level of linguistic structure", so that all the choices that a language user makes, not only speech acts, conversational moves, conversations, etc. are regarded as pragmatic phenomena. As will be seen in more detail in the analysis of the two essays, the two critics' linguistic choices at all the levels of linguistic structure can be shown to be motivated by their interpretive criteria. These choices could then very well be considered pragmatic, in the sense suggested by Verschueren. In fact, because the critics' linguistic choices are considered pragmatically motivated, they are in the present study referred to as *strategies*, as more or less deliberate linguistic ways for suggesting certain interpretive assumptions to readers.

Because the notion of strategy is central in the present study, it needs a short explanation. Originally the term comes from Greek where it means generalship or the art of war. A general definition of the term is that a strategy is a plan that a person adopts to get something done, especially in politics, business, or economics, etc. A related term is *tactics*, which are tools or methods that a person uses to achieve the success of strategies. However, as Oxford (1990:7) points out, these terms are often used interchangeably. This is because they share such characteristics as 'planning', 'competition', 'conscious manipulation', and 'movement toward a goal'.

The term strategy is nowadays widely used in theories of language learning. Within this field, the term learning strategy is often used to denote operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. (e.g. Rigney 1978, Dansereau 1985). It is also used in a more extended, and less cognitively oriented, sense (see e.g. Oxford 1990:8) as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations". Strategy is also a familiar notion in discourse analysis. One well-known example of this is John Gumperz's work (1982). Even though Gumperz does not provide an explicit technical definition of what he means by strategy, it seems that in his approach what he refers to as discourse strategies are verbal and non-verbal, rhetorical and interpretive operations that language users make to guide and channel the interpretation of speaker intention, to create involvement and to cooperate in verbal interaction (Gumperz 1982:206).

In all of these approaches the idea of 'moving toward a goal' is central. A strategy is considered an operation, action, or choice by the language user to get something done and to achieve certain goals. It is in this

sense that the linguistic expression that literary critics use in their interpretation of a text can also be labelled as strategies. Literary critics use certain linguistic expressions in order to suggest that a certain set of interpretive criteria is relevant for the interpretation of the text. Further, it is also assumed here that strategies can be deliberate or undeliberate: the critics' choices are potentially, but not necessarily, conscious.

The fact that strategies are generally considered as goal-oriented is also the reason why the linguistic choices made by the critics to suggest interpretive criteria are not referred to as *conventions*. Conventions are ways of thinking, believing and acting that are assumed to be normal or right by a particular community of people. As not much research exists about the practices of literary criticism, and as there are, more specifically, no studies of the mediation of interpretive criteria in it, it is reasonable not to regard any particular critical practices as examples of more general or 'normal' critical conventions. It could be argued that the findings of the present study can perhaps provide some tentative evidence on what conventions there are in literary criticism for mediating interpretive criteria. Later, these findings can also perhaps be validated by a more large-scale study.

The pragmatic connection of the present study also comes out in its focus on context, in particular, cognitive context as also essential in language understanding and interpretation. Pragmatic theories generally claim, in accordance with Artificial Intelligence, psycholinguistic, discourse linguistic and sociolinguistic theories of interpretation, that in their interpretations language users rely on stereotypical background assumptions, 'frames', 'scripts', 'scenarios', 'schemata', 'prototypes', 'mental models', etc. about frequently encountered objects, events and phenomena (see for example Minsky 1975; Schank and Abelson 1977; Sanford and Garrod 1981; van Dijk 1981; Anderson 1977; Tannen 1979; Rumelhart and Ortony 1977; Johnson-Laird 1981 for these theories respectively). A particularly interesting recent pragmatic approach towards the cognitive context is also Relevance Theory as introduced by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986).

For Sperber and Wilson (1986:137-8) context is a selected set of background assumptions in the memory of the "deductive device". This set is not arbitrary, nor does it consist of the totality of the encyclopaedic entries in the memory of a language user: it is rather a choice of a limited number of assumptions, selected by the language user under the guidance of what is called relevance.<sup>3</sup> Sperber's and Wilson's view of context differs from most other accounts of stereotypical assumptions in that for

<sup>3</sup> Sperber and Wilson (1986:153) define relevance on a cost-benefit scale: for them a phenomenon is relevant to an individual language interpreter (i) if the contextual effects ('benefits') achieved when it is optimally processed are large; and (ii) if the effort ('cost') required to process it optimally is small.

them context is not given, or aprioristic. In other words, as they themselves put it (1986:142), their view

suggests a complete reversal of the order of events in comprehension. It is not that first context is determined, and then relevance is assessed. On the contrary, people hope that the assumption being processed is relevant . . . , and they try to select a context which will justify that hope: a context which will maximize relevance.<sup>4</sup>

As was hinted above, Sperber's and Wilson's theory differs from sociolinguistic views of context in that for them context is purely a cognitive construct. Many sociolinguistically oriented scholars have tended to regard context as something that has a real existence in the world. For these scholars context is really the situation, which can be broken into a list of relevant components, and which, at least in theory, can be analyzed non-linguistically, that is, through visual or auditory perception (e.g. Hymes 1964, Cook 1990). For inferential pragmaticians, this position is untenable. This is, for example, how Regina Blass (1990:31), who has applied Relevance Theory to the analysis of real language data, argues against it:

physical context never affects language directly, but only via the speaker's and hearer's knowledge of it. Not everything that could potentially be perceived attracts attention. Moreover, people perceiving the same physical environment do not necessarily represent it to themselves in the same way.

Finally, Blass claims that the majority of contextual assumptions are retrieved from the memory of the speaker's and hearer's cognitive environment, and not only from the physical environment. In other words, the link between outside reality and language is for the most part an indirect one, and reality is mediated through cognition.

To an extent, we can surely agree with Relevance Theory. Language interpretation is not solely a social and cultural event, but also a cognitive process, involving the computation of cognitive contexts. More to the point, it could be argued that literary critical essays could very well be regarded as examples of the making relevant, or of the selection, prioritizing, naturalizing, even marketing of a certain set of cognitive contexts to readers of literature.

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, Sperber and Wilson could be seen as making a similar theoretical claim about the dynamic structure of interpretation as Paul Hopper. Hopper argues that grammar is always provisional and negotiable, in the same way Sperber and Wilson seem to suggest that context, too, is negotiable. Combined, these two ideas suggest a view of discourse interpretation which relies on no aprioristic grammar of rules, nor on aprioristic cognitive contexts - but which creates and negotiates its grammar and contexts as the discourse unwinds.

On a general level, the motivation behind the selection of contexts by literary critical essayists is here taken to be, however, not so much in terms of relevance but in relation to the critic's position or ideology. And it is here that Sperber and Wilson's approach is no longer sufficient. Although they implicitly hint, and Blass (1990:31) more explicitly states, that physical, social and cultural factors play a major role in utterance interpretation, their primary focus is not on the exploration of the ways in which external reality affects interpretation - or affects language users' assumptions about the world which in turn affect interpretation - but on the exploration of how language users, by relying on relevance, interpret language as more or less autonomous and uncontaminated processors. Their focus is thus on the cognitive operations of individual language users, and in doing so, they grant them a great deal of power and freedom from the normative pressures of socio-cultural and ideological assumptions. An acceptance of the position that the non-linguistic context constrains interpretation seems thus to call for a more sociolinguistic, or sociopsycholinguistic perspective which takes in to account that, while interpretation clearly is a cognitive operation in the interpreter's head, it is also a social and cultural process constrained by complex situational, institutional, and socio-cultural forces.

To recapitulate, the present study is connected to pragmatics in two ways. Like continental pragmatics, as represented by Verschueren, it assumes that everything in language, at every level of linguistic structure is pragmatically motivated. In the present study this assumption becomes manifest in the treatment of the two critics' linguistic choices as pragmatically motivated strategies for mediating a particular set of interpretive criteria. Like inferential pragmatics, the present study considers language interpretation as a cognitive process involving the computation of cognitive contexts. Unlike Relevance Theory, however, it assumes that this is not all there is: the computation of contexts is not only a cognitive process, but also a social and cultural one. With respect to literary criticism this position implies that their interpretations are seen as the socio-culturally, pragmatically and ideologically motivated mediation of certain cognitive interpretive contexts to readers of literature.

### 2.2.3 Discourse analysis

On a general level the analytical focus of the present study could also be regarded as a discourse analytic one. As is customary in discourse analysis, the present study focuses not only on sentence-internal features, but also on features beyond the sentence. In the analysis of the two essays this orientation will show, most prominently, in the identification of a number of discourse-level patterns of strategies.

In addition, another thing which links the study with discourse analysis (as well as with sociolinguistics and pragmatics) is its emphasis on context and its crucial importance in discourse understanding. Within the heterogeneous field of discourse analysis the term context is, however, used in various senses, too: for example, those discourse analysts with a conversational analytic orientation have tended to regard context as the discourse context of utterances, focusing on textual structures and conversational patterns, while other scholars with a more pragmatic orientation have delimited their analysis to how language is influenced by frames of mutual knowledge, and those with a more sociolinguistic orientation to the influence of social situations and speaker/hearer identities (see also Brown and Yule 1983:27-58, and Schiffrin 1987:11). Together, these different foci on context are an apt demonstration of the complexity and multi-levelledness of factors and forces in play in language use, a fact of which also the present study is aware. As we have seen, context, in the present study, has, likewise, several aspects.

On a more particular level, the present study has been inspired by work done within what could be referred to as critical discourse analysis. This approach covers work by the discourse analyst Teun van Dijk (e.g. 1987), the critical linguist Norman Fairclough (e.g. 1989) and the critical discourse stylistician Jean-Jacques Weber (1992).<sup>5</sup> It centers on the role of language in the communication and reproduction of attitudes, assumptions, values and beliefs, or ideologies. Van Dijk's work represents the continental strand of this kind of discourse analysis. Theoretically his approach perhaps covers more ground than Anglo-American discourse analysis. For example, van Dijk attempts to integrate in his analysis theoretical developments from such disciplines as cognitive and social psychology, microsociology, and communication. He has studied extensively the cognitive, discursive and communicative strategies in the expression, communication and sharing of ethnic prejudices in everyday conversations, and ideology in news (see e.g. van Dijk 1987:7). Fairclough, in turn, whose theoretical background is in systemic linguistics, continental pragmatics and cross-disciplinary trends in discourse analysis, has analyzed the connection between language and power, or more specifically, the connection between language use and unequal power relations in modern Britain (see Fairclough 1989:1,14). In the same way as Fairclough, Weber also relies on work done in systemic linguistics, as well as in recent discourse stylistics. One of his major concerns is to introduce readers to "a procedure of vigilance which trains them in *critical reading*" (Weber 1992:1). In spite of certain differences in their outlook on language study and theoretical background, these scholars share the belief that ideologies

<sup>5</sup> The shared interests of critical linguistics, critical discourse analysis and critical discourse stylistics is a good example of the fuzziness of disciplinary boundaries, and of the cross-fertilization going on currently in linguistics and stylistics.

are reproduced discursively, that the critical analysis of discourse is a means of raising people's awareness of how language contributes to the reproduction of ideology, and that critical discourse analysis is a key method in the description and explanation of these phenomena.

On these major issues the present author, too, agrees with van Dijk, Fairclough and Weber. This means, more particularly, that the central assumptions of the study that literary criticism mediates interpretive criteria can be regarded as one variation of the tenet that assumptions, values, beliefs, or ideologies, are reproduced discursively. In addition, an analysis such as the present one can be considered a means of making overt what is generally covert in literary criticism and thus of providing readers of literary criticism with one possible set of questions with which they can critically scrutinize its assumptions and practices.

The discourse analytic connection of the present study thus comes out in the analytical focus on language beyond the sentence, in its contextualist position, and in its assumption that discourse has the capacity to mediate interpretive assumptions, values and beliefs, and that the critical analysis of the linguistic strategies and interpretive criteria of literary criticism is a means of raising readers awareness of its covert assumptions and practices.

## 2.3 The literary connection

### 2.3.1 Post-structuralism and post-modernism

The term *post-structuralism* has come to mean a philosophical and literary movement which originated in France and in the United States in the late 1960's. It was a reaction against structuralism which claimed that in language there are stable structures with determinate meanings. For post-structuralists the relations between the *signifier* (the form) and the *signified* (the concept) are unstable, and meaning is indeterminate. This implies for example that post-structuralists do not take for granted their own ability to read texts. Jacques Derrida, an influential representative of a particular field of post-structuralist thinking, deconstruction, writes: "A text is a text only if it conceals, from the first glance, from the first comer, the law of its composition and the rule of its game. (Derrida 1972:71). The text does not transmit its meanings to readers, but, rather, conceals them.

At the same time, meanings are taken to be plural, cultural and historical. As Terry Eagleton (1983:129) puts it, post-structuralists generally agree that it is difficult to know what a sign originally or essentially

means, because we encounter it in so many different contexts. Its meaning necessarily changes from context to context.

A particularly important advocate of this view, and one whose influence can be detected in quite a few recent developments in stylistics and literary studies is also Michel Foucault. In Foucault's view the socio-historical position language users are in, (or what he refers to as *episteme*) has a decisive role how they interpret language. Their knowledge and beliefs are discursively produced; discourse transmits and creates ideological values (see e.g. Foucault 1972, 1985). Another influential name at present is also Mikhail Bakhtin. His notion of polyvalence, in particular, has influenced recent post-structuralist thinking: the term, which Bakhtin originally used to refer to the many voices, points of view, and ideologies characteristic of, for example Dostoevsky's novels (see Bakhtin 1929/1973), has also been extended to cover the plurality of meaning.

This position could also be seen as a post-modern one. The term *post-modernism* is usually taken to refer to a current literary movement which strives to challenge older literary traditions and conventions. In his influential essay Frederic Jameson (1984) defines the aesthetic qualities of the post-modern, noting, for example, that there is now a new sense of space and time, characterized by a de-emphasis of the temporal and historical, and emphasis on the spatial, on the decentred and disjunctured post-modern space. Importantly, in the realm of literature this shows in how our notion of the literary text has changed. Jameson (1984:63) points out that " the former work of art . . . has now turned out to be a text, whose reading proceeds by differentiation rather than by unification". Literary texts are thus perceived as not having unity and wholeness, and one meaning. They, like the post-modern world, can be seen as decentred, or, better, as multi-centred, disjunctured, plural.

The post-structuralist and post-modern position which emphasizes, on the one hand, the indeterminacy of texts, and the context-bondedness of language interpretation, on the other, is an important tenet of the present study. As will later be seen in detail, it is assumed here that, even though the text has also power to constrain interpretation, it is not the only evidence by which readers determine what it 'means'. In this view, text meaning emerges as the outcome of negotiation within a particular context. (For more details on post-structuralism, see e.g. Harari 1979, Culler 1983, Eagleton 1983.)

### 2.3.2 Reader-response criticism

In its concern with interpretation the present study could also be seen as related to theories of and approaches to literary reception. The study of reader responses (in its Anglo-American form) or of the reception of the

texts (in its German form) arose as a reaction against earlier text-based and formalist literary critical theories, which had tended to reject excessive interest in the biography of the author, on the one hand, and in the readers' responses, on the other. In the past fifteen years, there has in fact been a veritable swerve to readers' responses as a serious object of study in the Anglo-American literary criticism.

Reader-response criticism attempts to unravel the process of reading and its conditions, to make visible what is usually invisible, private and elusive. It aims at answering questions such as why literature is read; what it gives to us; how it affects or is affected by our psychology, imagination or language; what happens, consciously, unconsciously, cognitively or psychologically, during the reading process; how interpretation is carried out, what the relationship of an interpretation is to other interpretations, or to conventions and norms of a particular society/community (see e.g. Freund 1987:7). As this list shows, reader-response critics are a varied group, which perhaps is also a reflection of the diversity of factors and aspects involved in reading. The reading of a literary text is simultaneously a private and public affair, a psychological and cognitive process, a social and communicative event.

What takes place when readers actually interpret a literary text, when they make an effort to reconstruct the text is a particular focus in reader response criticism. Different answers have been suggested: some emphasize the role of the individual readers, others insist on the decisive role of communally shared interpretive strategies. Still others argue for the significance of interaction between the text and the reader, or in the interaction between the text, reader and community. These different theories, along with non-reader oriented theories of interpretation, will be discussed in more detail in the next section of the study; suffice it to point out here that the present study will also be concerned with this current debate on the nature and dynamics of literary (and non-literary) interpretation, and it will tentatively propose a model which emphasizes the complex, dynamic and multi-componential nature of the interpretation of written texts. Further, the examination of the two critical essays can be taken as an attempt at giving an in-depth analysis of two particular interpretive responses to one and the same literary text.

The present study could thus be seen to be connected to literary theory and literary studies in two ways. It shares with post-structuralism and post-modernism the idea that literary meanings are not unproblematically available in the text, but that they are plural, cultural and historical. At the same time it, nevertheless, argues that the text is not without a role in interpretation: it, too, has power to constrain interpretation. With reader response studies the present study shares its focus on what readers do when reading and interpreting literature.

## 2.4 The orientation of the study

The above overview has shown the multiple connections of the present study: it has shown how its concerns range from stylistic, to sociolinguistic, pragmatic, discourse analytic and literary ones. There is a complex network of influences and intertextuality here, for these different fields have increasingly become more open to influences from outside their own disciplines. The interest areas of these disciplines also overlap: stylistics and pragmatics, for example, are interested also in readers, not just texts.

The insights of these fields have shaped the orientation of the present study on a number of levels. Firstly, the present study shares with recent stylistics an eclectic and hopefully critical interdisciplinarity of its approach, an acknowledgement of the positionedness of its analysis, an emphasis on the importance of systematic and detailed analysis, and a concern with context in interpretation. Secondly, from sociolinguistics the present study gains a view of interpretations as (in part) products of a socio-cultural process of emergence, similarly as a view of the interpretation of a written text as an event involving the author, text, reader and context. Thirdly, from pragmatics it gains an assumption that everything in language, at every level of linguistic structure is pragmatically motivated. In the present study this assumption is realized in the treatment of the two critics' linguistic choices as pragmatically motivated strategies for mediating a particular set of interpretive criteria. Another pragmatic notion adopted here is the view suggested in Relevance Theory that language interpretation is, besides being social and cultural, also a cognitive process involving the computation of cognitive contexts. Fourthly, what links the present study to discourse analysis is a focus on language beyond the sentence, an emphasis on the role of context in discourse understanding and interpretation, and an assumption that discourse has the capacity to mediate interpretive assumptions, values and beliefs. Fifthly, similarly to post-structuralism and post-modernism the present study underlines the complexity of literary interpretation, the plurality and context-bondedness of literary meanings. And, similarly to reader response studies, it is not only concerned with the literary text, but in the interactions of the reader with the text in specific contexts.

The above discussion has shown the general orientative and disciplinary tenets of the present study. Next, to narrow down our camera angle and to focus more specifically on the problem of the interpretation of written texts, we shall turn to an examination of a number of psychological models of reading and literary models of and approaches to interpretation.

### **3 MODELS OF READING AND INTERPRETATION OF WRITTEN TEXTS: A REVIEW**

In this section I shall give a critical overview of a number of models of reading suggested in reading research and models of literary interpretation suggested in literary studies. This overview has two main purposes. On the one hand, it will provide a basis by which it is possible to specify tentatively a hermeneutical position against which literary critical mediation strategies and interpretive criteria can be examined. On the other hand, it will demonstrate how a variety of different interpretive criteria have been suggested by reading research and literary studies, and, hence, how, in theory, there is a variety of interpretive criteria available to interpreters of written texts, too. This implies that, to explicate the critics' underlying interpretive criteria, several analytical categories have to be established.

But, first, four hedges must be made. To begin with, the overview will be a selective one: due to a lack of sufficient time and space, it will not account for every model of reading and interpretation suggested so far. The choice of literary models, in particular, will be limited, and the reader may feel that important approaches, such as that of deconstruction, have been left out. Secondly, in many cases the models represent only one particular stage in the development of their producers' ideas. Thirdly, in reading the overview it must be borne in mind that the dynamics of the development of models is very different within the paradigms of reading research and literary studies. In reading research, models of reading have often evolved in a reactionary fashion, with one

model challenging many of the assumptions of previous models and becoming the dominant one for a certain time (which could be called, according to Grabe 1988:66, "the bandwagon effect" of psychological reading research). Within literary studies, in turn, models with different orientations have offered conflicting hypotheses of the nature of literary interpretation, most of which are, in one form or another, still current. Because the dynamics of development are so different, no claims will be made, for example, of the effect of literary models on reading research models, or vice versa. Most probably, and in some cases unfortunately, there has not been much cross-fertilization between the two disciplines.

Fourthly, another important difference between the psychological models of reading and the literary models of interpretation is that their philosophical bases are not compatible at all. The psychological models, in particular the earlier ones, often rely on the positivistic philosophy of science (see also Bloome and Green 1984:412), while the literary models tend to rely on a more phenomenological philosophy. As will later be seen in detail, the different philosophies show quite clearly in, for example, the way in which psychological models tend to regard meaning as a text-immanent given and recent literary models as a dynamic event.

Since the philosophical traditions underlying the models suggested in psychological and literary paradigms are so different, it may be asked whether it is sensible to compare them with each other, and whether their notions of reading and interpretation have anything in common at all. It could be argued, for example, that scholars are not talking about the same phenomenon at all. This line of argument is pursued by for example Cole and Scribner (1976), who are of the opinion (when talking about anthropologists or sociolinguists working within an anthropological framework, and psychologists) that the assumption that these scholars share a common topic of inquiry is unfounded. This is because scholars are not aware that their underlying philosophical assumptions are totally different.

In analyzing the psychological and literary models it must thus be borne in mind that there are crucial differences between them. Similarly, if it is assumed, as it is indeed in the present study, that disciplinary boundaries can be crossed in a search for more interdisciplinary answers to the phenomenon under scrutiny, it must be borne in mind that the terminology and analytical procedures of one discipline cannot be simply extended over to another and it cannot be claimed that the result is interdisciplinary (see e.g. Mills 1989:31). What is needed, instead, is an assessment of the fundamental assumptions of the discipline, a reformulation of basic research questions, and a careful analysis and appreciation of the meaning and value of the theoretical position of the other discipline.

Nevertheless, it is assumed here that such risky ventures can have promising results. In fact, it appears that bridging different perspectives is becoming increasingly interesting to scholars. Interdisciplinarity is beginning to be regarded as something out of which new findings and reconceptualizations may emerge. For example, in their state-of-the-art article about new directions in sociolinguistic reading research, Bloome and Green (1984:413) warmly welcome attempts where psychological and sociolinguistic perspectives will be united for the purpose of studying reading as both a cognitive and a social process.

Bearing these hedges in mind, the overview will best be regarded as an illustration of some fairly typical orientations within psychological reading research and literary studies towards meaning, reading and interpretation. More specifically, the overview will attempt to illustrate the different foci of the models, to compare them with one another, and evaluate them in the light of the present author's purposes of providing a tentative hermeneutical model against which the literary critical essays, the meditation strategies and interpretive criteria can be examined, and of specifying the relevant categories for the analysis of interpretive criteria themselves.

Before the overview, it will, however, be necessary to give preliminary definitions of the terms 'model', 'reading' and 'interpretation'. In the present analysis of the various approaches to reading/interpretation the term model is preferred to that of theory. The choice of the term may simply be a matter of taste, for often the two words are used interchangeably. However, a model can be taken as a hypothetical and formalized description of a phenomenon or of a process, or, in the words of the Collins Cobuild dictionary (1987) as "a theoretical description that can help you to understand how the system or process works, or how it might work". Since a model is taken to be hypothetical, it implies that there may be several different and even conflicting models of one and the same phenomenon or process (which, as we shall see, is exactly the case of models of reading and interpretation). A theory, in turn, could be defined, following again the Cobuild dictionary, as "an idea or a set of ideas that is intended to explain something" which may be based on evidence and careful thinking, but also on only thinking, but not on actual knowledge or evidence. A theory can thus be less empirical than a model which aims specifically at the description of real-life phenomena.

The distinction between empirically based models and (potentially) non-empirical theories actually corresponds to the ways in which reading research, on the one hand, and literary theory, on the other, have analyzed reading and interpretation. Reading researchers have built models using empirical evidence of the 'real' nature of reading,

whereas literary theory has been much more speculative, and suggested (different) theories of interpretation.

A similar terminological difference seems to exist in reading research and literary theory over the use of the terms reading and interpretation. The term reading is generally preferred in empirically oriented reading research. Within this field reading usually refers to the cognitive activity of phonetic, lexical and semantic decoding and/or inferencing by readers. As a consequence, reading research is not so much interested in the reading of specific (types of) texts, but in the general reading ability, or disabilities, of readers. Similarly, reading researchers are not usually concerned with extra-textual, non-linguistic factors which may affect readers' meaning-making. Furthermore, reading is often regarded as an unconscious, or automatic activity. However, some models of reading also deal with the 'comprehension' of a text, which most often seems to imply that reading also involves active and conscious cognitive work from the reader - in this way reading can actually be seen to shade into interpretation.

In literary criticism the focus of interest is the interpretation of specific literary texts. Interpretation is regarded as understanding the language, theme(s) and meaning(s) of a text (see, for example, Wales 1990:256). Interpretation requires conscious efforts from the reader. In Robert Scholes's words (1985:22), interpretation depends upon either some excess of meaning in a text or some deficiency of knowledge in the reader. With certain texts the reader may become aware that there is a 'non-obvious' level of meaning in the text which can only be discovered by an active and conscious interpretive process.

In spite of the different terms and foci of interest in reading research and literary studies, it could, nevertheless, be argued that the borderline between reading and interpretation is not a clear one. Traditionally, in literary criticism it was literary texts that used to be subjected to interpretation or criticism. In New Criticism, for example, literary texts were privileged as "verbal icons", as complex textual artefacts worthy of the literary critic's elaborate interpretation. Non-literary texts were, in turn, simply read. Unlike literary texts, they were claimed to say what they mean. Nevertheless, it has more recently been argued by various post-structuralist and post-modernist critics that non-literary texts - media, journalistic, and advertising texts, for example - can, and should, also be interpreted and criticized, and not only read (see e.g. Fabb and Durant 1988:2). These kinds of texts may also include subtle and complex layers of meanings and require from their readers conscious efforts of interpretation. An extreme position of this is represented by Stanley Fish (1980:13): he has argued that there is no reading without interpretation, that interpretation enters the process very early on. In his view, quite sen-

sibly, it is most probably impossible to decide where reading stops and interpretation begins.

For these reasons, 'interpretation' will be used in the present thesis as a general term to refer to the process whereby readers make sense of a written text. As will later be seen in more detail, in the present thesis interpretation is considered a negotiation process involving the author's intention (as mediated by the text), the written text, readers, and the non-linguistic context. In the analysis of the individual models, however, the term that they themselves prefer - 'reading', 'comprehension' or 'interpretation' - will be used.

The models will be classified into six categories.<sup>6</sup> The principle according to which the classification is carried out is the way in which the different models address themselves to the question of where meaning in the interpretation of written texts is derived. Some models argue that meaning in interpretation is strictly limited to the text, that the text somehow 'contains' meaning. These will consequently be labelled as *text-based* models. Some models make the claim that it is only the author who has the true meaning of a text in his/her possession. These models will be called *author-based*. Still other models argue that it is the readers who are the active agents or the only source of meaning in interpretation; these will be called *reader-based* models. And there is also a model which insists that it is the interpretive community which dictates the ways in which literary texts can be interpreted. This model will be referred to as a *community-based* one. In addition, there are models which emphasize the essential interactiveness of the generation of meaning: the reader is seen to contribute some things, and the text other things, and meaning evolves from the two components being enmeshed in each other. Such models will be referred to as *interactive*. Finally, there are models according to which interpretation involves social interaction between the author, the text, and the readers. For lack of a better term, these will be referred to as *social-interactive* models (cf. Nystrand 1987).

The above categories are not mutually exclusive. There will be fuzzy borders and categories shading into each other. In spite of the difficulty of straightjacketing complex and developing theories into fixed categories, it is, however, considered useful to stick to a classificatory scheme

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<sup>6</sup> Several classifications of reading and/or interpretation models have been suggested by primarily American reading researchers or literary scholars. Some of the classifications carried out by reading researchers delimit themselves to categorizing reading models only (e.g. Barnett 1989), others have also ventured to include eclectically some literary models also and compared these to reading models (Harker 1987, Harste 1985). Literary scholars, in turn, have usually attempted to categorize literary models of interpretation without any reference to reading research models (e.g. Mailloux 1982, Petterson 1988). Similarly as in the present study, in most cases these classifications function as a background to the author's respective conceptualizations of what reading/interpretation is about. As a consequence, their emphases are different and they are not directly comparable to each other.

in order to facilitate analysis and to point out the similarity of underlying assumptions of the models.

### **3.1 Text-based models**

In text-based models the reader's comprehension depends on what is in the text. Interpretation is text-driven, and the direction of meaning is from the text to the reader. There are examples of a text-based orientation in both reading research and literary criticism. This section will deal with one reading research model, the Information Transfer view, and two literary models, the formalist New Critical, and the structuralist model developed by Michael Riffaterre.

#### **3.1.1 An Information Transfer model: David LaBerge and S. Jay Samuels**

Information transfer or bottom-up models of text processing, were in vogue in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s. As these terms suggest, they are concerned with the process whereby information, which was assumed to be stored in a written text, is transferred in small chunks to the reader's mind, where they are then absorbed, analyzed, and gradually added to the next chunks until they become meaningful.

A well-known example of an information transfer model of reading was developed by David LaBerge and S. Jay Samuels (1974). Initially, the model was primarily concerned with the reading of individual words, and only secondarily with the comprehension of whole, or larger stretches of, texts. In later revisions, and with the increase of literature on comprehension, this aspect of reading was, however, later elaborated in the model. In the LaBerge and Samuels model reading consists of two operations, decoding and comprehending. By decoding LaBerge and Samuels refer to the reader's processing of the text in a hierarchical way which proceeds from the visual word on the page to its meaning: the reader uses different recoding strategies, the phonological code, or spelling pattern, for example, to arrive at the ultimate level of word meaning (1974:312-3). Reading is thus a complex skill which consists of several stages, including visual memory, phonological memory, episodic memory and semantic memory.

Central notions in the model are also attention and automaticity. For LaBerge and Samuels the ideal situation in reading is that readers can maintain their attention continuously on the "meaning units of semantic memory", while the decoding from the lower, visual to semantic systems

proceeds automatically (LaBerge and Samuels 1974:313). In their words, reading is

flowing at its best, for example, [when] in reading a mystery novel in which the vocabulary is very familiar, we can go along for many minutes imagining ourselves with the detective walking the streets of London, and apparently we have not given a bit of attention to any of the decoding processes that have been transforming marks on the page into the deeper systems of comprehension. (1974:314)

The ideal situation of reading is thus one in which the processing from visual perception to 'the activation' of meaning is automatic. The unproblematic nature of the process of reading and the active part of words in it is further emphasized by the claims that words take a "journey . . . from their written form on the page to the eventual activation of their meaning" (1974:293), that "written stimuli" undergo a "transformation . . . into meaning" (1974:296) and that words may take "alternative routes . . . as [they] proceed towards [their] goal of activating meaning codes" (1974:312). Thus, even though the focus in LaBerge's and Samuels's model appears to be on "automatic information processing" by readers (1974:293), they nevertheless picture reading as a process in which words have a great deal of power and in which they 'journey' unchanged from the page into the reader's mind where they then 'activate' or are 'transformed into' meaning.

A somewhat behavioristic picture of reading is thus suggested, particularly at the level of the word meaning. Even though it is not explicitly asserted, there appears to be a one-to-one relationship between the written stimuli and their semantic representation within the reader's mind. It is as if the reader's activated meaning is a mirror image, or an imprint, of the 'meaning' of the stimulus. Furthermore, the flow of meaning is unidirectional, from the text to the reader: the text is the full vessel, and the reader the empty one. The context, the actual setting, and situation of reading, as well as the institutional and socio-cultural context do not affect the processing at all.

A more explicit formulation of the position that reading is the transfer of meaning from the text to the reader can also be detected in Ronald P. Carver's model, which similarly has an Information Transfer orientation. Carver defines reading with comprehension (or as he puts it, "rauding") as understanding the complete thoughts of the author as they are encapsulated in the successive sentences of written texts (Carver 1990:5). Unlike LaBerge and Samuels, who do not specify the source and nature of the 'information' contained in written texts, Carver thus openly asserts that this information is the author's intention as embedded in the sentences of the text. For him, reading is thus basically a process of discovery.

However, the smooth picture of the process of reading is somewhat disturbed by LaBerge's and Samuels's claim that the "higher-order comprehension" of a text requires further operations from the reader. It is not enough that the reader works out the meaning of individual words one-by-one, but s/he also has to scan and organize the word meanings as a coherent whole. Without the more sophisticated process of comprehension, reading would be comparable, in LaBerge's and Samuels's words, to "viewing characters in a play one-by-one and ignoring their interactions". At this stage of reading, effort and associations also enter the process, which presumably could be taken as an acknowledgement that the comprehension of a text is not, after all, a fully automatized process of information transfer but a process where meaning is also brought to the text by the reader (LaBerge and Samuels 1974:319-20.) In this respect, the model by LaBerge and Samuels could be seen to anticipate the rise of more reader-based models which emphasize the reader as the driving force in reading and comprehension.

An interesting feature of the information transfer models is also the fact that they consider reading a secondary skill. Because it is taken to be secondary and not primary and natural in the sense that speaking and listening are, it needs to be consciously learnt. In other words, it is necessary that readers develop a linguistic awareness, which means that they become conscious of the specific characteristics of the written language as opposed to those of spoken language (see for example Mattingly 1972:133 and Liberman, Liberman, Mattingly and Shankweiler 1980:137).

A consequence of this position, and of the conviction that information/meaning is text-immanent and thus constant, is that researchers working within the information transfer paradigm pay a great deal of attention to the examination of the factors in the written form of the texts and/or in the readers' cognitive abilities of reading, which either further or prevent efficient reading. For example, LaBerge (1973) carried out an experiment in which he studied how the recognition of previously unknown letter patterns gradually automatized through practice. Similarly, Carver examined extensively reading rate, and attempted to identify factors which increase the efficacy and speed of reading comprehension, such as the control of eye movements and silent speech (Carver 1990:123-4 and 88).

It seems that in the information transfer models the central assumptions about the nature of comprehension were rather unproblematic. The basic situation of reading, the words of a text journeying from the page to the activation of their meaning in the reader's head, no doubt delimited the scope of study efficiently, cutting down the number of variables into just a few. It simplified the researchers' empirical and quantitative analysis of reading, but also radically reduced the explanato-

ry power of such models. Surely, the interpretation of a text is not predictable on the basis of the written form of the text or on the basis of the level of the metalinguistic awareness of the reader only, but other factors are in play, too.

### 3.1.2 New Criticism

In the field of literary studies the best-known text-based approach is possibly New Criticism. New Criticism grew and prospered in Britain and the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. It prospered so well in fact that by the mid-1950s it had acquired the status of an official dogma in literary criticism; after that its influence as a model of interpretation and criticism has been more or less rejected. As a practice, however, New Criticism has been slow to die: as Toolan has noted (1990:3), even though it is generally regarded as a "theoretical dinosaur", in the context of criticizing and teaching literature it is still current.

New Criticism was a reaction against earlier literary criticism. The focus of nineteenth century criticism had been on the explanation of literary works as literary history, with respect to their author's biography, in particular. The New Critics dismissed this kind of criticism for its inadequate interest in the literary works of art themselves and in the analysis of these works on their own terms (see e.g. Wellek and Warren 1956:139). In the same way as their 'unacknowledged' cousins Russian Formalists (see e.g. Hawkes 1977:151-2), they emphasized the importance of the literary text in interpretation.

In the practice of criticism this position implies that the text is regarded as an autonomous whole which does not need to be explicated by such extrinsic methods as biography, psychology or history. Instead, all that is needed is the "close reading" of the text itself. In Wimsatt's words (1954:xvii), "if we are to lay hold of the poetic act to comprehend and evaluate it, and if it is to pass current as a critical object, it must be hypostatized." In other words, for the purpose of critical analysis, the essentially dynamic act of a 'poem' must be converted or, rather, reduced into an object. Cleanth Brooks, another well-known New Critic, in his *Well Wrought Urn* (1947) puts this idea succinctly when he explains his own goal of textual analysis. He (1947:x) writes:

If literary history has not been emphasized in the pages that follow, it is not because I discount its importance or because I have failed to take it into account. It is rather that I have been anxious to see what residuum, if any, is left after we have referred the poem to its cultural matrix.

In Terry Eagleton's view, (1983:48-9) this means that the New Critics turned the literary text into a fetish, and that for them

meaning was public and objective, inscribed in the very language of the literary text, not a question of some putative ghostly impulse in a long-dead author's head, or the arbitrary private significances a reader might attach to his words. . . . It should be recognized that the New Critics' attitudes to these questions were closely bound up with their urge to convert the poem into a self-sufficient object, as solid and material as an urn or icon. The poem became a spatial figure rather than a temporal process.

Significantly, the spatial text is considered as the ultimate norm in interpretation. For example, Wellek and Warren (1956:150-1) argue for the normativity of the "real" poem as follows:

Thus, the real poem must be conceived as a structure of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers. Every single experience (reading, reciting, and so forth) is only an attempt - more or less successful and complete - to grasp this set of norms or standards. The norms we have in mind are implicit norms which have to be extracted from every individual experience of a work of art and together make up the genuine work of art as a whole.

The system of text-immanent implicit norms form a hierarchical whole. Following Roman Ingarden's classification of the 'strata' in a literary text, Wellek and Warren build up an image of the literary work, which consists of the sound, lexical and syntactic levels, and the level of the "objects represented", or the "world" of a novelist/characters. The realization of the normative structure of the literary text is what constitutes the object of interpretation and of literary scholarship. In Wellek's and Warren's words (1956:152), the structure of a work of art has the character of "a duty which I have to realize". The text itself or, ideally, the carefully amassed information on the literary texts, should be the sole authority in deciding meaning. The 'real', normative, self-sufficient, objective and stable poem is not considered, however, a straightforward entity, but is regarded as essentially a non-paraphrasable, possibly even ambiguous and complex construct. Brooks (1947), in particular, argues for a conception of a literary work which would center on the complexity and ambiguity of language and on the plurality of meaning.

The New Critical focus on the text itself also implies a focus on the language of the text. In fact, New Critics saw literature as "hyperverbal", deriving from "the interrelational density of words" (Wimsatt and Beardley 1954:23) and from language being used in a non-ordinary, non-everyday way. Literary language is the raw material with which highly complex structures, tensions and counter-tensions are built within a text. (see e.g. Warren 1958). This means also that the language of literature is distinguished from non-literary language.

Louise Rosenblatt (1981:3) has pointed out that such text-centered approaches as New Criticism, which suppress or marginalize the reader, are often in reality very much concerned with the reader. The New Critics' negative interest in the reader comes out most clearly in Wimsatt's and Beardsley's (1954:10) famous thesis of the "Affective Fallacy". After having discredited the (typically Romantic) enterprise of focusing on the author and his/her intention as "the Intentional Fallacy", they did the same with the study of the effects of poetry on readers:

The Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its results (what it is and what it does), a special case of epistemological skepticism, though usually advanced as if it had far stronger claims than the overall forms of skepticism. It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism. The outcome of either Fallacy, the Intentional or the Affective, is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgement, tends to disappear.

In practice readers' individual and personal, or historical and communal responses, or what Wellek and Warren (1956:156) refer to "the false or incomplete realizations" of the literary text, are thus considered categorically extrinsic to literary criticism. One reason for this decontextualism is that they could lead to "mere emotional appreciation" and "complete subjectivity" (Wellek & Warren 1956:16), which cannot be the focus of analysis for the text-oriented, allegedly objective and detached New Critics.

As a consequence of this position, readers have an obligation to behave in a certain way. More particularly, they have a duty to attempt to discover the structure of the complex literary artefact, its inner tensions, ambiguities and structure. To be successful, they have to behave in a rational way, and proceed in their analyses along the analytical routes recommended by the New Critics, through close reading and textual verification. Only this way can they experience literature correctly (see, for example Wellek and Warren 1956:150). Correctness means thus that individual readers have to discard their individuality, to submit to the authority of the text and to engage with the "super personal tradition" of "a growing body of knowledge, insights and judgements" about literature (Wellek and Warren 1956:19), a tradition shared, predictably, by all those with the New Critical frame of mind.

Surely this is a paradox. While it is insisted that literature, or what the New Critics really are interested in, poetry, is in its essence ambiguous, it is, at the same time, equally persistently insisted that there is a limit to ambiguity. This limit is that the idiosyncrasy of interpretation is not permitted. Subjectivity of interpretation, it is believed, only leads to anarchy. This predetermination of the interpretive activity and, what Freund (1987:61) refers to as the "categorical excommunication" of the reader actually requires readers to act, when reading, as creatures with no history,

individuality or social and ideological commitments. In short, it requires from readers that they become a *tabula rasa*. It also implies that, even though complex and ambiguous, the text is ultimately closed.

If the reader is not in the spotlight in the practice of criticism, neither is the author. With their thesis of "the Intentional Fallacy", Wimsatt and Beardsley also stigmatize the search for the author's intention as irrelevant. They (1954:10) argue that

the Intentional Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its origins . . . It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological *causes* of the poem and ends in biography and relativism.

It could perhaps be argued that, in a stark contrast to their predecessors in critical activity, the Romantics, the New Critics are not at all interested in writers and literary texts as expressions of the ingenuity and/or psychology of their authors. In the same way as with readers' responses to literary texts, the writer's psychology and background do not merit serious analysis: it is the static, objective, self-sufficient, all-mighty text which does so.

Even though the New Critics emphasize the importance of the text as a norm in the practice of interpretation, in their theorizing about literary interpretation they were not fully satisfied with the notion of the literary text as a stable and self-sufficient entity only. Wellek and Warren, for example, take pains to argue that, while the text is self-sufficient, it is also historical, and that it is only accessible through (different) individual experiences. Their argument (Wellek and Warren 1956:143) runs as follows:

the literary work of art is neither an empirical fact, in the sense of being a state of mind in any given individual or of any group of individuals, nor is it an ideal changeless object such as a triangle. The work of art may become an object of experience; it is, we admit, accessible only through individual experiences, but it is not identical with any experience. It differs from ideal objects such as numbers precisely because it is only accessible through the empirical part of its structure, the sound-system, while a triangle or a number can be intuited directly. It also differs from ideal objects in one important respect. It has something which can be called 'life'. It arises at a certain point of time, changes in the course of history, and may perish.

It is interesting to note that in Wellek's and Warren's reasoning there is something very similar to de Saussure's line of argument of the dual character of language. In fact, Wellek and Warren (1956:152) are themselves very explicit about this connection:

The system of language (*langue*) is a collection of conventions and norms whose workings and relations we can observe and describe as having a fundamental coherence and identity in spite of very different, imperfect, or in-

complete pronouncements of individual speakers. In this respect at least, a literary work of art is in exactly the same position as a system of language. We as individuals shall never realize it completely, for we shall never use our own language completely and perfectly. Similarly, the structure of a work of art has the character of a 'duty which I have to realize'. I shall always realize it imperfectly, but in spite of some incompleteness a certain 'structure of determination' remains, just as in any other object of knowledge.

A Saussurean model of literary language serves Wellek's and Warren's purposes perfectly: there is an ideal system, or a structure of determination in a literary work which can be claimed to exist as itself even though it is brought into being only through individual readings. Individual readings, in turn, represent the parole or the "individual speech act" (Wellek and Warren 1956:140), which by necessity is multiform, variant, and imperfect.<sup>7</sup> In theory, Wellek and Warren make an attempt to take both of these aspects of the literary text into account. They call this approach "Perspectivism" and emphasize that through its double camera angle we are able to see literary texts simultaneously as "eternal", as preserving a certain identity, and "historical", as passing through a process of traceable development (Wellek & Warren 1956:43).

In Elisabeth Freund's words (1987:59), the Saussurean distinction furnishes Wellek and Warren with "an extremely supple *both/and* definition of the work of art, which is granted both a 'timeless' fundamental structure of identity and a dynamic dimension of historicity and change." Freund, as a reader response critic, is highly skeptical of an approach of this kind. She argues (1987:60) that if the literary text is "available only through the recreation . . . of the sound patterns, syntactical structures, units of meaning, etc., how can we validly speak of its being a self-identical entity?" For Freund this means that the 'real' work of art is really a hypostatization, which "rather like the concept of the unconscious, is summoned into existence performatively". In other words, it is not possible to claim that the ontology of literary texts can be established without epistemology, without empirical verification of their existence.

In sum, there is a certain ambivalence in New Criticism about the role of the text in interpretation. In theory it is argued that literary interpretation should ideally be based on both the text and readers' experiences of the text. In the practice of criticism, however, the supremacy of the literary text as a norm in interpretation, as well as the irrelevance of readers' responses and the author's intention, is underlined. At least as far as the practice of criticism is concerned, meaning is believed to reside within the text. Thus, the text is the sole authority of meaning.

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<sup>7</sup> These could perhaps be seen as 'allo-interpretations' of an underlying 'phoneme-interpretation'; the analogy between the study of interpretations and that of phonemes is actually made very explicit by Warren and Wellek.

### 3.1.3 A structuralist model: Michael Riffaterre

The structuralist Michael Riffaterre's approach to interpretation, as represented for example in his famous article, "Interpretation and Descriptive Poetry: a Reading of Wordsworth's 'Yew-Trees'" (1981) can be seen as yet another literary model which centers on the text. For Riffaterre, too, the text itself is the basis for analysis as well as the supreme authority in interpretation.

Riffaterre's model is strictly about texts. It is about texts even though he starts off with the claim that his focus is on the relation between the text and the reader. In his words (1978:164), "the reader is the only one who makes the connections between text, interpretant, and intertext, the one in whose mind the semiotic transfer from sign to sign takes place". In principle, the reader thus holds a key position in Riffaterre's mode. In reality, however, the reader is irrevocably subordinate to the text. The text makes its readers, and not vice versa. In his *Semiotics of Poetry* (1978:19) Riffaterre defines the text as follows:

The poem results from the transformation of the matrix, a minimal and literal sentence, into a longer, complex and non-literal periphrasis. The matrix is hypothetical, being only the grammatical and lexical actualization of a structure. The matrix may be epitomized in one word, in which case the word will not appear in the text. It is always actualized in successive variants; the form of these variants is governed by the first or primary actualization, the model. Matrix, model, and text are variants of the same structure.

It has been pointed out by Young (1981:103), amongst others, that there is a certain resemblance between Riffaterre's formulation of the character of a poem and Chomsky's theory of competence. While Chomsky argues that language competence is a set of rules which generate a potentially infinite set of surface sentences, Riffaterre insists that the semiotic system of poetry is a set of predictable patterns according to which the language of a text functions. It is the task of the reader to work back from the language of the text to its matrix, or kernel, or central statement, and relate the central statement to the actual networks of linguistic transformations in the text.

In his framework, texts are also strikingly self-sufficient and non-referential: for him "the representation of reality is a verbal construct in which meaning is achieved by reference from words to words, not to things" (Riffaterre 1981:107). The text does not refer outside itself, to the 'actual' world of ours. Importantly, the text, as a construct of semantic features such as equivalence, tautology, and oxymoron, prescribes its own interpretation, leaving no room in principle for the reader to improvise. The text "allows the reader no freedom of choice", and keeps his/her

attention "under control" (Riffaterre 1981:114). For non-structuralist and more contextualist stylisticians this kind of prescriptiveness is "breath-taking" (Toolan 1990:37), but for Riffaterre's fellow structuralists, his non-referentiality seemed a laudable idea. Young (1981:106), for example, sees Riffaterre's claim of the non-representationality of poetry as "particularly valuable". This is not surprising, of course, for structural stylistics, from Jakobson and Bally onwards, has always insisted on the primacy of the language of the text and relied, in its analysis, on purely formal criteria.

Riffaterre is thus concerned with the observable, ahistorical, anti-intentionalist "fugue-like variation of one basic, unchanging statement" (1981:113) of a literary text. What is perhaps good in his approach is indeed his focus on these variations, on the language of the literary texts, and his analysis of the networks of static structures, which he argues give the literary text its literariness. The musical metaphor here is illustrative: for Riffaterre, a literary text has an essential core, one essential core, rather than various centers of gravity. In this respect, he represents the opposite view, to name a very influential recent discovery, to Bakhtin. Interestingly, Bakhtin also states his point about "cores" in literary texts<sup>8</sup> with a musical metaphor, like this:

(traditional) stylistic analysis is not oriented toward the novel as a whole, but only toward one or another of its subordinated stylistic unities. The traditional scholar bypasses the basic distinctive feature of the novel as a genre; he substitutes for it another object of study, and instead of novelistic style he actually analyzes something completely different. He transposes a symphonic (orchestrated) theme on to the piano keyboard. (Bakhtin 1981:263)

Whereas Riffaterre, the structuralist, whose stylistics could be characterized as a stylistics of the langue, is after the basic and unchanged statement of a literary text, Bakhtin, the non-structuralist, is after the plurality and variation of stylistic unities of a literary text. In Bakhtinian terms, Riffaterre plays his piano happily, content with the skeletal structures of his music, ignoring the symphonic qualities of literary texts, or the symphonic possibilities of multiple interpretations.

It seems then that the Riffaterrian interpretation process comes down to this: the exclusion of the symphonic potential of interpretations. There can be only one correct interpretation, and the correct interpretation is reached by a mechanistic almost computerial procedure of rationalization about the language of the literary text. Riffaterre (1981:110) writes:

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<sup>8</sup> Bakhtin is here concerned with the novel as a genre, but it has been argued recently, by for example David Lodge 1987:98, that his theory could be extended to characterize other genres as well.

the descriptive sentence in the poem is not built like the same sentence in cognitive language. In cognitive language, a 'vertical' semantic axis supports every word and links it to things or to commonplace concepts about things. The truth test of a cognitive message is whether or not it conforms to these commonplaces. In a poem, the descriptive sentence is a chain of derivations. Each word is generated by positive or negative conformity with the preceding one - that is, either by synonymy or by antonymy - and the sequence is tautological or oxymoric.

In literary interpretation no knowledge of the world can or is to be used. Interpreters are required to bracket off their own experiences, and their own selves, to become language-processing machines. What makes Riffaterre's claim even more curious is that he argues that 'cognitive' (ordinary, non-literary) language is fundamentally different. Ordinary language is referential, and in its interpretation language users make sense of what they hear or write by linking it up with what they know, believe, assume, or feel about the extralinguistic world. In other words, Riffaterre seems to be claiming that we as 'cognitive' language users and (uncognitive?) readers of literature have divided personalities. No doubt Riffaterre is wrong here. As will later be shown in more detail, it seems more valid to claim that a text is never interpreted on the basis of the text alone.

The reliance on the structural features of texts also means that Riffaterre's model is starkly anti-intentional and anti-historical. It is not interested in author intentions or in the variation and change of interpretations. Riffaterre argues (1981:113) that the author's meaning "can only be guesswork if the critic attempts a psychological or sociological or historical reconstruction of the norms"; consequently, the author's 'real' meaning is not relevant. Analogously, Riffaterre also dismisses contextually sensitive interpretations which are based on philology or erudition. Again, "interpretation . . . does not need to know norms of thought, or the conventions of society at a given time, so long as it knows the lexicon in which they are encoded." What interpretation does need to know then is "the incontrovertible fact" independent of the critic, the shape of the sentence (Riffaterre 1981:113). Like the New Critics, Riffaterre is thus after the discovery of the 'correct' text-immanent meaning, which, in his case, is expressed as the rationalization of the matrix of a literary text with its complex networks of actualizations.

What Riffaterre is really implying is that the critic, by starting off with the observable text, is safe. He, like formalists and structuralists before and after him, thus seems to find in the alleged objectiveness of his orientation and method a means with which interpretation can be validated. Nevertheless, as some recent critics have argued, the insurance of objectivity is simply not enough if the theoretical basis and central assumptions are shaky. To take a few examples, Toolan (1990:38) has criticized Riffaterre for getting his de Saussure all wrong: Saussurean

structuralism does not claim that meaning is achieved by reference from words to words, but that meaning is achieved by the differential relation of words to other words. And Taylor (1980:104) has accused structural stylisticians, including Riffaterre, of linguistic reductionism, which means that they claim that the primary cause of the verbal effects produced in verbal communication are traceable back to observable features of the expression-plane. In terms of analysis, Taylor continues, this kind of orientation means "a rather curious cause-effect study where the cause is supposed to be observable, but the identification of the effect remains a question of guesswork, tradition, and some rather autocratic theory-making." However, it seems that there is a way out of this theoretical cul-de-sac: in both Toolan's and Taylor's view it can only be seen if the context-bonded nature of all communication is acknowledged.

Roger Fowler (1981:133) regards Riffaterre's model as "excessively and unrealistically limited", and he explains these limitations from two angles - the historical and the theoretical. Firstly, Fowler does not agree with Riffaterre's Jakobsonian claim that it is the specific qualities of literary texts which make them literary. Instead, he claims that the fact that we perceive certain texts as literary is the product of our being socialized into a particular literary culture. Secondly, Fowler argues that Riffaterre's reading, in its concentration on the linguistic, primarily lexical structure of literary texts, disregards stylistic recognition. In other words, Riffaterre does not take into account that readers rely on their earlier experiences of certain styles and registers, in their interpretive work. Like Toolan and Taylor, Fowler also accuses Riffaterre for doing exactly the opposite, for sticking to the text itself, and for refusing to see the writing and reading of literature as being shaped by powerful extratextual and socio-cultural forces.

To summarize: for Riffaterre the text is the primary focus of attention and the supreme authority on meaning. This also implies that Riffaterre is not interested in authorial, readerly, or contextual meaning. In this respect, his ideas are not so different from the other monistic and normative text-based theories accounted for in this section which all claim in their own way that the text is an active force in the determination of meaning.

### 3.1.4 Summary

In text-based models of interpretation the text is all-mighty: it has all the power, and the reader is subservient to it. The text is hypostatized, autonomous and self-sufficient. Most importantly, the text is seen as the repository of its meaning, and an active force in guiding and constraining its interpretation. The text has a great deal of normative power, for it en-

capsulates the blueprint of its 'correct' interpretation. Interpretation is thus basically the discovery of meaning, for meaning is taken to be available and decodable by anyone.

The overemphasis of the power of the text in text-based models means also that the readers and their backgrounds, assumptions and beliefs are not relevant. In LaBerge's and Samuels's model, the reader's task is argued to be the straightforward and more or less mechanical computing of the written stimuli. In the New Critical and Riffaterre's models, in turn, readers are seen as a more active force: they are in theory granted the ability to generate interpretations of their own, but these interpretations are necessarily 'false and incomplete'. Both the psychological and literary models are also normative in that they insist that the reader has an obligation to discover the text-immanent meaning. The reader is thus reduced into some kind of a reading automaton with not much power in the business of sense-making. Or, in Toolan's words (1990:34), in "autonomous text theories" readers are seen as classless, sexless, tasteless and colorless *tabula rasa*, and not as already contaminated, prejudiced, purposeful harbingers of ideological commitments.

These models thus insist that readers have a duty to unravel the meanings embedded in a text. Interpretation is thus a discovery procedure, a quest for what the text conceals. Here, however, readers cannot be trusted to discover the correct meaning of a text on their own, but they have to be taught how to do it; otherwise they end up with incorrect interpretations, and interpretation degenerates into anarchy. In LaBerge's and Samuels's model this kind of normativity comes out in their claim that reading is a secondary and unnatural skill, one that has to be consciously learnt. Readers have to develop a linguistic awareness of the specific characteristics of written language. In New Criticism the same idea is foregrounded in the need to teach students the techniques of close reading as a guarantee of correct interpretation. A similar observation is made also by Harker (1987:244): in his view New Criticism is highly compatible with text-based theories because it considers the interpretation of literature as one particular type of secondary language activity, an activity which demands the conscious focused attention of the reader on the specific features of the text. Riffaterre, in his insistence on the importance of the rationalization of the matrix, or kernel, of a literary text, implies a similar idea: the reader must know the strategies with which s/he is capable of identifying it.

A related observation on the models is that all of them also disregard the role of context. In LaBerge's and Samuels's Information Transfer model the situational, institutional and socio-cultural context is more or less ignored, by which it is implied that the reading and 'comprehension' process takes, or should take, place in a vacuum between the psychologi-

cal computer of the reader and the text. In New Criticism and Riffaterre's model, in turn, the role of context is acknowledged in theory, but, at the same time, its value is discredited by the argument that the socially, culturally and historically variant interpretations, in the same way as subjective readerly interpretations, are not relevant, or even 'correct', in the actual interpretation of texts. Thus, New Criticism, despite its good intentions of regarding literary texts as both historical and universal, focuses on the structures of the texts only; and Riffaterre, as a kind of an apex to this decontextualist tendency, claims that literary texts are non-referential in nature; in other words, they do not refer outside themselves at all.

As a consequence of the supremacy of the text, the author, too, is pushed out of the picture. LaBerge and Samuels, who insist that the written text contains and transfers 'information', do not, however, make it explicit what this information is more specifically like, or who inserted it within the text in the first place. For them the 'information' of the written text is not, at least explicitly, a message from the writer. In contrast, Carver, whose approach also has an Information Transfer orientation, openly asserts that the goal in reading should be the comprehension of the author's text-immanent "thoughts". He also seems to take it for granted that the author's "thoughts" are encapsulated in the text, and that they can be discovered by simply reading the text. In both of these models the author's contribution to the process of meaning-making (as for example the facilitator of text comprehension) is thus ignored. With New Critical and Riffaterre's models the exclusion of the author is even more complete: there it is argued that the text is self-sufficient, also in the sense that the author's intentions are not considered relevant in actual interpretation.

The reliance on a text-based model of interpretation has implications for the stylistic analysis of literary texts. It could be argued that text-based stylistics is a stylistics of *langue*. In their text-based insistence on one correct, text-immanent, universal and unchangeable interpretation, on a phoneme interpretation, these models exclude all other interpretations, readerly, and/or socio-culturally variant ones, as more or less imperfect realizations of the ideal text-immanent interpretation.

Underlying the text-based tenets of interpretation there is then a view of language which is based on the idea that there is a core in language which is unchangeable and universal, and a dimension of potentially infinitely variant actualizations of the core. It is a familiar view, no doubt, in western linguistics. A similar point is made by Taylor, who argues that structuralist stylistics (such as Riffaterre's) actually relies on a view of language which regards language as a fixed code, and which takes for granted that by using language we communicate (Taylor 1980:7). Language as a fixed code means that language is a system which deter-

mines, for all of its users, the relations between linguistic form and meaning. Language as a means of communication, in turn, means that it is possible to communicate to others what is meant (this is, in Roy Harris's words (1981), the process of *telementation*).

It is perhaps possible to extend this idea to cover other text-based models of interpretation as well, besides those of structural stylistics, and argue, with Harris and Taylor, that text-based models generally appear to take for granted that it is possible to interpret text correctly and equifinally, because there is a universally accepted, unchangeable code or system, namely, that of language, on the basis of which interpretations are generated. Furthermore, these theories also take for granted that, since all users of a language share the same code, they, regardless of their background, assumptions, setting and context, are able to 'understand' what a text (or a person) communicates and unlock the closed money-box of the text. The process of interpretation is thus solidly under control, rationally analyzable and infinitely safe. No plural texts or meanings are possible.

### 3.2 An author-based model: E.D. Hirsch

An author-based model is defined here as an approach to interpretation which gives priority to the author's (alleged) original intention as the source of the correct interpretation of a text. In literary studies E.D. Hirsch's (1967, 1976) intentionalist approach is perhaps the best-known example of an author-based model of interpretation. More recently, Stephen Knapp and Walther Benn Michaels (1982, 1987) have also suggested another, and quite differently oriented, author-based approach. A number of author-based models can also be located in reading research: as was seen in the previous section, Carver's Information Transfer approach, for example, could be taken as explicitly author-based. It will later be shown how there are reading models, too, which, in spite of their claims to the opposite, tacitly assume that the author's intention, as embedded within the text, has a decisive role in interpretation. Since these (implicitly author-based) reading models will be discussed elsewhere, this section will primarily concentrate on examining Hirsch's model. However, an attempt will also be made to point out the significant ways in which it differs from Knapp's and Michaels's more recent approach.

In literary criticism the emphasis on the text as the supreme authority in interpretation and the exclusion of the authorial (as well as readerly) meaning as being relevant was in a way a reaction against an earlier, particularly Romantic, tendency to emphasize the author. There was, before the rise of New Criticism, a whole tradition of literary criti-

cism which aimed at studying literature in the light of the authors' biographies. Writers were often seen as exceptional human beings, whose mysterious ingenuity and eccentricity made them as interesting as the literature they produced. However, the biographical tradition formulated no model of interpretation. Such a model came later: in the late 1960's, E.D. Hirsch Jr., elaborating on Edmund Husserl's hermeneutical theory, introduced his intentionalist model of interpretation (1967, 1976), which insists on the importance of the authorial meaning in literary interpretation.

For Hirsch the author's intention - in other words, the author's aims and attitudes - should be the basis for interpretation. However, the author's intention is not available in the text, but it must be reconstructed by readers on the basis of information gathered on the author and his/her background. In Hirsch's view (1967:224) "hermeneutics must stress a reconstruction of the author's aims and attitudes in order to evolve guides and norms for construing the meanings of his text". It is important to see that for Hirsch the author's intention clearly means something different from what it means, for example, to the New Critics. The author's intention à la Hirsch refers to the author's own plans, purposes and goals. Hirsch's notion of intention is thus perhaps close to speaker intentions as seen in speech act theory, especially in the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (e.g. 1983). The New Critics, in turn, are more concerned with dismissing interest in the author's individual design, biography, background and personality as irrelevant in interpretation.

The author's meaning is the constant, self-identical and universal norm in literary interpretation; in fact, in Hirsch's view there must be a norm, for "if the meaning of a text is not the author's, then no interpretation can possibly correspond to the meaning of the text, since the text can have no determinate or determinable meaning" (Hirsch 1967:5). Without a norm, there cannot be literary interpretation, but only interpretive anarchy. The guarantee of equifinal interpretations is, again, the assumption that there is a fixed code. Like the text-based models, Hirsch's model thus insists that meaning - in this case the authorial intention - is sharable thanks to shared linguistic conventions (Hirsch 1967:218).

From a contextualist position Hirsch's approach begs certain questions. Firstly, it is problematic how the author's intention can be identified by interpreters. In linguistics, intentionalism, as represented by speech act theory, for example, has been seriously questioned. It has been claimed that the identification of the intentions of speakers is never an easy and straightforward task. Our subjective assessment of what the speaker/writer possibly might mean in a particular situation, and under particular circumstances, is the only way we can know his/her intentions, unless, of course, we directly ask him/her. In the interpretation of literary

text the identification of writer intentions becomes even more problematic, for it is very rarely the case that the reader can consult the writer about his/her intentions. The writer's intention thus becomes the reader's construct.

However, this problem is in a way dealt with by Hirsch when he argues that the interpreter of a literary text can never have absolute certainty that his/hers is the correct interpretation; at most s/he can hope that, on the basis of "facts" gathered about the literary work and authorial meaning, this interpretation is a "probable" one (Hirsch 1967:173). The process of gathering and verifying facts is referred to by Hirsch as the reconstruction of the "intrinsic genre" of the literary text, which means that the interpreter tries to work out the general system of expectations, norms and conventions under which the text was originally produced (Hirsch 1967:81). In another context he refers to this process as "validation". By validation Hirsch (1967:175) refers to a process where the reader makes judgements of probability, on the basis of relevant evidence. This, in turn, will help the interpreter to channel his/her interpretations and increase the probability of him/her hitting on the correct interpretation of the text. However, at the same time, Hirsch gives no methods for arriving at correct or more probable interpretations, but argues that there is

no possible set of rules or rites of preparation [that] can generate or compel an insight into what an author means. The act of understanding is at first genial. (or a mistaken) guess, and there are no methods for making guesses, no rules for generating insights. (Hirsch 1967:203)

The interpretation of a literary text is first only a more or less "genial" one. This seems to suggest, as William Ray (1984:94) points out, that Hirsch provides us "only the certainty that an experienced, good reader will have a better chance of recovering the author's meaning than an inexperienced novice."

Nevertheless, Hirsch's tenet that the authorial meaning, which he, confusingly enough, also refers to as the "verbal meaning" of the text (see e.g. Hirsch 1967:38), is something that is stable, self-evident and pure, remains a problem. More particularly it could be argued that the problem is that Hirsch treats authorial meaning as primarily a fixed given which is independent of language, and only secondarily a product of language, where both the author's verbal meaning and the reader's interpretation are "limited by linguistic possibilities" (Hirsch 1967:47). On the important issue of whether meaning can be shared by author and reader, Hirsch thus refuses to acknowledge that authorial intention is, as Eagleton argues (1983:69) "a complex text, which can be debated, translated and variously interpreted just like any other".

Hirsch attempts to do away with this problem, too, by claiming that there is another dimension to meaning, the dimension of readerly "significances". If (verbal) meaning is what is unchangeable and self-identical in a text, then significance represents what is changeable and variant in it. Significance, in Hirsch's framework, thus refers to the different meaning experiences of readers or to "a relationship between that [verbal] meaning of a text and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable" (1967:8). Significances can vary and change in time, in different cultures, in different settings, in different readings even. It is noteworthy that the idea of significance also implies that the text itself is in a way open.

The construction of readerly significances and the recovery of the authorial meaning require two different kinds of activities from the reader. The search for authorial meaning involves interpretation, in other words, understanding of what the author means. The construction of readerly significances, in turn, involves criticism. In this activity readers judge the text according to some external criteria, relating it, for example, to their own experiences or to some historical phenomena (Hirsch 1967:140-143). Textual commentary, Hirsch argues (1967:140), usually involves both activities, but it is clear that, in his framework, interpretation is the primary activity, and only after that is criticism permissible, or even tolerable.

One thing that unites the New Critics and Hirsch is that, while both schools include a dimension of variation in their models - the idea of "Perspectiveness" in New Criticism and the notion of "significances" in Hirsch's model, they also dismiss this dimension as irrelevant or even incorrect. Both of them are thus equally normative: for New Critics it is the text which is the supreme norm in interpretation; for Hirsch the norm is the author's meaning. What makes Hirsch less dogmatic, though, is perhaps the fact that he does not see the reliance on authorial meaning as an absolute guarantee of correctness of interpretation, but claims that at its best this is only a guarantee of a more probable interpretation.

What differentiates Hirsch's model from the more recent author-based approach suggested by Knapp and Michaels (1982, 1987) is the importance he assigns (or rather, does not assign) to the literary text itself. For Hirsch the authorial intention is not available or 'contained' in the text but can be established only after an exegetic process and erudition. For Knapp and Michaels, in contrast, there is no gap between authorial intention and textual meaning that theoretical explanations should fill. In their view, "the meaning of a text is simply identical to the author's intended meaning" (Knapp and Michaels 1982:724). Further, they argue (1987:57) that texts contain "clues" to what the author might have intended by his text. Their argument looks like this:

There is no necessary relation between the meaning the author intends and any one of the meanings the author's words can have in the language - except for the one the author intends. And the relation there is not one of relative proximity but of identity . . . how are [the rules of the language] relevant at all? They are relevant not because they provide a range of possible meanings but because they provide clues to the meaning the author intends. The dictionary definition of "vehicle" is useful not because it determines the range of possible meanings "vehicle" can have but because it provides clues to what an English-speaking author might mean by "vehicle". (1987:57)

The shared conventions of language help the reader to hit on the 'correct' interpretation. It could also be argued that shared conventions and rules are in fact a necessary precondition that, as posited by Knapp and Michaels, that authorial meaning is contained in the text. This also implies that in this view interpretation must be seen as a process of discovery of what is within the text. As also David Lee points out (1990:168), a clear indication of Knapp's and Michaels's view is their use of the verb phrase *figure out* to refer to the process of interpretation (see Knapp and Michaels 1987:53 and 59). In Hirsch's approach, in contrast, interpretation is not a discovery, but a reconstruction.

To sum up, Hirsch's intentionalist model of interpretation takes the authorial meaning as the norm in literary interpretation. The author's intention is the unchangeable, self-identical and pure meaning of the text, and the readers have a moral obligation to try and reconstruct it. What differentiates Hirsch's model from, for example, Knapp's and Michaels's approach, Carver's psychological text-based model, and as will later be seen, from other implicitly author-based reading models, is that it does not claim that the authorial intention is embedded in the text itself. For Hirsch the author's meaning can be established only after amassing background data on the author's aims and attitudes, and even then the end-product is only the probable authorial meaning. Nevertheless, Hirsch also claims that literary texts have a dimension of meaning, the dimension of readerly significances. Significance, in Hirsch's approach, is the aspect of interpretation which can vary in time, place, culture and history, and which relates the text to something other than the author's intention. This dimension thus relates literary interpretation to context. Importantly, however, contextual meaning is not what interpretation should be about, but the aim in interpretation should be the recovery of the author's intention.

### 3.3 Reader-based models

In the late 1960's the text-based models of reading came to be challenged and largely replaced by models which emphasized the readers' active processing of texts rather than the supremacy of the texts over readers. About the same time a somewhat similar orientation emerged in literary studies: the examination of readers' activities gradually came to be accepted as a relevant field of study. Since then, the study of readers' responses has expanded radically and it nowadays includes a wide variety of different orientations. The section below will give one example of a psychological reader-oriented model and one example of a literary model which could be argued to have a reader-centered focus.

#### 3.3.1 A cognitive reader-based model: Kenneth Goodman

Reader-based models emphasize the readers' active role in the derivation of meaning in reading. The best-known cognitive model is perhaps that by Kenneth S. Goodman (see, for example, 1982). Another well-known model was developed by Frank Smith (1971). The strictly reader-based or top-down models are, however, rare (see Barnett 1989:13), and they have been generally replaced by models with a more interactive focus. In this section, Goodman's initially reader-based model will be discussed. As will be seen in more detail below, even in the early stages of the development of his model, Goodman shows signs of not being completely consistent in his reader-orientation. In fact, later on he suggested several revisions to his original model which made it more interactive in nature. However, because Goodman has been very influential in reading research, and because there are no other reading models which would be any more consistent in their emphasis on the reader's role in reading, Goodman's model will be discussed here.

In Goodman's model it is the readers who are considered dominant. The process of reading is driven by the reader's mind at work with the text, by means of the top-down strategies of processing that s/he uses "through which the reader attempts to reconstruct a message from the writer" (Goodman 1968:15). The reader first receives physical stimuli in the form of graphophonetic input, then scans the text and selects elements of the input on which s/he fixes his/her focus. Not everything that is on the page is relevant: according to Goodman (1975/1982:9), the reader attempts to select only a minimal amount of input, on the basis of which s/he then anticipates, or makes intelligent guesses of what is likely to follow in the text. Reading is thus basically a "psycholinguistic guessing game" (Goodman 1967/1982:33), where the reader's mind is actively and

selectively at work with the text, and not simply a perceptual process, where the reader would be bombarded by physical stimuli and where s/he would respond to them in a more or less reactionary and sequential way, as was the case with text-based models of reading.

In addition to guesswork or anticipation, the reader uses various other strategies to process the text and get to the meaning. In Goodman's framework (1975/1982:13), the reader confirms his/her guesses and, if necessary, corrects them or restarts the whole process if his/her guesses have been completely wrong. A similar emphasis on the anticipatory nature of reading is also characteristic of Frank Smith's work (1971). Like Goodman, Smith argues that, while reading for the over-arching purpose of meaning and relying on background knowledge, readers are constantly anticipating text content.

The selection of input is carried out on the basis of the reader's knowledge of the language structure and of his/her general experiential and conceptual background (Goodman 1967/1982:39). In other words, the reader's schemata are a powerful force driving and channeling reading. A good reader (Goodman 1967/1982:39) is one who is capable of making accurate first guesses on the basis of good selection techniques, control of language structure, broad experience, and increased conceptual development. As a consequence, in addition to being very active by doing a great deal of processing, the reader is also much more complex and 'intelligent' than the reader as a receiver of stimuli implied in the text-based models.

Curiously, however, the increased reader-power is somewhat neutralized by Goodman's firm assertion that there is one, and only one, meaning to the text, the author's message, and that this "message has been encoded by the writer in graphic symbols spatially distributed on the page". The reader's task is to reconstruct a message from the writer" (1968:15). The text is thus a container of meaning, and meaning is a reification, a definite message from the author which the reader, provided s/he is sufficiently developed linguistically, experientially and conceptually, is able to *reconstruct*. However, Goodman also admits that readers may not always succeed in their reconstruction of the author's message. The reason why the reader may fail in this task is that his/her background knowledge and the processing strategies are not been advanced enough. By admitting this, Goodman also admits that readers may well end up with different interpretations of the author's message.

The budding sensitivity towards variation in reading is even more evident in a more recent argument by Goodman which says that the social context of readers also has a certain role in reading. In his view (1975/1982:7)

language, reading included, must be seen in its social context. Readers will show the influence of the dialect(s) they control both productively and recep-

tively as they read. Further, the common experience, concepts, interests, views, and life styles of readers with common social and cultural backgrounds will also be reflected by how and what people read and what they take from their reading.

This extract is clearly a step away from a solely reader-based and cognitive orientation, and leads towards a more contextualist view which takes into account that readers are not solipsistic processors of text but, in their roles of readers, members of certain communities and possessors of various kinds of literacies.

Nevertheless, the social and cultural constraint in reading is not Goodman's primary focus of interest. In accordance with the Transformational-Generative model of language, to which Goodman evidently subscribes, at least in the early stages of his career, he is more interested in what lies behind behavior, rather than in the behavior itself. In reading, social and cultural variation is only performance in his view, which is interesting only to the extent to which it reflects the readers' competence (Goodman 1975/1982:8). It is competence that is vital for reading and, as a consequence, for reading research also. Thus, in spite the concessions to the role of the socio-cultural context in interpretation, the orientation of the Goodman model remains primarily cognitive.

In sum, compared to text-based models, Goodman's reader is more active, which shows, for example, in that, ideally, s/he uses minimal graphophonic, syntactic and semantic cues and relies more on prediction strategies, his/her knowledge of the linguistic structure, and more general experiential and conceptual background knowledge in the processing of the text. Goodman also acknowledges, at least in theory, that not all readers are alike: owing to differences in their background knowledge or social context, readers' reconstructions of the author's message may have different success rates. Nevertheless, it is also clear that Goodman considers that the ultimate aim in reading should be the reconstruction of the message encoded by the writer by means of graphic symbols. It could be argued then that while Goodman's model is reader-based, in that it emphasizes readers as active processors of texts and as sources of potentially plural interpretations, it is also to some extent text-based and author-based in that it posits that meaning is essentially the author's message embedded within the text, and that readers have a duty to attempt to reconstruct it.

### **3.3.2 A model of subjective interpretation: David Bleich**

In American reader-response criticism David Bleich (see e.g. 1975a, 1975b, 1978) and Norman Holland (see e.g. 1973, 1975, 1976) have insisted, among others, that interpretation is primarily a subjective matter. In their

models the focus is individual readers, and their idiosyncratic, psychological and subjective attempts to make sense of a literary texts. In Bleich's work, in particular, the role of the reader and of his/her subjectivity in interpretation is emphasized. For this reason, his approach, although it is in some respects extremist, will be examined below as an example of a reader-based model of interpretation.

Bleich's subjective model is supported by an insistence on the existence of a subjective paradigm, examples of which Bleich finds not only in literary studies but also in the natural and social sciences, and psychology. In this paradigm reality is regarded as purely subjective, so that "reality is invented and not observed or discovered by human beings" (Bleich 1978:11). For Bleich, reality is thus a fiction, instead of an objectively verifiable fact. Bleich does not claim that reality is necessarily different for all human beings, but argues, by making use of Thomas S. Kuhn's (1962) conception of scientific paradigms, that reality is collectively or communally subjective. This means that at any moment of time all perception takes place through a paradigm (Bleich 1978:11).

According to Bleich, interpretation consists of three stages. The first stage is that of the reader's initial perception of the text, or of the "perceptual initiatives we automatically take with a work" (Bleich 1978:96). This stage acts as a motivation for the next which consists of "more deliberate conceptualizations we try to synthesize from these initiatives". Moreover, the conceptualizations or "resymbolizations", i.e. the complex and conscious explanations of language use (Bleich 1978:66, 96), are to be distinguished from symbolizations, i.e. from "the use of language as simple denotation" (1978:65). In principle, readers both symbolize and resymbolize what they read, but the resymbolization is what is customarily considered to be literary interpretation. In Bleich's words (1978:66), "when we become aware that a symbolic objectification system is unsatisfactory, we try to resymbolize or explain it." The final stage in interpretation is that of negotiation, where subjective interpretations are negotiated on the basis of shared motives (such as aims, assumptions, expectations) of a community, and either accepted and transformed into new knowledge, or rejected (Bleich 1978:125).

Unlike Goodman's model, in which the text is seen to contain a number of cues, Bleich's model posits a passive and empty text. The text is only a stimulus and an interpretive trigger. In Bleich's words (1978:110-1), "the subjective paradigm, in emphasizing the distinction between real objects, symbolic objects, and subjects (i.e. people), holds that only subjects are capable of initiating action." The text as a real object can thus have as its only role in reading that it can be 'seen' by readers (Bleich 1978:111). In other words, the real object of the text functions as the basis of the reader's perception of it, but the text itself does not in any way con-

strain its interpretation. Contrary to what "the objective paradigm" (1978:98) claims, the text thus does not contain information or meaning which would ensure that every reader's perception of the text would be, if not the same, at least equifinal. These are only subjective societal choices "widely accepted as permanent categories of objective knowledge about literature" (Bleich 1978:265).

If the text is a passive sensory trigger, the individual reader is vigorously active and the only source of meaning in reading. Therefore, rather than studying the text, or the interaction of the reader with the text, Bleich looks at the reader's symbolization and resymbolization of the literary text; in his view

these two actions by the reader convert the text into a literary work. Therefore, discussion of the work must refer to the subjective syntheses of the reader and not to the reader's interaction with the text. (Bleich 1978:111)

In pedagogical contexts, with which Bleich is primarily concerned, readers' subjective syntheses are obtainable in the form of response statements, which he sees as records of the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences, such as "feelings, or affects, and peremptory memories and thoughts, or free associations" (Bleich 1978:147). Bleich considers the reader to be a constructor, who, on the basis of his/her personal and subjective experiences, assumptions, and expectations, builds up his/her own meanings, which may well be completely idiosyncratic. In this sense, his reader differs from Goodman's reader: while Goodman considered the reader as essentially a reconstructor of the authorial message, Bleich insists that the reader is much more free from the text. Paradoxically, Bleich's reader appears to be more of an author and creator, than a reader.

Another consequence of Bleich's subjective orientation is that he also dismisses the quest for authorial intention as a criterion of validity in interpretation. In the same way as he considers it futile and misguided to search for meaning in the text, he regards the task of finding out what the author intended as irrelevant. Contrary to what E.D. Hirsch claims, authorial intention cannot, in his view (1978:94), be established in an absolutely objective way. A task like this is for Bleich necessarily either personally or culturally subjective. Once more, he thus repeats his argument of the primacy of the individual, of the fact that in his model it is the individual who reconstructs the text on the basis of his/her idiosyncratic perception. The dismissal of authorial intention as a basis of correct interpretation also implies that Bleich does not regard literary texts as communicative (see e.g. 1978:95).

The role of community, and particularly the interface between the individual and the community, is problematic in Bleich's model. In spite

of his explicit acceptance of Kuhn's notion of paradigm as a theoretical basis for developing his own views of literary interpretation, he, in reality, ends up having a view which contradicts Kuhn's position. This has not gone unnoticed in the scholarly community. Steven Mailloux (1982), for example, has criticized Bleich strongly for his distortion of Kuhn's fundamentally social view of the development of science and knowledge. Mailloux's (1982:35) main argument against Bleich is that whereas for Kuhn "initial perceptions are communal, not individual with paradigms being shared by scientists (in the same community) from the start" in periods of normal science, for Bleich, agreement follows only after individual perception, and after individual perceptions are successfully negotiated and a consensus established. Consequently, whereas Kuhn sees the process as a one-way persuasion, Bleich conceptualizes it as two-way negotiation (Mailloux 1982:35fn.). Furthermore, Bleich argues that consensus or a paradigm is possible if and when the community has similar motives or aims (which he equates with both Kuhn's paradigms and Stanley Fish's communal reading strategies). When motives are different, different interpretations are generated, which explains to him why different historical communities have also produced different local interpretations of the one and the same text (Bleich 1978:213).

In every aspect of his model Bleich consistently underlines the primacy of the individual as an agent of change. In his words (1978:151) "the synthesizing of communal knowledge cannot begin without the substrate of individual subjective knowledge." This primacy of the individual is also evident in Bleich's devaluation of what he calls "subjective societal choices". He points out that his use of response statements in the study of literature has amply demonstrated that societally established categories are indeed fundamentally subjective. In his experience response statements "provide a collective means of helping to establish categories more responsive to changes in local motives for formulating new knowledge" (Bleich 1978:265). Bleich thus gives a great deal of power to individual readers and ratifies their potentially plural and often marginalized interpretations as valid and dynamic sources of new knowledge.

To recapitulate, as a consequence of Bleich's radical subjective orientation towards interpretation, his model ends up giving a great deal of power and freedom to individual readers. In his framework readers are not constrained by the text, the author's intention, or social conventions and norms. Readers are in principle free to do whatever they wish with the literary text, and this freedom Bleich considers a source of genuinely creative and personalized new knowledge, which can then contribute to the reshaping of new communal (and communally subjective) paradigms of knowledge. Thus, in spite of his support for social constructivist views of knowledge, he ends up arguing the opposite, by emphasizing the indi-

vidual's freedom to change and resist the established ways in which literature is read. However, as Mailloux has pointed out (1982:39), this lack of consistent intersubjective orientation, along with the claim that literary texts are essentially non-communicative, are some of the reasons why Bleich, as well as Holland, have remained marginal in the institutional study of literature. After all, if literary texts are essentially non-communicative, it is not easy to see why readers would select and read any particular text as opposed to another. At its extreme, this view could be taken to suggest that texts are essentially, or objectively all alike. Further, the assumption that texts are empty also radically devalues the role of language in interpretation: it implies that the linguistic and stylistic form of the text do not have any role in interpretation. And yet it can be easily shown that the language of the text has great deal of power to influence and constrain interpretation.

### 3.3.3 Summary

Both Goodman's reading model and Bleich's model of interpretation emphasize the role of the reader. In both models the reader is not a receiver of textual meaning but a constructor who drives the process of interpretation and makes meanings actively and intelligently. In Goodman's approach this shows in an emphasis on the important role the readers' linguistic, experiential and conceptual background knowledge as well as the role of the socio-cultural context as a source of variation in interpretation. In Bleich's radically subjectivist approach, in turn, this is apparent in the importance of collectively subjective paradigms and the readers' more idiosyncratic associations and feelings.

Both scholars grant a minimal role to the extra-textual context, even though at the same time they seem to be aware that they have not perhaps paid enough attention to it. This dawning awareness of situational, institutional and socio-cultural constraints on interpretation can perhaps be detected in Goodman's point of the readers' setting as a potential source of variation in reading, and in Bleich's uneasy equivocation between fully acknowledging the important role of intersubjectivity and his emphasis of the essentially subjective nature of interpretation.

However, there is also an important difference between the models. While Goodman agrees with Bleich that the reader is in a decisive role in interpretation, he also assumes that the ultimate goal in interpretation is the recognition of the author's intention, which he takes to be encoded in the text. It is the reader's duty to make an attempt to reconstruct this meaning, but it may be that he does not fully succeed, owing to his/her lack of sufficient background knowledge or restrictions caused by the socio-cultural context. In this sense, his model could be regarded as not

only reader-based, but also text- and author-based. In a way it could be argued that in his model there are signs of moving towards a more interactively based approach. While not denying the existence of authorial intention, Bleich, in turn, claims that there is no objective way in which the author's message can be confirmed. Therefore, the quest for authorial intention is futile. This different emphasis on the author in the models can perhaps be explained by the radically different conceptions of knowledge and reality held by the two scholars. Goodman is a representative of what Bleich refers to as the 'objective paradigm', which does not question the existence of an outside reality and the possibility that this reality can, with the right kind of methodology, be discovered, observed, and analyzed. In contrast, Bleich represents the opposite view which argues that reality is a subjective phenomenon, which, at its best, can be agreed upon socially, but can never be taken for granted nor anatomized objectively.

In a way, both models are radically less normative than text-based models or Hirsch's author-based model. In spite of the fact that Goodman cautiously includes a thesis of the reader's decoding of the authorial message, he nevertheless, in the same way as the much more radically individualistic Bleich, regards interpretation as involving much more variation and change than, for example, is suggested by the overly normative text-based models.

### **3.4 A community-based model: Stanley Fish**

In the past twenty years the American literary critic Stanley Fish has been very active in advocating an approach which argues that readers or reader communities, are the primary source of literary meanings. Fish has strongly criticized views which center on there having to be one universally accepted norm in interpretation. In particular, he has challenged the premisses of New Criticism, arguing, for example, that the Affective Fallacy should no longer be regarded as a fallacy but as a valid methodology of literary analysis. He has also questioned the intentionalism represented by, for example, Hirsch, which insists on the primacy of the author's meaning as a norm. What Fish recommends instead of these approaches is a model which claims that it is readers who make the texts in their experience of interpretation.

So far Fish's thesis sounds familiar: similarly to Bleich Fish seems to argue in the name of readers. However, there is an important difference between Bleich and Fish; and this is because, for Fish, readers are not free to generate whatever meanings they wish, but are conditioned by

communally-shared interpretive assumptions to generate only particular sets of meanings.

Before Fish's model is accounted for in more detail, some background on his work is needed. This is necessary, because the synoptic picture of Fish's views given above is not the whole truth about him. His community-based approach represents, in fact, only one stage in the strikingly vigorous and self-revisionary development of his thinking. At the beginning of his career, Fish began as a kind of "closet formalist" (see e.g. Fish 1980:7). In his earlier work (1970/1980), and, in particular, in the essay 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics', in spite of attacking the formalist tenet of the objectivity and normativity of the text, and claiming that reading is really a temporal and subjective event, he ends up arguing that the text has a formative role in its interpretation. The reader, the "informed reader", (who has the linguistic, semantic and literary competencies that a mature language user is expected to have (Fish 1970/1980:48))<sup>9</sup> is thus controlled not only by his/her competencies, but also by the author's text (Fish 1970/1980:46-7). There is then something both in the reader and in the text that constrains and channels interpretation, so that the reader's freedom in making meanings is not absolute and without limits, but only relative and moderate.

Moreover, Fish's equivocation between the temporal character of reading and the constraining function of the text can also be seen as a struggle to break away from the extremely influential formalist model of reading/interpretation as suggested by New Criticism, and as a step towards a more complete reader-focus.

In his later work, Fish does just this. He rejects his implicit allegiance to New Criticism and gives readers (as members of reading communities) the total control of the interpretive event. In doing this he has been extremely influential: many of his ideas have proved very fruitful, not the least of which is his move from *the* meaning of a literary text, to meanings of a literary texts, to readers' experiences with literary texts. But, at the same time, he has also proved to be a controversial figure, whose work has stimulated critical counter-arguments and debates.

Interpretation for Fish is a matter of individuals responding to literary texts according to the particular interpretive strategies that they have learnt in their lifetime. Furthermore, the strategies that readers use are not just any strategies, but strategies characteristic of and conventionalized in their particular interpretive community. Here is one formulation of this position:

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<sup>9</sup> The idea of competencies comes from the then fashionable theory of language as suggested by Transformational-Generative linguistics. At this stage of his career, the notion gave Fish a means of explaining why there is also uniformity in literary interpretation (see e.g. Fish 1980:5).

One can respond with a cheerful yes to the question "Do readers make meanings?" and commit oneself to very little because it would be equally true to say that meanings, in the form of culturally derived interpretive categories, make readers.

And, moreover,

if the understandings of the people in question are informed by the same notions of what counts as a fact, or what is central, peripheral, and worthy of being noticed--in short, by the same interpretive principles--then agreement between them will be assured, and its source will not be a text that enforces its own perception but a way of perceiving that results in the emergence of those who share it (or those whom it shares) of the same text. (Fish 1980:336)

Thus, meanings are not embedded or contained in texts, since texts themselves with their patterns are "themselves constituted by an interpretive act" (Fish 1980:165) and do not exist prior to interpretation. Neither are meanings created by solipsistic readers, but by readers who are powerfully constrained in their interpretive acts by shared strategies. The real source and authority in interpretations is then the community, which is made up of those who share similar interpretive strategies.

With the help of the notion of community, Fish is able to explain (in a non-formalist way) why there is both agreement and variation in interpretation: for him, agreement is the product of shared interpretive strategies of an interpretive community, and variation results from different interpretive strategies of different interpretive communities. It also explains how the same reader uses different interpretive strategies and thus makes different texts: s/he belongs simultaneously to different communities (Fish 1980:171-2).

It is important to note that, when speaking of interpretive communities, Fish does not want to refer directly to real collectives of individuals (unlike Holland or Bleich, for example, for whom interpretive communities often are just this: classrooms or literary critics), but to "a bundle of strategies or norms of interpretation that we hold in common and which regulate the way we think and perceive" (Fish 1980:322). In reality, he often seems to imply that interpretive communities do nevertheless consist of real individuals. This can be seen for instance in his explication of the notion of interpretive community. He points out that communities are themselves not stable, but grow and decline, as "individuals move from one to another" (Fish 1980:171). For example, Fish's choice of the expression 'move' suggests that an interpretive community is also a spatial entity, a collection of physically existing individuals, and not only an abstract collection of ideas, conventions, norms and assumptions about interpretation. Fish's interpretive community can simultaneously refer to certain particular sets of background assumptions and/or

to certain particular interpretive settings which consist of certain individuals with certain characteristics and assumptions under certain circumstances - like "all Christian readers of literature", as also Scholes (1985:153) points out.

This inconsistency is nevertheless not typical of Fish alone. The problem of how to narrow down contextual assumptions in language use has been notoriously difficult. Not many suggestions exist as to how to point out the sets of assumptions, norms, expectations and beliefs which are relevant to the interpretation of a particular language expression with any degree of exactitude. What happens most often is that analysts, like Fish, cannot help mixing up and shifting to and fro between very general socio-cultural background knowledge and very specific situational information in explaining language use. The problem with Fish is then perhaps not so much that he makes the notion of interpretive community expand and shrink to be able to explain different perspectives of literary interpretation, but the fact that he does not state it explicitly that the scope of interpretive communities, or of contextual constraints and assumptions, can be theoretically without bounds, and that it must be made clear what kinds of contextual constraints or assumptions are in question.

What Fish's adoption of the notion of interpretive community as a basis for meaning also implies, is that meaning is determinate. In Elizabeth Freund's words (1987:109), "meaning for him is always determinate and decidable because it is constrained by and built into a context of interpretation." So, what happens is that, after first having rejected the normativity of the text itself as a theoretical basis for his model, Fish ends up by introducing another and equally compelling interpretive norm, that of communal strategies. He does not give individual readers the right and power to resist conventional reading strategies, or, as Freund again puts it (1987:110), to engage with "the infinite regress of figuration, with doubt, uncertainty, or irony, with the strangeness and 'otherness' of poetry or language". What they can only do is to follow the public reading strategies, to read texts wearing the lenses of their respective interpretive communities. For Freund, this kind of a view or "the appeal to the imperialism of agreement can chill the spines of readers whose experience of the community is less happily benign than Fish assumes" (Freund 1987:111).

There have in fact been quite a few of those whose spines have chilled - one of them is also Robert Scholes. Whereas Freund refers to Fish's model as relying on "the imperialism of agreement", Scholes goes a step further and talks about Fish's totalitarian view of interpretation. (It is interesting how both critics thus underline the political implications of Fish's work and see it as a radical reduction of the individual's power and freedom and as a collapse of the 'democracy' of interpretation.) Again like Freund, Scholes (1985:153) also backs up his claim by explaining how in

Fish's model individuals are stripped of their power and integrity and forced to perceive and think only of what their interpretive community allows them to see. For Scholes this suggests a pessimistic and coercive picture of interpretation where the Big Brother of an interpretive community decides, even against the interests of its members, what is right for them.

Freund and Scholes are of course right in criticizing this strong version of Fish's thesis and in pointing out that a blind reliance on such a model leads to interpretive imperialism and totalitarianism. However, there is a weak version of the thesis as well which can be detected in Fish's own hedges. As was seen above, Fish does not claim that individuals belong to only one community by necessity, but that they can in fact move from one community to another or belong to several (and possibly conflicting) interpretive communities at the same time. So, Scholes's complaint against Fish as treating individuals as members of a single unified group, who act on the basis of a single set of interpretive assumptions, is in a way answered by Fish himself. However, it could also be asked whether Fish's suggestion of the existence of several interpretive communities in a way repudiates his main point: for if there are several sets of interpretive criteria available to any particular reader, how can it then validly be asserted that the community determines interpretation? Surely, in this case, the community is no more than the individual him/herself who can decide whatever interpretive strategies s/he uses.

Another problem with the notion of interpretive community is pointed out by Toolan. Like Scholes (1985:150), who complains that Fish's interpretive community is "vague, inconsistently applied, and unwor-kable", Toolan also criticizes Fish for a lack of an extended discussion on the nature of interpretive communities. He (1990:19) argues that "it seems too naïve to suppose that all community members are equally free to lobby for revisions in interpretations, since there is ample evidence that hierarchies of power, influence, patronage, intelligence, access to the channels of dissemination of views, and adeptness at and interest in persuasion exist." In Toolan's view, what Fish needs is an acknowledgement of the fact that criticism is not only the dialogue of interpretive communities, but also, and perhaps more importantly, "intellectual resistance and struggle" (Toolan 1990:19). In other words, Toolan's point is that interpretive communities should not be considered homogeneous and unified, but heterogeneous and internally divided, in the same way as linguistic communities are nowadays perceived to be.

It has been pointed out by Mary Louise Pratt (1987) that Fish's insistence on the supremacy of community in interpretation reflects a more general trend in linguistics, as well as to some extent in literary criticism. In her view this trend posits the existence of (sub)communities within so-

ciety, and analyzes the linguistic behavior of these communities separately from each other. As a consequence, linguists, similarly to Fish, have been overly interested in the ways in which language users conform to shared norms. Such an image of the social world is in Pratt's view no longer valid, as the world is becoming increasingly transnational, economically, politically and linguistically. This means that language is being used (in addition to within communities) "*across* lines of social differentiation, . . . between the dominant and dominated groups, between persons of different and multiple identities, speakers of different languages". To be able to account for such linguistic encounters, linguists should rely on a linguistics of contact, which focuses specifically on the "modes and zones of contact" between persons of plural linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Pratt 1987:58-60, see also Gumperz 1982:7).

Pratt also extends the same argument to Fish's literary criticism. What Fish's emphasis on homogeneous interpretive communities overlooks, Pratt argues (in the same vein as Toolan), is that language use involves struggles and negotiations for agreement and power, more than a submission to a set of communal norms and conventions. Language users, or readers of literature, are not thus as unified as Fish likes to think, nor do they necessarily have the right to belong to a certain interpretive community. As Fish himself points out, readers of literature may belong to several interpretive communities, or they may have to move from one community to another (as within the educational system), but what he is not aware of is that in some cases this may be a problem, culturally, linguistically, and politically.

What Fish's model also lacks is an acknowledgement of the fact that both the text and the individual have some autonomy and power. This exclusion of text-power and reader-power is actually a consequence of Fish's orientation towards reality. Judging by his theorizing about the status of text, reader, author and community in interpretation, it appears that reality is, for Fish, what is agreed upon as reality. What this implies is that, in addition to belonging to an interpretive community, which determines the ways in which we can interpret texts, we also belong to a perceptive community which determines the ways in which we see the world. Consequently, texts and readers cannot have any independent and objective status: quite simply, they are socially constituted. In other words, the reader is a product of a community, a *tabula rasa* on which the community inscribes an identity; similarly, a literary text is a text which, through social consensus, is labelled as one. This is how Fish himself formulates this idea,

I will make the point that since the thoughts of an individual can think and the mental operations he can perform have their source in some or other inter-

pretive community, he is as much a product of that community (acting as an extension of it) as the meanings it enables him to produce (Fish 1980:14.)

This tenet has important consequences in terms of interpretation. Firstly, as Fish himself points out, the problem of whether meaning is objective, a quality of the texts, or subjective, an experience of the reader, disappears. Instead,

the claims of objectivity and subjectivity can no longer be debated because the authorizing agency, the center of interpretive authority, is at once both and neither. An interpretive community is not objective because as a bundle of interests, of particular purposes and goals, its perspective is interested rather than neutral; but by the very same reasoning, the meanings and texts produced by an interpretive community are not subjective because they do not proceed from an isolated individual but from a public and conventional point of view (Fish 1980:14.)

Since readers are not the agencies and authorities of interpretation, the study of (individual) readers' experiences is not a valid enterprise either. As Freund (1987:108) points out, in addition to undermining the formalist position, Fish also undermines the grounds for reader-response criticism. Since readers can no more than parrot what communal strategies say, they will, provided they are in the same community, necessarily produce similar responses. What this means is that in Fish's model readers are not seen as psychological, autonomous, idiosyncratic and potentially creative beings.

Secondly, as texts, also, are empty of meanings, the search for textual meanings is futile. Fish argues (1980:165) that

the form of the reader's experience, formal units and the structure of intention are one, that they come into view simultaneously, and that therefore questions of priority and independence do not arise.

In other words, forms do not exist prior to the experience of reading, they are not independent of interpretation. Thus, in addition to ignoring readers' multiform, complex and even conflicting strategies as sources of change in interpretation (in the strong version of his thesis), Fish also ignores the constraining features of texts, their linguistic forms and patterns. Evidently, language is yet another social construct, which does not exist, no more than readers or texts, before it is summoned into life in interpretation. As a consequence, in the analysis of a literary text, it is not possible to only describe the text, since the description is already the product of an interpretation.

At the same time, Fish nevertheless feels somewhat uncomfortable with this claim, for he admits that he has no answer to the question of

what the interpretive act is actually an interpretation of (1980:479). He is thus not, as far as texts are concerned, prepared to commit himself fully to an absolute type of social constructivism which claims that there is strictly nothing out there in the world, until it is perceived by human senses and agreed upon. Nor is he ready, as was seen above, to accept the subjectivist position, which says that reality is different for every one of us, no more than the objectivist view which posits that there is an independent objective reality. His excuse for not being able to decide the ontological status of the text is that he feels that it cannot be solved, that no one can in fact provide a solution which would be universally acceptable (Fish 1980:479). Most probably, in the Fishian world, a universal solution is an impossibility, because all solutions, like literary interpretations, are products of different epistemological communities.

However, it has been argued by, for example, Ian MacKenzie (1990:120) that it can be easily shown that texts *do* provide resistance to our interpretive strategies. As an example, he mentions radically innovative works of art, which in a way create their own "authorial audiences", audiences which have to modify or change their interpretive strategies in order to be able interpret such resistant texts, and which in turn enable them to reinterpret other works as well. A similar point is made by Robert Scholes (whose views MacKenzie is actually echoing almost word-for-word); in Scholes's view, texts have a certain reality so that "a change in a letter or a mark of punctuation can force us to perceive them differently, read them differently, and interpret them differently" (Scholes 1985:161). In other words, Scholes, firstly, assumes that texts do exist, and, secondly, that they exist primarily because they are encoded in a particular language, in particular linguistic forms, which cannot be changed without affecting their interpretation as well.

Another problem related to the status of the text is whether or not it must be considered communicative. Relevant questions in this context are whether we have to accept the fact that the author has created the text with a particular intention in his/her mind, and whether we have to accept that texts may in fact communicate something from the author to readers. According to Fish, the answer to both of these questions is negative. In Fish's view, in spite of the fact that the writer has created the text for some purpose, any attempt to discover this intention is in vain, because interpretation is not the search for authorial meanings, but the creation of readerly/communal meanings. Analogously, texts cannot communicate anything particular to their readers, since the business of meaning-making belongs solely to readers. If, in contrast, we assume with Scholes, MacKenzie, Mailloux or Voloshinov, for example, that texts, particularly innovative texts, can be seen as "authorial" (as creating their own authorial audiences, MacKenzie 1990:127) and that they can be seen as

also communicating something of the author's initial intention (in addition to providing a stimulus for interpretive free play, Mailloux 1982:152-3), and, that the author, along with the reader and the text, is an integral member of the meaning-making act (Voloshinov 1987:105), it must be accepted that the author and his intention must not be overlooked in interpretation.

To recapitulate, Stanley Fish's community-based model of interpretation thus claims that the community, with its public and conventional interpretive strategies, is the primary agent and authority in interpretation. Even though Fish first grants readers the major role in interpretation as the makers of meaning, in the next moment he deprives them of that role, and converts them into mouthpieces of communal assumptions of interpretation. Similarly, the text and the language in which the text is encoded do not have any role in interpretation in the Fishian model. Like the reader, the text is also the product of an interpretive act; before the act of interpretation it simply does not exist. Or, if it does, it is simply, as in the literary pragmatics as represented by Sell, only black marks on paper, which of course leaves it open whether it would make any difference to interpretation if the text with its linguistic forms and patterns was changed.

An interpretation of Fish's model without any attention to his own hesitations and hedges (his inability to state what the status of the text is; his acknowledgement that readers can in fact belong to several interpretive communities simultaneously) suggests a monolithic and totalitarian view of interpretation. It emphasizes the absolute supremacy of communally shared conventions of interpretation or the supremacy of contextual assumptions characteristic of certain particular interpretive settings, and radically devalues the role of readers (as potential sources of idiosyncratic and creative new knowledge), of the text (as consisting of units and structures of linguistic constraints on interpretation), and of the author's message (as possibly communicating something to its readers). Like the normative formalist and intentionalist models he so vehemently criticizes, Fish's model ends up underlining an equally strong norm, that of the interpretive community. If, however, Fish's hedges are taken into account, it must be concluded that Fish, at least, is aware of the dangers of exaggerated determinism and interpretive totalitarianism.

In all fairness, there is a great deal in Fish's work that is valuable. Of particular importance to the study of literature is his insistence on interpretation not being a question of discovering the one and only correct meaning, but of creating meanings in different interpretive settings under different interpretive assumptions. Moreover, Fish is certainly right in that under powerful social constraints interpretations can conform to each other. Conversely, under different umbrellas of social and cultural con-

straint, interpretations can and do diverge from each other. In this way Fish's model convincingly explains the mechanisms through which interpretive assumptions determine interpretive practices. But it is important that it does this by denying the power of the individual readers to question and resist the conventions of their community and the power of the to constrain interpretation.

### 3.5 Interactive models

The section below surveys three models which claim (or, as in one case, appear to claim) that meanings arise from the interaction of the text and reader. In reading research there are nowadays a number of interactively-oriented models: examples of these are David E. Rumelhart's trend-setting model (1977) and Walther Kintsch's and Teun van Dijk's model (1978); as an interactively oriented literary model, mention could be made of Wolfgang Iser's theory of the aesthetics of reception (1978) (For a more comprehensive review of psychological interactive models see, for example, Samuels and Kamil 1984.)

In reading research interactive models grew out of a dissatisfaction with the bottom-up and top-down models, which argued that reading comprehension is a uni-directional process, starting from, and driven by, either the textual bottom or the cognitive top. For reading researchers interactive models seemed to offer a balanced view which admitted, at least in theory, that both the text and the reader have a role and that both bottom-up and top-down processing strategies are at play in reading. Similarly, for Iser, literary interpretation appears to be interaction between the text and the reader where both parties contribute something to the process.

Before the interactive models are examined, a degree of terminological clarification is worthwhile. The term interactive has been solidly established in reading research. However, it is often used in more senses than one, and this may cause misunderstandings. Firstly, as Grabe (1988:56) points out, echoing Widdowson's views (1979), reading as an interactive process can refer to a process where textual information is combined with the information that the reader brings to a text: there is then a dialogue between the text and the reader. All of the models discussed in this section are interactive in this sense, because they assume that in reading, the reader brings to the process his/her knowledge, experiences and assumptions and that the text supplies some information to the process, thus constraining its interpretation.

Secondly, the term interactive may also refer to a processing strategy, where different levels of processing interact with each other. For example, there may be interaction between the stage of lexical processing and that of its linguistic context: the interpretation of an individual word may depend on the interpretation of the whole sentence. In this sense only the first two models to be accounted for below can be regarded as interactive: both of them consider the processing of written language to be an interactive, parallel process rather than a linear one. Iser's literary model, in turn, is not interactive according to this definition, for it is not so much interested in the processing strategies and their dynamics but in the co-operation of the text and the reader in literary interpretation<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.5.1 An interactive model: David E. Rumelhart

For David E. Rumelhart (1977), reading is a process of understanding written language which starts with

a flutter of patterns on the retina and ends (when successful) with a definite idea about the author's intended message. Thus, reading is at once a "perceptual" and "cognitive" process. . . . Moreover, a skilled reader must be able make use of sensory, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information to accomplish his task. These various sources of information appear to interact in many complex ways during the process of reading (Rumelhart 1977:573-4)

Although compressed, this definition actually states the most important tenets of Rumelhart's model. Firstly, reading starts with the perception of the text; the text is thus a graphemic input which triggers reading and an information source which constrains reading. As a source of input and information the text thus has a certain objective existence. Secondly, in very much the same way as Information Transfer models or Goodman's model, the ultimate aim in reading, according to Rumelhart, is "a definite idea about the author's intended message". Thirdly, in addition to the graphemic or sensory source of information, the reader has several other, cognitive knowledge sources on which s/he can rely in reading. It is important to see that these knowledge sources interact continuously, so that lower level processing stages can be interpreted with the help of higher level stages. In this way, the reader also brings his/her background knowledge to the process.

In his argumentation for his model Rumelhart is careful to distinguish it from earlier bottom-up, or Information Transfer models. He ar-

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<sup>10</sup> In Grabe's view (1988:65) there is also a third sense in which the term 'interactive' is sometimes used. In this usage the term refers to the interaction of linguistic forms within a text. In his own studies Grabe (see e.g. 1984) has argued that writers deliberately use and manipulate different textual parameters in different text types and genres. A similar point has been made by Biber (e.g. 1986).

gues that there is a great deal of empirical evidence to suggest that reading is better characterized as a process whereby linguistic units are interpreted in relation to their linguistic context than a process evolving serially (Rumelhart 1977:578). He cites an impressive amount of experiments which unequivocally suggests to him that previous bottom-up (as well as top-down) models were incomplete. For example, he refers to studies which show that letter apprehension is faster if the letter is part of an existing word or if the unit in which it is embedded conforms to the rules of English spelling; similarly, he refers to studies which prove that if there is an error in word recognition, there is a tendency for readers nevertheless to choose a word which is of the same part of speech; and, finally, he cites studies which show that the semantic and linguistic context can influence the interpretation of a word (Rumelhart 1977:578-587). For Rumelhart, earlier models of information processing were unable to account for these results because of the formalisms with which the ideas were represented: they conceptualized reading as a linear process which advances from features to letters, to spelling patterns, to visual word representations to phonological word representations to word meanings and to word group meanings.

In Rumelhart's model the reading process starts with the entering into and registration of graphemic information in the visual information store (VIS). This is followed by a process where a feature extraction device selects the critical features from the VIS. These features are thus selected as sensory input to the pattern synthesizer. As its name suggests, the pattern synthesizer uses information from several sources: in addition to sensory information, it has information available on the orthography, lexicon, syntax, semantics and pragmatics of the language in question. All this information is used simultaneously by the pattern synthesizer to produce a "most probable interpretation" of the graphemic input (Rumelhart 1977:588). Moreover, the efficient processing of parallel information inputs requires a mechanism which is able to accept, store, and redirect the information needed. This mechanism is labelled by Rumelhart as the message center. The message center holds the information, received from the knowledge sources, in a temporary store. Each knowledge store constantly scans the message center for information and hypotheses relevant to its sphere of action. The message center thus provides an arena where the different knowledge sources can interact economically with each other. For example, the lexical knowledge source can confirm its own hypothesis of a particular word by interacting with the information provided by the syntactic knowledge source stored in the message center (Rumelhart 1977:589-590).

In comparison with earlier reading research models, Rumelhart's model represents an approach which no longer considers reading to be

driven by one particular agent or entity. While for example the LaBerge and Samuels model insists that the text is the driving force in reading, Rumelhart emphasizes that there are not one, but two entities involved, and interacting with each other, in reading, the text and the reader. The text functions as a perceptual trigger and a source of information, while the reader processes the text in a highly complex way. The process of reading is characterized by the co-operation of the two.

In the same way as LaBerge and Samuels, Carver, Knapp and Michaels, and (to a certain extent) Hirsch and Goodman, Rumelhart assumes that the written text is communicative. It is communicative in the sense that it encases a message from the author. Consequently, Rumelhart, too, appears to assume that the goal in reading is the identification of the author's message. However, his point that this identification is a matter of producing the most probable interpretation of the text seems to imply that for him reading is not a straightforward process of discovery, but, again, a process of construction which does not necessarily end up with the one and only 'correct' meaning of the text. The possibility of variation in interpretation is further emphasized in Rumelhart's model by the acknowledgement that readers also rely on "information about the current contextual situation", i.e. on pragmatic information in reading. In the same way as with the other information sources mentioned by Rumelhart, this information may also shape reading experiences and cause variation in interpretation.

### **3.5.2 A model of text comprehension and production: Walther Kintsch and Teun van Dijk**

Walther Kintsch's and Teun van Dijk's (1978) model of text comprehension and production is another example of the interactive orientation in psychological reading-related research. Unlike all previous reading research models we have looked at so far, their model is more concerned with text comprehension than with reading. By comprehension, Kintsch and van Dijk refer to the listener's/reader's cognitive operations with which s/he works out the semantic structure of spoken or written discourse. They distinguish text comprehension from reading, which, although they do not state it explicitly, most probably means the initial perception of the text (see e.g. Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:364). Further, despite the fact that text comprehension is "in the normal case a fully automatic process" (1978:372), it sometimes requires more conscious cognitive operations from the reader.

Kintsch and van Dijk consider text comprehension to be a complex, cyclical and hierarchical process of information reduction which evolves partly serially, partly in a parallel fashion. The model lists three

fundamental operations. Firstly, it assumes that the comprehension process starts with the construction of a text base. The text base, or the microstructure of the text, is a coherent list of propositions which are related to each other either explicitly, by referential links, or implicitly, through the reader's inferences. (The implication is here that the propositions are both the explicit propositions expressed in the text and the implicit propositions which can clearly be inferred on the basis of the text.) Kintsch and van Dijk argue that the text base represents the "full meaning of the text", by which they mean that it is an economical and readable paraphrase of the propositions of a text and their relations to each other.

However, the text base represents only the initial stage in text comprehension, by which a deeper understanding of the text can be constructed. The second stage is the organization and condensing of the information of the text base into the gist, or the macrostructure, of the text. The macrostructure is the semantic deep structure of discourse, and it characterizes the discourse as a whole. The microstructure and the macrostructure of the text are linked up to each other by macrorules, which reduce, organize, and condense the text base information by, for example, deleting irrelevant micropropositions from the macrostructure, generalizing on the basis of relevant micropropositions, or inferring a more global fact from relevant micropropositions. Discourse can be claimed to be well-formed or coherent only if both of the semantic levels are coherent, i.e. if its sentences and propositions at the microlevel are connected, and if these propositions are organized also at the macrolevel.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, text production is a process where new texts are constructed on the basis of "the memorial consequences of the comprehension processes" (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:363-6).

In the model, text comprehension is characterized as the interaction of the text and the reader. Kintsch and van Dijk (1978:372) point out, for example, that "readability cannot be considered a property of the texts alone, but one of the text-reader interaction". In this interaction the power of the text lies, not so much in its language, but in the information it contains and its schematic structure. If a text has a conventional schematic structure, as in the case of a story or psychological research report, it gives the reader a set of criteria by which s/he can determine what type the particular text represents and whether "a story or argument is correct or not" (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:366). More technically, conventionalized text types suggest to readers the relevance of certain particular schemata. With their help, the reader is able to recognize the units of the text (as in

<sup>11</sup> The characterization of discourse as a two-levelled semantic unit consisting of a surface and deep structure, clearly reflects the views of language advocated by the then influential Transformational-Generative linguistics. Kintsch (1974:15) points out this connection: he writes that his view of the text base as a basis on which natural discourse can be generated relies on generative semantics, which has provided the actual rules of derivation.

the case of research reports, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) and to determine what information in each unit is relevant for the purpose of constructing the macrostructure of the text (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:373).

The power of the reader in the model derives, firstly, from the fact that, in addition to consensual schemata, or, in Fish's words, shared interpretive conventions, the reader may have more unconventional and idiosyncratic schemata. By this Kintsch and van Dijk want to emphasize that the reader's individual goals also constrain comprehension. In addition, the reader's, idiosyncratic as well as socio-culturally shared, goals are important because they ultimately control the process of forming the macrostructure of the text. In Kintsch's and van Dijk's words (1978:373), "the schema determines which micropropositions or generalizations of micropropositions are relevant and, thus, which parts of the text will form its gist." The reader not only powerfully directs comprehension by his/her goals, but also shapes and constructs the information of the text. S/he is able to do this because, in addition to having a number of actual propositions, the text has missing propositions, or gaps which different readers may fill in different ways by inferencing. In Kintsch's and van Dijk's view (1978:365) this is the process whereby "language users are able to provide, during comprehension, the missing links of a sequence on the basis of their general or contextual knowledge of the facts".

Individual reader goals and the indeterminacy of the text explain why there may be different understandings of one and the same text. Barnett points out (1989:28) that Kintsch and van Dijk thus acknowledge that instead of producing a replica of the author's intended text, the reader produces another text, one that may reflect the author's text in varying degrees. This recognition of possible variation in text comprehension also underlies Kintsch's and van Dijk's discussion of the limitations of their model. They (1978:392) point out, for example, that "the theoretical rules and constraints used to generate coherent text bases" are not identical to the operations and strategies of understanding authentic discourse. It is very important to see that actual readers in a specific pragmatic and communicative context may accept a piece of discourse as appropriate even though it is not formally coherent. This pragmatic dimension of text comprehension is, nevertheless, not part of the model. However, the writers point out that in this respect the model clearly needs to be elaborated (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:392).

It may be that even though the Kintsch and van Dijk model is admittedly sophisticated and more relativistic than its reading research predecessors, it may not be so readily applicable to texts which have a definite and traditional schematic structure only. It may also function with texts which are generally read with a uniform goal in mind. In fact,

Kintsch and van Dijk (1978:373) point out that research on comprehension should indeed concentrate on texts which are read with clear goals shared within a reading community. According to them, the reason is that in cases where "the schema that controls the macro-operations is not well defined, the outcome will be haphazard, and . . . no scientific theory, in principle, can predict it" (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:374). In other words, mainly for reasons of research economy, Kintsch and van Dijk rule out texts which do not conform to certain definite schemata. This may imply that the comprehension of literary texts, except perhaps traditional stories which often have a clear-cut and conventionalized structure, are not so readily analyzable with the model. This is because more unconventional, modernist, or avant-garde texts may open up a plurality of schemata, which would make the examination of comprehension processes clearly rather complicated.

Kintsch and van Dijk focus on schematically conventional texts for another reason, too, and this is that they illustrate very well their fundamental tenet of the underlying coherence of texts. As was pointed out above, for them coherence is the outcome of the connectedness of the surface level propositions of a discourse, and of the more deep or global organization of these propositions. Kintsch and van Dijk take coherence to be a pervasive quality of texts and argue that one proof of this coherence is that text information can be reduced into a kernel statement.

There are a number of comments that could be made on this view of coherence. Firstly, it could be asked whether even the comprehension of conventionally structured texts is always necessarily predictable? Could it be that, in some cases and contexts, they could be understood, not as coherent, but as ambiguous, ambivalent, or even incoherent? And the same goes for Kintsch's and van Dijk's assumption that actual texts can be translated into text bases, in the form of coherent lists of propositions, in an objective way. In this case, too, what is involved may be a subjectively or culturally constrained process of interpretation, rather than that of meaning derivation. In their many hedges about their model, Kintsch and van Dijk could perhaps be interpreted to voice a similar doubt. In a way their hesitations could be taken as a questioning of their TG-inspired conviction that even the most incoherent-appearing surface structure can be converted in a universally replicable way into a coherent deep structure, and as a shift towards a more performance-oriented and functionalist view of text comprehension. In this latter view, instead of focussing on coherence of propositions and on gist-formation, the analysts would be more interested in looking at "what is readable for whom and why" (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:393), in examining the comprehensions of particular target groups in particular social and cultural settings.

Another problem in the model is the meagre role it assigns to language in text comprehension. As was pointed out above, Kintsch and van Dijk note that propositions can be transformed, other than in conventional ways, in various "essentially arbitrary and unpredictable ways". These variations they consider, however, only "optional transformations" of essentially the same core meaning and argue that they are motivated by pragmatic and stylistic concerns. These transformations can be made on the level of the microstructure, macrostructure, or the schematic structure. They include such operations as reordering, explication of coherence relations among propositions, lexical substitutions and perspective changes (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:375). However, because of the optional status of these transformations and because they would further complicate their already complex model, Kintsch and van Dijk do not deal with them at all. What this implies is that Kintsch and van Dijk rule out surface structure from their model and concentrate wholly on the operations that they assume take place on the semantic level of the deep structure, i.e. "the predictable, schema-controlled transformations achieved through macro-operations" (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:375). In principle, they imply then that meaning is primarily the product of semantic operations, and only secondarily a product of language, of transformations on the surface level. Like many other cognitive models they thus marginalize the power of the language of the text, emphasizing, instead, its informational content and schematic structure as forces constraining interpretation.

In spite of its limitations, Kintsch's and van Dijk's model is clearly a new opening in reading research. It explicitly departs from the tradition of the discipline in that it no longer presupposes that the ultimate goal and norm in reading is the authorial message encapsulated in the text which the readers must either discover or attempt to reconstruct. Instead, their model argues that the reader and the text both provide something to, and interact in, the construction of text meaning. On the one hand, comprehension is constrained by the schematic structures suggested by, and information within, the text. On the other hand, it is directed by reader goals and inferences. This has the implication that there may be variation in the way in which one and the same text is comprehended. In theory, Kintsch and van Dijk also note that the pragmatic, social and cultural context may affect comprehension. However, the role of context remains a marginal issue for them, so that comprehension appears in their model as primarily a decontextualized process taking place between the text and the reader's mind only.

A similar relativism can be detected in other recent and schema-theoretically oriented models of reading. For example, the reading/writing model developed by David Pearson and Robert Tierney (1984) suggests that, depending on goals, knowledge and prior experience, the

reader constructs or "composes" an interpretation of the text, which may or may not be in accordance with what the author intended. In these approaches, text meaning no longer seems to be embedded in the text, but is something which truly emerges out of the reader's interaction with the text.

### 3.5.3 A model of reception as interaction: Wolfgang Iser

Wolfgang Iser (e.g. 1974, 1978) is a representative of the German school of *Rezeptionsästhetik*. This approach entails that he is primarily concerned with the development of a theory of aesthetic response. In his view, reading is "the essential precondition for all processes of literary interpretation" (Iser 1978:20); consequently, he concentrates on the analysis of the components of reading: i.e. the text, reader, their interaction, and the conditions of this interaction.

A fundamental assumption in Iser's model is that the literary work is a two-sided entity. It has

two poles which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author's text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader. In view of this polarity, it is clear that the work itself cannot be identical with the text or with the concretization, but must be situated somewhere between the two. (Iser 1978:21)

Consequently, the literary work is neither objective nor subjective, but both, that is, 'verbal' and 'affective', or virtual. And because it is virtual it is also dynamic: the reader receives it by composing it.

In this view the author's text has an important function in the reading process: it is the trigger that initiates the construction of the aesthetic object (1978:107), and a constraint which channels this construction. In Iser's words (1978:25) "the literary text contains intersubjectively verifiable instructions for meaning-production", which guide our reactions and prevent them from being arbitrary (1978:21). Iser does not specify exactly what these instructions are exactly but refers to text-embedded schemata as suitable for picturing the effect of the text on the reader. The text's 'effect', in this context means "a potential effect [of the text] that is realized in the reading process"; it is thus not a property of the text or the reader only (Iser 1978:ix). Iser notes that, in spite of the fact that the text can mobilize a variety of different subjective responses, textual schemata, such as social norms and contemporary and literary allusions, give shape to the knowledge which the text has invoked, and provide a somewhat unifying framework within which the text can be perceived (Iser 1978:143-4). The text thus has certain power in determining the composition of its meaning.

But this is only half of the picture, for, in addition to its layers of determination, the text has also its places of indeterminacy which in their own way affect the composition of meaning. Iser refers to them as blanks. A blank refers to "a vacancy in the overall system of text". Furthermore, it is the blanks that trigger the interaction of textual patterns. By this Iser means that literary texts often contain various perspectives or segments which are not explicitly connected to each other, but which, under the assumption of textual coherence, must be interpreted as connected. Thus, the blanks also trigger the reader's processes of meaning-making, which Iser calls "ideation" (Iser 1978:182).

Iser's blanks could be taken to be an attempt to add a dimension of variability into the model. In fact, Iser grants a certain amount of freedom to the reader: he says, for instance, that the "very indeterminacy [of the text] increases the variety of communication possible" (Iser 1978:167). Nevertheless, in the next moment, Iser hurries to add that too much freedom for the reader is tantamount to there being no communication between the text and the reader, to nothing being transferred from the text to the reader. For this reason, the reader needs to be controlled in some way by the text. Only then, Iser argues, can the text-reader communication be successful.

The reader is thus in a position where s/he is, on the one hand, controlled and constrained by the text and by the assumption of textual coherence, and where s/he is given a certain amount of freedom to fill in the gaps between text segments, on the other. Another way in which Iser attempts to say the same thing is his notion of the Implied Reader. The Implied Reader is an abstraction of a reader implied by the text: it is an image of the potential addressee of the literary text which the author has in his mind when writing the text. On the level of the text this is to say that there are, in the text, "a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text" (Iser 1978:143). The Implied Reader - as certain kinds of textual elements and structures - thus also shapes and constrains the possibilities of interpretation. At the same time, Iser acknowledges the fact that the real reader may not actualize the implicit "response-initiating structures" but spin out something quite idiosyncratic.

Nevertheless, whatever the guise that the reader assumes - whether s/he is textually constrained or not - the process of reading remains the same. The reader's task is to attempt, through successive phases of gestalt formation, a synthesis of the literary work. The reader is, to use Iser's own image, a traveller in a stagecoach,

who has to make the often difficult journey through the novel, gazing out from his moving viewpoint. Naturally, he combines all that he sees within his memory and establishes a pattern of consistency, the nature and reliability of

which will depend partly on the degree of attention he has paid during each phase of the journey. At no time, however, can he have a total view of that journey. (Iser 1978:16)

In this way Iser builds up an image of reading where the reader has to compose his/her interpretation on the basis of phases where s/he has focussed on a particular perspective of the literary work, by attempting to work out its meaning in relation to the perspectives already seen, and by filling in the gaps between the various perspectives.

The reader proceeds gradually, in the flow of reading, to higher and higher levels of coherence, where textual elements are fitted into more general and essential frameworks for meaning. As, for example, William Ray (1984:35) has pointed out, this process of "ideation" clearly relies on the hermeneutic and semiotic notion "that significance requires the integration of a lower-level meaning into the next higher level". At the end of this process there is the level where the whole text, all of its segments and perspectives, are seen to be a coherent whole.

The ultimate aim of reading is thus the establishment of coherence. As in the case of Kintsch's and van Dijk's model, this claim could be criticized as an attempt to homogenize texts as entities which ultimately have a determinable semantic unity. Such an idea of underlying unity works well with traditional novels, for example, which, incidentally, as Freund points out (1987:144), have been a source of inspiration for Iser in the construction of his model. However, the application of the model to more unconventional literary texts may be more difficult. Or, as Eagleton (1983:82) puts it, "it is always worth testing out any literary theory by asking: How would it work with Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*?" In Eagleton's view, the answer in Iser's case would no doubt be: not too well. And the reason for this is that it is very difficult to interpret avant-garde texts with their "tantalizing glide of signs . . . and the provocative glimpses of meanings" (Eagleton 1983:82) as coherent systems of connected perspectives.

In spite of the fact that Iser seems mainly to be dealing with reading as if it took place in a microcosm of the reader and the text only, as a process of ideation, there is also a social and historical dimension in his model. Firstly, his notion of the Implied Reader could be considered an attempt to include social constraint as a force affecting the interpretation of texts: as the Implied Reader can be seen to be a certain type of response inviting structures within a text, it could be argued that, in order to make his structures meaningful and relevant for readers, the writer has to be aware of his/her audiences' expectations. And, conversely, readers must also share with the writer at least some interpretive strategies to make sense of the text. In this way the literary text becomes a shared social activity, where meanings are constrained by the socially shared assumptions of the nature and structure of literary texts. Secondly, Iser

claims that, in addition to constructing a unified mental image of the literary text, the reader may also learn something new about reality. The literary text recodifies social and historical norms, and this recodification enables the readers, if they are contemporary ones, "to see what they cannot normally see in the ordinary process of day-to-day living", and, if they belong to subsequent generations of readers, "to grasp a reality that was never their own" (Iser 1978:74). In this way, literary text can be a means of learning.

The inclusion of a social and historical dimension into the model implies that Iser is at least aware that reading is not only interaction between the text and the reader's mind, but also between the text, reader, and the context of reading. In addition, the fact that Iser notes that textual schemata and cultural assumptions are a constraining force in reading, signals that Iser is not fully unaware that reading can be controlled by extra-textual forces as well. Nevertheless, similarly to the Kintsch and van Dijk model, this kind of interaction is not accentuated, and it remains more a marginal than a central concern of the model.

In Iser's model, meaning thus arises from the interaction between the author's text and the reader. Meaning is not a quality of the text only, no more than it is the product of what the reader does. Meaning is dynamic, it is "the product of an interaction between the textual signals and the reader's acts of comprehension" (1978:9). It is simultaneously constrained by the author's text and composed by the reader's mental operations. It is primarily imagistic and anti-referential, and only secondarily referential in that it may tell us something previously unknown to us about reality. Moreover, meaning is part idiosyncratic (in that the gaps of the text can be filled in various ways), part consensual (in that the schematic structures of the text direct interpretation to similar ends). The role of the historical, cultural and social setting as well as the actual situation of reading are, in contrast, only marginal sources of influence in Iser's theory.

In sum, Iser's is a holistic model, which attempts to build up a balanced view of the complex forces and processes of literary interpretation. In spite of its ambitious theoretical aim of accommodating both variation and uniformity of reading, the model nevertheless relies heavily on the notion of a stable text. Unlike Fish (who, incidentally, has strongly criticized Iser for this, see e.g. Fish 1981:7), Iser takes the text to be a given. For Iser the text is the (in principle unchangeable) trigger and constraint of reading. In the end, it could perhaps be asked whether the interaction that Iser so anxiously advocates is really the working together of the text and reader, or whether it would be more justified to claim that in his framework the text is, after all, the more powerful partner which ulti-

mately sets the limits on how far the reader can actually go in the interpretation.

### 3.5.4 Summary

All of the three models examined in this section could be considered to be interactive in that they appear to posit that in interpretation both the text and the reader contribute something to and interact in meaning making.

However, in the analysis of Rumelhart's model it was very soon found out that for him interaction does not entail that the text and the reader are equally important or powerful. Even though, in principle, the reader has an active role as the one who computes the text in a highly complex series of parallel processing, s/he is, as far as meaning making is concerned, submitted to the authority of the text. The text encapsulates the author's message, and the ultimate aim in reading should be the construction of the most probable interpretation of the author's message. In this respect, for Rumelhart, in the same way as for LaBerge and Samuels, Carver, Knapp and Michaels and Goodman, the text is the criterion of interpretation.

A similar dynamics of interpretation is proposed by Iser's interactive approach. Even though Iser apparently claims that literary interpretation is best characterized as a process of interaction between the text and the reader, he, too, in reality implies that the text is the more important party. In spite of its places of indeterminacy, which the reader must fill through a process of inferencing, it still has its structures of determination which powerfully constrain the reader's activities. Nevertheless, neither Rumelhart nor Iser seem to assume that the reader's interpretation of the text is a discovery of the author's text-embedded meaning, but they see it as a reconstruction or a realization of the author's message/text. This means that the reader's reconstructed meaning is not, by necessity, identical to the author's intention.

In the same vein, for Kintsch and van Dijk meaning does not equal the author's text-immanent intention, no more than its discovery is for them the ultimate goal of text-comprehension. In their view, too, text comprehension is interaction between the text and reader. In comparison to both Rumelhart and Iser their model could, however, be considered to grant readers more genuine power in interpretation. This is because they argue that interpretation can also be constrained and directed, by not only the text, but also by the reader's idiosyncratic goals. Potentially different reader goals also explain why there is variation in text comprehension.

The insistence on potentially plural reader goals could be taken as an indication that Kintsch's and van Dijk's model is more properly interactive than Rumelhart's or Iser's even though it does not give any empir-

ical evidence for the claim that text comprehension is characterized by the co-operation of the text and the reader. For Kintsch and van Dijk interpretive criteria thus appear to be simultaneously textual and experiential, objective and subjective, static and changeable. In short, it appears that for these scholars meaning is no longer an objective quality of the objective text, but a dynamic event which emerges from the active and goal-directed reader at work with the text.

What is problematic in all of these three models is that, even though they appear to be at least aware that interpretation is also affected by the non-linguistic context (pragmatic, social and cultural), none of them fully takes the role of context in interpretation fully into account. It remains a marginal issue. Interpretation is primarily perceived as a cognitive activity which takes place in a social vacuum, between a text and a reader. This shows very clearly in for instance how these theoreticians quite consistently refer to the (individual) reader, instead of groups of readers with various linguistic, educational, social and cultural backgrounds.

The lack of emphasis on the situational, social and cultural context of reading/interpretation could be seen a shortcoming in the interactive models. The view of the interpretive process given in these models remains limited as important, text-external forces shaping and constraining interpretation, are marginalized or even ignored.

### **3.6 Social-interactive models**

In the writing and reading research of the 1980's, there was a shift of interest from things cognitive to things social (see e.g. Nystrand 1989:66, Gee 1992:31). Researchers working within these fields, instead of concentrating on the processes of reading and writing, started to become increasingly interested in the ways in which social context, writer and reader goals and purposes, the setting and context of reading, for example, affect the writing and reading processes. New approaches emerged, approaches which saw reading not only as interaction between the reader and the text, but also as social, contextualized, or dialogic in nature. In recent sociolinguistic reading research (see e.g. Harste, Burke and Woodward 1982:118), and socio-psycholinguistic research (see e.g. Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1983) it has even been suggested that, in the same way as in the case of speech research, reading research should not separate the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic dimensions, but that attempts should be made to bridge the gap between them and to incorporate the interpersonal context with the intrapersonal one. In this way reading would be a so-

ciopsycholinguistic process which involves not only the text and the mental setting (the reader's mind), but also a language setting (the situation and culture) and the use of strategies.

Again, similar approaches can be located in literary studies, too. Importantly, some researchers have suggested that literary interpretation always takes place in a social and cultural context, and that this context powerfully constrains what readers can make out of the texts. At the same time, there has been a return to the text: it has been argued that the text, too, has certain power to change our reading habits.

This section will examine one reading research model and one literary approach to interpretation which both share the assumption that interpretation is a social and interactive process.

### **3.6.1 Writing and reading as a social-interactive process: Martin Nystrand**

Martin Nystrand's model of writing is a recent example of an approach which centers on the idea that both writing and reading are social, interactive and reciprocal processes.

Nystrand's (1989:72) claim that writing and reading are social and dialogic processes of interaction means that he considers neither of them a solitary process where an individual writer attempts to give a logical and linguistic form to his/her thoughts, or where an individual reader attempts to unravel the information packed in the text. Instead of a solitary writer/reader, Nystrand gives a picture of a writer and reader actively interacting and negotiating the meaning of a text. More specifically, the writer and the reader interact in the sense that they exchange meaning, or transform shared knowledge, and in the sense that they "play reciprocal and respective roles in the mutual enterprises of written discourse". Written discourse is thus a shared social activity, and the guiding principle in both writing and reading is that writers and readers "continuously seek to orient themselves to a projected state of convergence between them". This means that

the respective purposes of the writer and reader intersect . . . , the meaning that the reader gives to the text is a unique result---a distinctive convergence or interaction---of writer and reader purpose. (Nystrand 1989:74).

In other words, according to Nystrand, text comprehension occurs when writer and reader purposes are similar, or when they at least do not exclude each other. In more practical terms this means that writers, when writing, attempt to elaborate and monitor their texts according to what they assume that readers know and expect, and readers, when reading, predict the text according to what they assume about the writer's pur-

pose. Quoting Ragnar Rommetveit (see Rommetveit 1974:63), Nystrand crystallizes this idea in yet another way: in his words, "we write on the premisses of the reader [and read] on the premisses of the writer". Reading and writing are thus characterized by a fundamental conformity and convergence, by a strive towards the establishment of a Temporarily Shared Social Reality (Nystrand 1989:74-75).

Following Bakhtin and Medvedev (see e.g. 1985:152), Nystrand (1989:78) also conceptualizes text meaning as a social construct, an ideological bridge which is built in the interaction between the writer and the reader. In terms of writing, Nystrand's position implies that writing is necessarily affected by its context of eventual use or by the way the text is used by a reader. To put it otherwise, what affects the meaning of the text is not only the writer's situation and purposes, but also the reader's purposes, the time and place of reading, and the cultural context of reading. Ideally, if the text is to be understood at all by the reader, "it must not exclude the reader's situation of use" (Nystrand and Wiemelt 1991:30). In practice this means that the writer must take care of how s/he establishes a mutual frame of reference (by signalling adequately the genre and topic of his/her text, for example), and how s/he elaborates points which may cause problems for readers. Obviously, texts thus have an important role in guiding readers as to what the writer's purposes may be, in constraining the number of possible readings and in anchoring the text into a certain tradition and genre (Nystrand 1989:78-80).

In spite of the fact that readers, like writers, can bring their own purposes to the text, they are nevertheless constrained, not only by the text, but also by their own cognition and, like writers, by the "cultural conventions as they apply to word meaning, syntax, genre; and . . . by reciprocity between the readers and writers, which obliges the readers to interpret the text in terms of what they can make of the writer's own purpose" (Nystrand 1989:39). Another formulation of this position is the following:

the limits of text meaning are determined not only by objective properties of text and not only by reader's cognition, but also by reciprocity between writers and their readers that binds the writer's intention, the reader's cognition, and properties of text all together in the enterprise of text meaning. In other words, meaning is between writer and reader. (Nystrand 1989:78)

There is an almost moral obligation for the readers, too: like the writer, they have to make a conscious effort to work out the writer's context of production and the ways in which it affects text meaning. It could be argued that Nystrand, in spite of his radical move in treating writing and reading as social, is nevertheless still firmly attached to the mainstream tradition in reading research in claiming that in reading there is a mean-

ing which can, or must, be shared by the writer and his/her readers. Even though this meaning is "a hybrid, reflecting the negotiated interests and purposes of both writer and reader" (Nystrand and Wiemelt 1991:40), there is a limit to how hybrid-like it can be.

The argument that readers have to read with the (assumed and probable) writer purposes in mind, rules out the possibility of completely subjective, idiosyncratic or resistant readings. This kind of reduction of the reader power is also emphasized in Nystrand's model by its insistence on communicative homeostasis and convergence of writer and reader purposes as the overarching principle guiding written communication (Nystrand 1989:81). The problem here is not so much that homeostasis and co-operativeness could not be the principle (for, as in face-to-face interaction, it often is), but that there may be cases where writers may deliberately produce texts that are difficult, obscure or ambiguous, and, vice versa, there may be cases where readers read divergently and unconventionally. In spite of his good intention in reminding his readers that real-life writing and reading are something totally different than writing and reading at school (Nystrand 1989:71), Nystrand may have nevertheless forgotten that, outside the composition classroom, real writers and readers may have multiple and even conflicting purposes and intentions.

What is also problematic in Nystrand's approach is that it leaves it open how exactly the writer/reader purposes are available. In terms of reading the crucial questions are what these purposes really are, and how readers can reasonably be expected to work them out. Significantly, Nystrand does not give a definition of what he means by writer purpose. Like the notion of authorial intention, writer purpose thus remains (suitably) vague. It may refer to specific ideas or goals that the author has when writing; equally well it may refer to more general writer motives and incentives in writing. What it is exactly that readers must be specifically aware of in the name of author purposes is thus not clear from Nystrand's theorizing. Further, as they are not specified, it is not easy to know the ways in which they can be recovered.

Nystrand (1989:79) tries to get round this problem by arguing that the fact that writers are continuously constrained by their sense of reciprocity with their readers, and readers by their sense of the writer's purpose, does not require

that the writer must actually have met her readers or know them personally, nor indeed must they even be contemporaries. The skilled writer reasonably assumes that her text will almost certainly be read by someone who comes to the text already sharing or at least open to her interest in the topic and, to some extent, her purpose in writing, for why else would someone read it? . . . In real life, readers come looking for texts--when they pick up newspapers or check books out of libraries or buy novels to read--prepared to meet halfway the writers whose texts they select.

Nystrand's claim that real-life readers share at least some of the writer's interest in the topic and purpose in writing even before they start reading implies that, from the outset, readers and the writer actually share part of their context. However, at the same time Nystrand also points out that there exist texts, such as Chaucer's tales, that have ceased to be functional for general readers today. In these cases

where the writer masterfully matched his texts to his contemporary reader's expectations, the texts have outlived the readers for whom they were written. In such cases, readers may need to take a course in Chaucer, and/or an editor may need to provide marginal glosses in order to revitalize the texts, making them function once again in terms of the author's original purpose and new reader's needs. (Nystrand 1989:74-5)

Even with old and therefore difficult literary texts, the acquisition of a shared context is thus simply a matter of taking a course or reading editor's footnotes. The implication in this line of reasoning seems to be that the author's purpose is really what other readers have said that his/her text means. If this is true, it could be argued that Nystrand is suggesting something very similar to Hirsch: the author's purpose, or intention, is what is publicly reconstructed as one.

What is new in Nystrand's conceptualization of the writing/reading process is that it posits real interaction, not between the text and the reader as the interactive models claim, but between the writer and the reader. What is also new is that Nystrand is at pains to get rid of the formalist and text-based position which regards texts as containers of meaning, of the cognitivist position which sees individual writers as 'willing' their texts, and of what he calls the social structuralist position which claims that individuals are informed directly in their writing/reading habits by groups, or discourse communities (see Nystrand 1989:70-72).

If the focus on the social negotiation of meaning is something that is new in Nystrand's model, in comparison with earlier reading-research models, then its emphasis on the text is something which it shares with earlier text-based and interactive models. The text is not just black marks on paper, but it has a certain objective status (Nystrand's "objective properties of text") and it functions as a mediator between writer and reader purposes, so that, ideally, they can converge and comprehension occurs (Nystrand and Wiemelt 1991:31). But it is important to see that the text in Nystrand's framework does not have any semantic content, but semantic potential (1989:76), which clearly differentiates Nystrand's model from the text-as-a-container view advocated by text-based models.

To summarize, Nystrand's social-interactive model of writing posits that the writer and the reader interact, through the medium of the text.

Nystrand is primarily concerned with text comprehension, and not text interpretation, which shows, for example, in his argument that both the writers' and readers' purposes are distinct and identifiable rather than complex, multiple, and even conflicting. Ideally, the text is a mediator of writer and reader purposes in this game. The text, or better text meaning, thus becomes a social construct, negotiated by the writer and reader purposes under the magnetism of the principle of reciprocity. The whole of the writing/reading process is social in nature: it could be argued that writers and readers are obliged to attempt to join each other's discourse communities for the purpose of successful written communication.

### 3.6.2 Literary interpretation as social interaction: Ian MacKenzie

In the pluralistic field of literary scholarship, too, there are examples of a social-interactive view of literary interpretation: Ian MacKenzie's (1990) approach<sup>12</sup> to literary interpretation can be taken as one such case.

MacKenzie advocates a view which, on the one hand, gives readers the choice whether or not to make an attempt to isolate the author's meaning in interpretation, and which, on the other, considers authorial meaning to be more social than individual. Like Peter Rabinowitz (1985) MacKenzie argues that readers of literature generally read on more levels than one, and therefore they constitute more than one audience. One of these audiences is the authorial audience, or the hypothetical group of people for whom the writer imagines himself/herself to be writing. Usually, writers make an attempt to limit the gap between their actual audience and their authorial audience. This is in fact the process that Nystrand is mainly concerned with. Sometimes, however, writers do not pay attention to their actual readers' needs but "make inordinate demands on readers' linguistic abilities, general knowledge, powers of memory, and so on" (MacKenzie 1990:125). Conversely, readers have the choice whether or not to make an attempt to join the authorial audience, by trying to find out "this hypothetical knowledge and beliefs of the authorial audience", in order to fully appreciate the text (Rabinowitz as quoted by MacKenzie 1990:125).

Even though the introduction of the authorial audience as the locus of meaning in interpretation clearly has the advantage that it relieves the critic from the search of the meaning from within the text, from the author's publicly reconstructed intentions, or from communally shared interpretive strategies, it is no less problematic than these. The problem with the notion of authorial audience is exactly the same as with the notions of authorial intention, Fish's interpretive community, or Nystrand's

<sup>12</sup> MacKenzie's approach cannot really be called a model of literary interpretation. It simply attempts to question certain existing interpretive models - such as the one suggested by Stanley Fish - and propose how these models should be revised and updated.

writer purposes: it is difficult, at times even impossible, to specify exactly what it entails, or how it can be identified.

MacKenzie also relies on Voloshinov's social and interactive view of language. For instance, he refers to Voloshinov in an attempt to argue that writing, like speaking, is a fundamentally social activity:

The word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As a word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee* . . . I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is a territory shared. (Voloshinov 1929/1973: 79, as quoted in MacKenzie 1990:126)

In terms of literature the adoption of the Voloshinavian position implies that meaning is the product, and expression, of the interrelationship between the author and the reader, "fixed in a work of art" (Voloshinov 1987:105). In other words, meaning is social, rather than individual or textual, it is shared by the author and his intended contemporary audience.

With some texts, conventional, canonical and contemporary texts, for example, joining the authorial audience (or in Fishian terms, joining the authorial interpretive community) is relatively undemanding. Such texts do not require inconsiderate efforts, or the application of new interpretive strategies from their readers. The reason for this, MacKenzie suggests (1990:128), is that the readers and the author share the same horizon, or at least, as Gadamer puts it (see Gadamer 1982; as quoted by MacKenzie 1990:127) that there is a fusion of their horizons in literary interpretation.

With other, old, experimental or avant-garde texts, for example, conventional interpretive strategies may not be sufficient. In MacKenzie's view (1990:127), with older texts the problem is that the recuperation of the author's strategies becomes more difficult. With new artistic forms, in turn, it seems that they call for new kinds of strategies. What happens then is that unconventional texts "if we allow them to question our currently held strategies - tend to create their own . . . authorial audiences, effecting the changes in our interpretive strategies which subsequently allow us to reinterpret works from the past" (MacKenzie 1990:127-8). Thus, there is a kind of hermeneutical spiral: new texts help readers create new strategies with which to approach older, previously opaque and difficult texts.

Consequently, MacKenzie subscribes to the idea that there is a dimension of openness in texts, a dimension which allows for new ideas, views and interpretations of texts. Like Bakhtin, he argues that the work

of art is always unfinalized: "there is a continuing dialogue, with the author's text always open to addition from the outside" (MacKenzie 1990:127). Texts thus have power: like Robert Scholes (1985:165), MacKenzie argues that the texts can change us, if we just let them.

In sum, MacKenzie considers literary interpretation as a social and interactive process. In his view literary interpretation is actually negotiation where the inter-relationship between the author, text and the reader can be negotiated differently with different kinds of texts. With conventional texts, conventional strategies can be summoned; with unconventional texts, new strategies can be created. The author writes with a certain audience in mind, the text plays the role of suggesting certain particular strategies, conventional or unconventional; the reader either attempts to join the original authorial audience, or chooses to form or create a new kind of (idiosyncratic, creative, or unconventional) audience. The whole process takes place in a social and interactive setting, where the author and the reader interact via the text, and where in principle different interpretations can be constructed.

#### 3.6.4 Summary

Finally, some conclusions can be made on Nystrand's and MacKenzie's approaches. What makes them social and interactive is that they, with different emphases, argue that reading/interpretation is social and interactive in nature. For Nystrand social-interactiveness means that writing and reading are reciprocal processes where the writer writes with a particular audience in mind to facilitate the reader's comprehension. For MacKenzie it entails that, in addition to this, writers, through their texts, may challenge and change the reader's established interpretive strategies.

In both approaches the situational, social and cultural context are important. They consider interpretation a joint social and interactive process of meaning negotiation and place contextual constraint on reading in the author and reader. It is in their assumptions and strategies where contextual forces have their say.

In addition, what is common to both is that they do not take meaning-making to be a process of discovery. For them, meaning is not embedded in the text, no more than it is the author's individual intention or a product of communally shared interpretive conventions. In contrast, they agree that meaning must be constructed, or negotiated. It is a social construct, where the writer's and reader's purposes should converge for the purpose of full text comprehension (Nystrand), or where the authorial strategies may have to be replaced by more readerly ones, because the text, if it is old or unconventional, may require the reader to do so (MacKenzie). In both approaches the text can suggest or mediate to its

readers that certain particular purposes or interpretive strategies are more relevant than others.

Nevertheless, there is a crucial difference between Nystrand and MacKenzie here: Nystrand's model, possibly reflecting a trend which has above been found to be typical in most reading research, is normative and authoritative. It requires from readers that they find out what the writer's purposes are before they can fully understand the text. In a way, Nystrand could be seen to have replaced the familiar author's intention with the writer's purposes. Nystrand also disregards the possibility that a text may have plural or ambiguous layers or meaning or purpose. For him, the text still seems to be closed. MacKenzie, in turn, is more relativistic: even though he acknowledges the role of the author's intention in interpretation, he nevertheless claims that a text is always 'unfinalized' and open to additions from the outside. This implies that nothing in principle stops readers from attempting to use authorial strategies with conventional and contemporary texts, if they so wish; equally, nothing prevents them from creating new, non-authorial strategies.

In these approaches, reading and literary interpretation are thus complex processes which involve the author, text, reader, and context. Meaning is the product and expression of negotiation where the text may propose the relevance of an authorial, conventional (or socio-culturally constrained), resistant, or idiosyncratic interpretation.

### **3.7 Interpretation of written texts as negotiation**

In the light of the findings of the above review, this section will account for the hermeneutical position of the present study. According to this position the interpretation of written texts can be seen as a process of negotiation involving the written text, the author, the readers and the situational, institutional and socio-cultural context. As the present model has not been tested empirically, it is best regarded as a tentative and hypothetical one. However, in spite of the fact that the model remains theoretical only, it is assumed here that the specification of its main tenets is necessary in order to give a general theoretical framework against which the mediation of interpretive criteria can be examined. This section will thus attempt to specify the entities taken to be involved in the negotiation of meaning, and demonstrate in what ways they relate to what has been suggested in earlier models of reading and interpretation.

### 3.7.1 The text as a trigger, constraint and mediator

The text is naturally essential in interpretation. Firstly, as is assumed in cognitive models of reading, the text is the sensory stimulus. However, contrary to what these models assume, the text does not trigger the process of reading, but, specifically the process of interpretation. This is because it is assumed here that there is no reading without interpretation. Obviously, without the text, there would be nothing to interpret.

The text not only triggers interpretation, but also constrains it. It has certain objective properties, most significant of which is that it is written in a particular language and style. A change in the linguistic form of the text may imply a change in its meaning. In this respect, the present study agrees with the explicitly or implicitly text-based psychological models of reading (e.g. LaBerge and Samuels, Carver, Goodman and Rumelhart), as well with New Criticism, the structuralist Riffaterre, Knapp and Michaels, Kintsch and van Dijk, Iser, Nystrand and MacKenzie, who, with different emphases, all assume that the text has certain power in affecting interpretation. This does not mean, however, that it is here assumed that the text is a container of meaning. As Nystrand argues, rather than having meaning content, the text has meaning potential.

The text is also a constraint on interpretation because there is behind it a deliberate author plan, goal or intention. Similarly to intentionalist models, it is thus assumed here that the author, too, has a role in interpretation. Importantly, however, the author's intention is not simply taken to be encapsulated within, or identical with, the text where it can be discovered by simply reading the text, as for example the Information Transferists, such as LaBerge and Samuels, and Carver, or the more recent literary theoreticians Knapp and Michaels seem to assume.

Likewise, the present notion of the author's intention is not compatible with Hirsch's corresponding term. For Hirsch, authorial intention, i.e. the author's own plans, purposes and goals, are not something that can be recovered in the text. Instead, they can only be constructed through exegesis and erudition. Authorial intention in this context is not identical with the New Critical notion either. For the New Critics authorial intention means the author's independent, non-text-based meaning. In their view, the quest for authorial meaning, through the reconstruction of the author's psychology and biography, is futile. In this respect, like the structuralist Riffaterre or Kintsch and van Dijk, they insist that what counts in interpretation is the objective text.

If it is accepted that the texts are communicative, this also means that such reader response approaches as Bleich's, Holland's or even Fish's, which have strongly argued that the spotlight of literary studies should be moved on to what actual readers do in reading are not relevant for the

present purposes. This is because their focus on the reader has had the effect that they have at the same time pushed the author out. In their exclusion of the author, these reader response critics could be seen to put to practice Barthes's (1970) thesis that the writer as the criterion of meaning is 'dead'. As Ihab Hassan (1988:184) has pointed out, this means that the burden of interpretation is given solely to the reader, who, consequently, has now to 'write', rather than 'read' the text.

At the same time, critics of this persuasion are uncertain about the way in which they should relate to the text. In fact, it could be argued that there is a kind of struggle or equivocation going on in reader response theories, or, more generally, in literary studies about the status of the text. For example, Fish notes that he has no answer to the question of what the interpretive act is an interpretation. Nevertheless, he excuses himself by claiming that this question cannot be answered by anyone in a universally satisfactory way (Fish 1980:479). The equivocation also shows in the way in which in actual analyses of texts, the text as an authority on meaning in a way creeps back into the picture. In Elizabeth Freund's words, "theoretical models which aspire to monism [i.e. which for example emphasize the supremacy of the reader in interpretation] are systematically subverted by a lingering practical duality [i.e. by a notion of interpretation as interaction]". Better than monistic models, Freund suggests, would be models which posit that reading is not a game of mastery - the text over reader or vice versa - but a "patient dialogue or interrogation." (Freund 1987:154). In this, we can surely agree with Freund.

Because of their excommunication of the author, reader response approaches can avoid dealing with the problem of how the author's intention relates to the actual readings of the text. In contrast, in such social-interactive models such as Nystrand's and MacKenzie's this problem is at the center of their interests. The social-interactive spotlight covers both the author and the reader: like the reader, the writer is also involved in the negotiation of meanings. Like Nystrand and MacKenzie, the present author in fact assumes that the text can mediate at least some of its author's purposes, premisses and interpretive strategies (i.e. strategies shaped by the author's goals and his original audience's expectations). A similar position can be detected in Iser's work: by his notion of the Implied Reader, Iser suggests that the author writes his/her text with a particular image of the potential addressee of the literary text in his/her mind. This image is thus reflected in the text as a network of response-inviting structures which impel the reader to grasp the text. However, it is here assumed, along with MacKenzie, that the author may design his/her text so that it can also question or challenge the reader's conventionalized interpretive strategies and encourage him/her to revise the strategies

s/he already has, or to create completely new ones. This means that texts have also power to trigger new knowledge and assumptions about texts.

The argument that the text can give rise to a number of different interpretive strategies implies that the text is not wholly determined or closed. In this the present writer agrees with Iser, for instance, who suggests that the text has both its structures of determination and its places of indeterminacy. A similar point about the possibility of variation in reading is also apparent in Goodman's reader-based and Rumelhart's interactive model which picture interpretation as more a process of reconstruction of the most probable meaning, rather than the discovery of the correct meaning of the text. An explicit acceptance of the fact that idiosyncratic reader goals can direct reading to unconventional ends can also be located in Kintsch's and van Dijk's model. In MacKenzie's social-interactive approach it is also assumed that readers have in principle the choice whether or no to attempt to isolate the hypothetical knowledge and beliefs necessary to recover authorial meaning.

Finally, the text no doubt also has an experiential aspect. More will be said about this aspect of interpretation in the next section. Here it may suffice to point out that as the reader response critics Holland and Bleich have argued, interpretation can also be considered a highly personalized experience where the individual reader interacts with a particular text, possibly learning something new about literature, the world or him/herself, or even how to change our assumptions about these.

### **3.7.2 The readers' role: constraint and freedom**

The reader, or rather, readers (who can be differently positioned) can simultaneously be seen as powerfully constrained and potentially free. They are constrained, not only by the text, but also by the non-linguistic context (on the role of non-linguistic context see section 3.7.3). At the same time, they have certain power, too: they can resist established conventions of interpretation, and even produce new knowledge and assumptions about literature.

In different models of reading and interpretation, the readers, like the text, have been granted different degrees of power. It seems that the readers' role and power has varied according to how normative the models are: the more demands and duties they place on the readers, the less power they appear to have in the interpretive activity. Conversely, the fewer demands made of the readers, the more power they have.

Models which claim that some entity or agent has the 'correct' meaning of a text, usually require that the readers behave in a certain way. As examples of this orientation, the text-based approaches by LaBerge and Samuels, Carver, Knapp and Michaels, New Criticism and Rif-

faterre could be mentioned. Since they argue that the meaning of the text is embedded within the text, they present to the readers an obligation to learn how to unlock it. In the same way, a model such as Hirsch's, which argues that the author's intention is the only correct meaning of the text, demands from readers that they attempt to discover it. In these models the readers' role is to act as the discoverers of the correct meaning. An equally normative view of interpretation is presented in Fish's model. According to this view, literary interpretation is a communal affair where the interpretive community dictates to readers how they should interpret a particular text. Clearly, this view radically reduces the power of the individual readers. Because interpretation is always the product of certain communally shared interpretive strategies, there can, in principle, be no such thing as a subjective interpretation. In this framework the readers thus appear as puppets who repeat the strategies of meaning-making conventionalized in their particular interpretive community. Because normative models of this kind completely deprive the individual readers from any power of interpretation, they are not considered useful for the present purposes: the readers cannot be completely excluded from the process of interpretation. No doubt, they are as essential in interpretation as the text.

The opposite, and equally normative and extremist, view of the role of the readers is suggested in psychologically oriented literary models. In Bleich's subjective model, in particular, there are no limits to individual creativity in the interpretation of literature. What is perhaps acceptable in this view is that it emphasizes that the readers' subjective interpretations can be a source of new knowledge which can contribute to the reshaping of the paradigms of interpreting literature. In Bleich's view, it is also possible that readers can challenge or resist established interpretive conventions. What cannot be accepted, however, is Bleich's claim that the readers' interpretation can be completely non-text-based and idiosyncratic, for, logically, this would imply that there are no differences between texts. In Bleich's view, since texts do not 'contain' anything, they can stimulate an infinite number of different interpretations.

It is important to see that, if texts are considered as constraints and communicators, interpretation is not only a matter of the readers projecting their subjectivity on the text, but of paying careful attention to the text and trying to recover at least some of its authorial goals, premisses and strategies. This position implies that radically individualistic and creationist models of interpretation, such as Bleich's, or radically constructivist models, such as Fish's, cannot be accepted here. This is because it does not seem sensible to claim that texts are only sensory stimuli and that meaning is the product of the reader or reader communities. Clearly, interpretation should not simply be the individual readers 'writing' the text

on the basis of their individual needs, premisses or goals, or of those conventionalized in their particular interpretive community. Texts are not only black marks on paper, but they have a great deal of power to constrain interpretation.

A more balanced picture of the readers' role in interpretation is perhaps suggested by Goodman, Rumelhart, Kintsch and van Dijk, and Iser who consider the process of interpretation to be directed not only by the text, but also by the readers. In these approaches the readers are sensibly seen as reconstructors of the text's meaning, and their reconstructions may reflect the author's meaning in different degrees.

In Nystrand's social-interactive model there is almost a moral obligation on the readers in that they have to try and identify the author's purposes and strategies in order to fully understand the text. In MacKenzie's approach it is similarly argued that if the text is to be appreciated the readers should try to recover the authorial interpretive strategies. At the same time, the readers have a certain degree of freedom: for example, if the text is for some reason 'difficult', it may be that the readers have to create their own interpretive strategies, instead of having to stick to the (potentially) authorial ones. The readers' role, within this framework, could be then one of a negotiator, who has certain power, but who is, simultaneously, constrained by the social principle of reciprocity. As in face-to-face conversation, where co-conversationalists (normally) jointly strive for or negotiate mutually acceptable meanings, the meaning-making in the interpretation of written language is thus a joint social venture.

The interactive, as well as the social-interactive models, picture the process of interpretation somewhat differently from the text-, reader-, community- and author-based models. This is because the latter depict interpretation as a game of mastery and power, where one entity supersedes all others. The former, in turn, conceptualize interpretation as a process where two or more entities interact or cooperate with each other. In the interactive models this co-operation entails the working together of the text and the reader, whereas in the social-interactive models it is the author and reader who interact through the medium of the text. In terms of the readers' role in interpretation these conceptualizations mean that their power, as well as that of the text or the author, is relative. For the purposes of the present study such an idea seems appealing: ideally, meaning-construction is not to be taken as something in which the text, author or readers have absolute power, but a process where all of these entities are in play. Interpretation is thus not determined not only by the individual readers, the text, or the author's intention, but by their interaction within a certain context.

### 3.7.3 The situational, institutional and socio-cultural context as a constraint

Interpretation is also constrained by the non-linguistic context. There exist some models which boldly disregard context altogether (e.g. LaBerge and Samuels, Carver, and Riffaterre). For these strictly non-contextualist models interpretation takes place in a social vacuum, between a text which is believed to contain its meaning and a solipsistic and uncontaminated reader-text processor. With psychological reading models this is perhaps not unexpected, for they generally assume that the language user's cognition can be examined as separate from its situational, social and cultural environment. Apart from these, the majority of the models reviewed above, however, acknowledge, at least in principle, that context has a role in interpretation.

The rudiments of a view which underlines the importance of context in interpretation is already manifest in New Criticism; Goodman's reader-based approach; Rumelhart's, Kintsch and van Dijk's, and Iser's interactive models. However, even though the role of the social (Goodman), pragmatic (Rumelhart, Kintsch and van Dijk), and historical context (New Criticism, Iser) is in principle acknowledged in these approaches, in practice it has remained a marginal issue.

The role of context is more explicit in the social-interactive models. There, however, context comes into picture indirectly only, via the author's and readers' cognition, as a set of premisses, goals, purposes, etc. that they have when writing/reading the text. In a sense it could be argued that in these models interpretation relies crucially on context. For example, Nystrand argues that the goal in reading should be that the writer's and readers' context should be made to coincide. Similarly, MacKenzie's Voloshinovian argument that writing and reading are fundamentally social, emphasizes that these activities necessarily take place in a social context.

An extreme and deterministic view of the role of context is, not unsurprisingly, put forward by Stanley Fish: in his view interpretation is a fundamentally contextualized process in the sense that it necessarily takes place under a set of communal interpretive strategies which more or less determine what a text can mean. A less extreme position is suggested by Bleich: he seems as conscious as Fish of the crucial role of context has in interpretation. In spite of his focus on the individual reader, Bleich nevertheless argues that socially agreed-upon literary paradigms exist.

However, in all of the approaches reviewed above, context is rather pretheoretical and inexplicit. A possible explanation of why this is the case may be that these approaches seem to assume tacitly that context, while an important source of influence, is in practice elusive, limitless,

and therefore un-analyzable. It is often, as is clearest in Fish's model, used on a very general level to refer to a variety of contextual assumptions. Similarly, it is usually not specified in a detailed way of what exactly is in play, or what the specific assumptions are that affect interpretation. What may happen then is that, as in the case of the New Critical idea of Perspectivism, it is in theory argued that interpretation always occurs within a specific historical context, but in practice context is dismissed, and the focus of the theory shifts onto the text only. Admittedly, however, the identification of contextual features, such as the role situation and setting of reading, and of assumptions and beliefs affecting interpretation, is not an easy task. The retreat back to the text seems, in this light, not wholly unforgivable.

However, it could be argued that an effort should be made to define the notion of context in a more explicit way. In the present study this is attempted, following the suggestions put forward in recent sociolinguistically and discourse analytically oriented reading research. In accordance with, for example, James Gee's (1992) and Catherine Wallace's ideas (1992), it is in the present study argued that the interpretation of written texts is plural, and that it is embedded in, and inextricable from, social practices, cultures, and subcultures - or what Gee (1992:32) following Foucault (1985) refers to as Discourses. According to this argument, in the same way as all language use, reading/interpretation and writing cannot be separated from their specific contents and contexts, and they cannot be regarded as the "private psychic possessions of decontextualized heads" (Gee 1992:33).

In practice, the adoption of this position means that the notion of context must be specified. For this end, a tentative distinction is made between the actual situation, the institutional context, and the more general socio-cultural context within which interpretation takes place. Similar distinctions are also suggested by Wallace (1992:24-29) and Fairclough 1989:151. The context of situation refers to the actual setting and environment of reading, and it includes such factors as the place and time, the participants in the event, and the physical characteristics of the text to be interpreted. The institutional context, in turn, means the influence of a particular institution, such as the school, advertisement media, or literary criticism, which direct and constrain the readers' choices in the interpretation of a text. Finally, the socio-cultural context, socially and culturally specific sets of values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations and knowledge, also constrains, in complex ways, the interpretation of texts. In spite of the fact that this distinction is admittedly rather general, too, it could perhaps be seen as a step towards showing in a more explicit way that different kinds of forces and assumptions, at different levels of specificity, are in play in interpretation.

### **3.7.4 The interpretation of written texts as negotiation between the author, text, readers and context**

All of this implies that in the present thesis the interpretation of written - literary and non-literary - texts is not considered a game of mastery, where one entity has absolute power, or even a decontextualized interaction of the text and the reader only, but negotiation involving the author, text, readers and context. More specifically, this means that it is hypothesized that the interpretation of written texts can be seen as a process in which there are a number of factors that can constrain interpretation and in which the meaning of the text can be negotiated, or constructed in different ways. In different eras, cultures, communities, settings, in interpretations by different readers, and even in different interpretations by one interpreter, one and the same text may be made to mean different things. A case in point is Shakespeare interpretations: it is no doubt a commonplace in Shakespeare studies to argue that every age creates its own Shakespeare. This is not to say, however, that texts can validly be made to mean whatever their interpreters may want to. On the contrary, if they are to be appreciated, their objective properties constraining interpretation must be taken into account.

Meaning negotiation could also be referred to as a process of re-contextualization. It is a contextualisation process in three senses: in the cognitive sense, where reading is seen to involve at least two cognitions, the writer's and the reader's, and where the readers are seen to make sense of texts by relying on cognitive contexts (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1987), in the social sense where the reading process is seen to take place in a certain situational, institutional and socio-cultural context (cf. Duranti 1986), and in the linguistic sense where the process of reading is taken to also involve a text, written in a particular language and style, and representing a particular tradition, type and genre.

The above review of different models of reading and interpretation also shows that there are, in theory, various kinds of interpretive criteria available to interpreters of written texts. These include (at least) the authorial intention, the written text, the readers, and the non-linguistic, situational, institutional and socio-cultural, context. On the basis of this observation, Chapter 4 specifies the analytical framework and the methods of analysis to be used in the examination of the essays.

## 4 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I shall specify the present analytical orientation and methods and give an outline of the analytical framework. The overall aim of the analysis is to carry out a qualitative exploration of the linguistic means that literary critics use to suggest that a particular set of interpretive criteria is relevant in the interpretation of a particular literary text.

To be fully acceptable, the present hermeneutical model would obviously need to be tested with empirical means. Its empirical validation is, however, beyond the scope of the present study. Despite this, it could be argued that even its tentative acceptance means that a consistent analysis of interpretive criteria and their mediation in literary criticism would have to include, besides an examination of the linguistic strategies used by the critics, also an analysis of the role of the literary author's (socially reconstructed or assumed) intention, the critics' respective premisses and goals, readers' or other critics' responses to their criticism, the situational context, the literary critical context, and the more general socio-cultural context in the critics' interpretation of the primary text. Mainly because of research economy, no systematic examination of these aspects will be carried out, but the analysis will focus on one particular aspect of the present model of interpretation, the critical texts and the linguistic strategies that the two critics employ within them. However, the other entities involved in interpretation are not wholly overlooked: most significantly, both analyses will be followed by a brief account of the critics' respective theoretical and critical premisses as a point of comparison to the findings of the analysis of the linguistic strategies.

The analysis will be qualitative in nature. One of the main reasons for this decision is that, rather than giving a wholesale quantitative ex-

amination of the strategies used in the essays, the analysis will attempt to give an in-depth characterization of the two texts and aim at proposing tentatively major similarities and differences between them. Another important reason for not carrying out a quantitative analysis is that it is assumed here that a high frequency of a particular linguistic strategy may not necessarily be an indication of its prominence. A low frequency, or a complete lack, of a strategy (particularly in relation to strategies used more frequently) may also be indicative of its prominence. An extensive and detailed qualitative analysis that keeps intimately close to the texts is thus felt to provide a more sensitive means of deciphering the complex ways in which the critics suggest a particular set of interpretive criteria than would be allowed by a quantitative analysis.

To make sure that the two essays can be examined in a relatively systematic and replicable way, the analytical steps will be labelled and a stringent set of analytical questions suggested. This arrangement makes it possible that the analysis can be replicated and tested. It is important to see, however, that a systematic analytical framework is no guarantee for an objective analysis of the data. More than an objective description, the analysis is considered here as a positioned interpretation of the data which is, as the interpretation of written texts in general, directed and constrained not only by the texts, but also by the analyst's assumptions, beliefs, background, and the situational, institutional and socio-cultural context within which s/he carries out his/her analysis.

The analytical framework is designed, firstly, for the purpose of analyzing the linguistic strategies with which literary critics mediate their interpretive criteria to readers. This analysis will be exploratory in nature which means that it is primarily concerned with the identification and preliminary characterization of the critics' mediation strategies, and only secondarily with the more specific linguistic analysis of the nature of these strategies, or with the identification of more general literary critical conventions for mediating interpretive criteria. Both the detailed in-depth analysis of the strategies themselves and the specification of more general conventions in literary criticism will have to remain the tasks of future research. The present study could, however, be taken as a necessary preliminary and pioneering step on the basis of which more detailed and/or large-scale analyses of literary critical mediation strategies can be carried out.

Secondly, similar to Fairclough's (1989) or van Dijk's (1987) analytical approaches, the present study will also attempt to explicate covert assumptions, in this case interpretive criteria, that texts mediate to readers, on the basis of an extensive and detailed examination of the linguistic features of the texts. Again, it is important to see that in doing such an analysis it is not assumed that there is a one-to-one relationship between a

linguistic structure and 'meaning', or interpretive criteria. Rather, it is assumed that, because the analysis attempts to anchor closely onto the texts, by carrying out extensive and detailed examinations of their linguistic structures, and by making its analytical operations explicit, it can gain only relative force. What this again implies is that, although detailed and structured, the analysis will be no more and no less than an interpretation constructed by the analyst. Thirdly, the two critics' respective strategies and interpretive criteria thus discovered will be compared with each other. This comparison is to be considered tentative, because it will not be carried out by means of a quantitative analysis, but by means of qualitative comparative discussions.

Underlying assumptions in this formulation of the research task are that (1) literary criticism always relies on interpretive criteria, that (2) by using certain linguistic strategies literary critics mediate these criteria more or less consciously to their readers and that (3) this mediation is more often covert than overt in that critics generally do not argue explicitly for their particular interpretive criteria but use more indirect and implicit ways for suggesting them. Moreover, it is assumed that (4) the uses of the indirect linguistic means for suggesting interpretive criteria are motivated pragmatically by the critics' respective interpretive criteria: hence these uses are referred to as strategies.

In a way the analytical procedure is similar to that used in the review of different models of reading and interpretation in chapter 3, but this time its focus will be on the linguistic strategies for mediating an interpretive model, rather than on the models themselves as in chapter 3. However, the two cycles of analysis, theoretical and linguistic, are related: the analysis of reading/interpretive models functions not only as the basis for the formulation of the present negotiation model, but also as evidence by which it can be argued that, in theory, there is a variety of different interpretive criteria available to interpreters of written texts. These criteria include the text, author, readers, context, or some combination of these, such as the text and reader; or the author, text and reader. As will be seen below, the analytical questions will deal with each of the potential interpretive criteria.

In addition, the construction of the present analytical framework is influenced by previous analytical work by such scholars as Carter and Nash (1990), Simpson (1990) and MacDonald (1990). Similarly, Fairclough's (1989:110-139) suggestion for an analytical framework for critical discourse analysis has provided a number of relevant analytical questions. In addition, van Dijk's (1987) research on prejudice in conversation has provided a number of general insights for the present approach.

The structure of the analytical framework is simple: it consists of a number of questions about the data. The superordinate question is: "What

is the basis for deciding what the primary text is about, as stated or implied by the essayist?" To provide an answer to this question, a number of more specific questions is asked. These include questions about (1) the strategies that the critics use to suggest a particular notion of the primary text, of the literary author, of themselves as interpreters of the literary text, of their implied readers and of the situational, institutional, and socio-cultural context. In the analysis of the notions of these entities the critics' references to them and their immediate co-text will be examined in a detailed way. The analytical questions also deal with (2) the strategies that the critics use to suggest that one, or a combination of, these entities has a particular function in interpretation. In this analysis the methods of critical linguistics will be applied (see e.g. Fairclough 1989). Most significantly, it will be examined whether and in what ways the critics assign agency to the entities. The analysis will attempt to explore the linguistic (such as lexical choices, syntactic structures, the use of the active and passive), discoursal and pragmatic (e.g. interactional features), and rhetorical (e.g. imagery) strategies used by the critics. In addition, some extra-textual strategies, such as references to the theatrical performance of the drama text, will be noted. To facilitate the analysis, and to provide its findings in an unequivocal manner, when possible, the patterns of linguistic strategies will be presented in a tabular form. In addition, because not much co-text can be included in tables, the analysis will also include discussions of certain longer passages in order to show how different kinds of strategies interact in the essays and form emergent discoursal patterns.

The analytical framework consists of the following questions:

- 1 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the text** in the essay?
  - a. In what ways is the primary text quoted or referred to? How long are the quotations? How are they framed? At what points in the essay is the text quoted or referred to?
  - b. How is the primary text characterized? Is it considered a text or a play? What kinds of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials, and images are used about, and in connection with, the primary text? What do these phrases and their relationships with each other indicate about the notion of the text?
  - c. What function is given to the primary text in interpretation? Is it stated, implied, presupposed, or left unsaid, that the text is a/the source of meaning in interpretation? Is agency given to the primary text? If so, what does it indicate about its function in interpretation? How is the (potential) text 'meaning' expressed: are modal expressions used in connection with the text? Are generalizations used with the text?

- 2 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the author** in the essay?
- a. In what ways is the author quoted or referred to? At what points in the essay is he quoted or referred to?
  - b. How is the author characterized? What kinds of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials, and images are used about, and in connection with, the author? What do these phrases and their relationships indicate about the notion of the author?
  - c. What function is given to the author in interpretation? Is it stated, implied, presupposed, denied, or left unsaid, that the author is a/the source of meaning in interpretation? Is agency given to the author? If so, what does it indicate about his function in interpretation? How is the (potential) authorial 'meaning' expressed: are modal expressions used in connection with the author? Are generalizations used with the author?
  - d. Is there any indication of what the relationship between the text and the author is? Is there any interaction between the text and the author?
- 3 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the readers** in the essay?
- 3.1 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the critic** in the essay?
    - a. In what ways does the critic refer to himself? At what points does he refer to himself?
    - b. What is the notion of the critic emerging in the essay? What kinds of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, pronominal phrases (I/one/we), adverbials, and images the critic uses to refer to, or in connection with, himself? What do these phrases and their relationships indicate about the notion of the critic?
    - c. What is the function of the critic in interpretation? Is it stated, implied, presupposed, denied, or left unsaid, that the critic is a/the source of meaning in interpretation? Is agency given to the critic? If so, what does it indicate about his function in interpretation? How is the (potential) critic's 'meaning' expressed: are modal expressions used in connection with the critic? Are generalizations used with the critic?
  - 3.2 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the readers** in the essay?
    - a. In what ways are the readers referred to? At what points are the readers referred to?
    - b. What is the notion of the readers emerging in the essay? Are they readers of the text, or viewers of the play? What kinds of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, pronominal phrases (you/we), adverbials, and images are used to refer to, or in connection with, the readers? What do these phrases and their relationships indicate about the notion of the readers?
    - c. What is the function of the readers in interpretation? Is it stated, implied, presupposed, denied, or left unsaid, that they are a/the source of

meaning in interpretation? Is agency given to the readers? If so, what does it indicate about their function in interpretation? How is the (potential) reader 'meanings' expressed: are modal expressions used in connection with the readers? Are generalizations used with the readers?

- 3.3 What is the relationship between the critic and the readers? Is there any interaction between the critic and the readers? Are any interactional conventions used? Does the critic address, control, guide, or persuade the readers? If so, with what strategies? Is the critic exact, clear and explicit, or does he leave inferential work to the readers by for example using long and syntactically complex sentences, and difficult terminology?
  - 3.4 Is there any indication of what the relationship between the readers and the text is? Or of the relationship between the readers and the author? Is there any interaction between them?
- 4 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **context** in the essay?
- 4.1 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the situational context** in the essay?
    - a. Is the situational context of interpreting *King Lear* (the time and place, e.g. reading the text, or watching the play) specified, left unspecified, presupposed? How is it referred to? At what points is it referred to?
    - b. How is it characterized? What kinds of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials, images are used about, and in connection with, the situational context? What do these phrases and their relationships indicate about the notion of the situational context?
    - c. Is there any indication of what function the situational context has in interpretation?
  - 4.2 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the institutional context** in the essay?
    - a. Is the institutional context of interpreting *King Lear* specified, left unspecified, or presupposed? How is it referred to? At what points is it referred to?
    - b. What aspects of the institutional context are focussed on? How is it characterized? What kinds of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials, images and metaphors are used about, and in connection with, the institutional context? What do these phrases and their relationships indicate about the notion of the institutional context?
    - c. Is there any indication of what its function in interpretation is?
  - 4.3 What strategies are used to mediate a particular notion and function of **the socio-cultural context** in the essay?

- a. Is the socio-cultural context of interpreting the primary text specified, left unspecified, or presupposed? how is it referred to? At what points is it referred to?
  - b. What aspects of the socio-cultural context are focussed on? How is it characterized? What kinds of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials, images are used about, and in connection with, the socio-cultural context? What do these phrases and their relationships indicate about the notion of the socio-cultural context?
  - c. Is there any indication of what its function in interpretation is?
- 4.4. Is there indication of what the relationship between the context and the text is? Between the author and context? Between readers and the context? And between all of them? Is there any interaction between them?

The two texts will be analyzed separately, but following the same analytical pattern. Knight's essay will be analyzed first. All through the analysis of Dollimore's essay, its findings will be related to and compared with the findings on Knight's essay. Because the analysis will yield a large number of findings, the analysis of each entity will be followed by a summary of where the main observations and conclusions about the strategies used by the critics will be summarized.

## 5 DATA SPECIFICATION

This section has three main purposes. Firstly, to provide a literary framework for the analysis, it will briefly describe the field of Shakespeare and *King Lear* criticism in the twentieth century. Secondly, it will attempt to give a short description of literary criticism as a stylistic and linguistic phenomenon. Thirdly, it will present the motivation behind the choice of the data, G. Wilson Knight's '*King Lear*' and the Comedy of the Grotesque' (1930) and Jonathan Dollimore's '*King Lear* (c. 1605-6) and Essentialist Humanism' (1984).

### 5.1 Issues in twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism

In the history of western literature, Shakespeare is undoubtedly one of the authors whose status as a canonical writer-genius is not questioned. In literary criticism this shows, for example, in the devastating number of different comments his work has received. Shakespeare criticism, according to Hugh Grady (1991:1), is

a scandal, a paper battlefield where armies of both ignorant and learned tilt and joust at each other in an ineffectual but never-ending contest of interpretations. Long ago, well before the mass of critical writings on Shakespeare reached the voluminous proportions of today's professional and international libraries of commentary, Hazlitt had sardonically observed that if we wished to perceive the splendors of human achievement, we should read Shakespeare; but if we wish to view the follies of human ingenuity, we may look to his commentators.

It may be a paper battlefield, but the business of Shakespeare criticism has always been serious, and a critic who does well in it can perhaps hope to gain some of the ingeniousness and immortality granted to the Master himself. In the twentieth century, in particular, the number of critical voices has increased almost in a geometrical series compared to the arithmetic growth of previous centuries.

In Viswanathan's words (1980:1-2), three major schools - the historical, theatrical and poetic - can be isolated in the (pre-1980s) Shakespeare commentary in this century. However, these schools have not been wholly self-contained: there has been not only rivalry, but also cross-fertilization and dialogue between them (Viswanathan 1980:3). First, the 'old' historical school, which was prevalent in Shakespeare criticism until the 1930s, attempted to apply historical findings to the interpretation of Shakespeare's work. Scholars with this orientation examined Shakespeare in the light of Elizabethan expectations and responses; in relation to primitive conventions informing Elizabethan drama; and in the light of knowledge about Elizabethan political, cultural, theological, psychological, social and economic life. The most famous representative of the historical approach is E.M.W. Tillyard (see e.g. 1943, 1944), whose work, as Grady points out (1991:158), grew partly out of his disillusionment with Cambridge New Criticism. In Tillyard's view, Shakespeare's drama is an expression of the "Tudor myth" and particularly of its metaphysics of universal order, which, for him, was evident in Shakespeare's repeated references to the alleged "Elizabethan world-picture". In Tillyard's work, as in other historicists' work of the day, it was often taken for granted that Shakespeare's art was determined by his cultural and historical background, and his texts were seen as complicit with the official dogma of his day.

Second, the theatrical school includes two approaches: one which tried to restore the plays to the original Elizabethan theatrical context by attempting to reconstruct Elizabethan stage conditions; and one which interpreted the plays for the purpose of producing them on the modern stage, but with some concessions to Elizabethan stage conventions. Well-known representatives of these approaches are such critics as E.K. Chambers (see e.g. 1923, 1930) and G.E. Bentley (1941-1968) for the former approach and H. Granville-Barker (see e.g. 1927-47) for the latter.

Third, the poetic school, or the school of G.W. Knight (e.g. 1930) and L.C. Knights (e.g. 1959), focussed on the poetic quality of Shakespeare's drama. This school regarded a literary text as an integrated whole with a complex and multi-levelled structure. Viswanathan (1980:42) points out that the rise of this school was triggered and influenced by various forces. These included the rise of Modernism in literature, as well as the development of New Criticism, of new sciences such as psychology, and social and cultural anthropology, logical positivism and the phi-

losophy of "symbolic forms" (see e.g. Cassirer 1953). In addition, this school was influenced by the consciousness of the modern cultural crisis and of the role of literature in trying to come to terms with this crisis, by the formulations of theories about the origins of drama, and relations between drama, ritual, myth, symbol and archetype. Grady (1991:4), in turn, connects the rise of "poetic" criticism with the dynamic interplay between the forces of cultural and aesthetic Modernism and the economic, scientific and technical forces of modernization.

In both Knight's and Knights's case their poetic criticism could also be seen as a reaction to the nineteenth century character criticism tradition, represented most famously by A.C. Bradley. This character criticism, in spite of the popularity of the approaches by Knight, Knights, and New Criticism, also survived to some extent to this century, in the form of psychoanalytic character studies (e.g. Green 1979, Adelman 1982 and Kristeva 1987), for example. Similarly, also bibliographical studies on Shakespeare have been carried out in this century.

In recent years a new 'alternative' or post-modern school towards Shakespeare has also emerged. It includes a wide variety of approaches - deconstructive, semiotic, New Historical, cultural materialist, and feminist, for example - with a wide variety of theoretical backgrounds. For example, post-modern Shakespeare critics have been influenced by the major writings of Barthes, Foucault, Althusser, Gramsci, Brecht, Derrida, Benjamin, Kristeva, Macherey, and Lacan. Other important sources of influence have been semiotics, new British and American historiography, and Bakhtin (for these approaches see the collection of essays in Drakakis 1985 and 1992, and Drakakis's preface 1985:1-2 and 1992:27-37.) All these approaches, however, share the recognition that criticism is an "openly pluralist activity", and the wish to challenge "the existing dominant paradigm" of Shakespeare criticism (Drakakis 1985:1-2).

Critics working within this approach have argued that to see Shakespeare as Ben Jonson or Coleridge did is no longer valid or interesting. For Jonson (as expressed in his poem prefixed to the Shakespeare First Folio), Shakespeare's plays are "not of an age, but for all time". For Coleridge (see 1969:122), Shakespeare appears as someone whose "works came out of the unfathomable depths of his oceanic mind". In Drakakis's view (1985:5) this is

a Shakespeare perfectly familiar to modern criticism; a chameleon figure whose work resists in its very essence any dogged questions that would tie it to time and place.

For post-modern Shakespeare critics this image of the all-wise and atemporal Bard whose writings convey a universal message of truth, wisdom and beauty to audiences of all ages represents an ideological move with

which Shakespeare's dramas were canonized and domesticated by liberal humanist critics. Instead, these critics suggest, Shakespeare is most definitely not "for all time", but always in time, a product of history, culture, and ideology. Shakespeare's texts, like literary texts in general, are thus not regarded as closed universes of established and correct real meanings, but as open and plural, social, cultural and historical.

Such critics as the New Historicists in America and their radical and Marxist counterparts in Britain, the cultural materialists, have put the case of the historically relative Shakespeare very strongly. In their work they have repudiated the 'old' historicism exemplified by Tillyard. Similarly, they have explicitly set themselves against earlier non-historicist approaches, in particular, against New Critical or 'poetic' approaches such as illustrated by Knights and Knight (see also Viswanathan 1980:40-1).

What is particularly interesting for the purposes of the present study is that there has recently been a heated literary critical debate, referred to as the "Bardbiz", about the validity of the new alternative approaches to Shakespeare. This debate took place on the pages of the *London Review of Books*, and it went on for almost two years. (About the same time there was a similar, but shorter, and more scholarly debate on the plausibility of new historicized and politicized readings of Shakespeare's work in the pages of the journal *New Literary History* (21:3, 1990).)

To show the interesting and complex field of tensions within which Shakespeare's texts, and criticism on Shakespeare, are located nowadays, a short account of the main points of the debate may be in place. It was Terence Hawkes who initiated the debate by reviewing a number of historically and socially oriented new books on Shakespeare as the cultural artefact in the *London Review of Books* (22 February, 1990). Among other things, Hawkes (1990:13) gave a short introduction to the central principles of both New Historicism and cultural materialism:

fundamentally, the project has involved locating the drama in history. First, by reinserting the plays into the cultural history of their own time, by abandoning the modern category of 'literature' and merging them back into the context of the circulating discourses from which 'English' has prised them, it sets out to judge the degree to which the drama was or was not complicit with the powers of the state that seem to sustain it. Second, by inserting the 'after-lives' of the plays into subsequent history and by historicizing salient features of 'literature' and 'criticism', it offers to assess their use as instruments of present cultural meaning.

Very soon, an agitated comment followed. This comment, voiced by James Wood (22 March, 1990:5), strongly criticized cultural materialists for reducing texts into poor sponges that soak up "the various historical, ideological and social discourses of the day". In other words, Wood's main grudge against cultural materialists was that these critics do not as-

sign any objective power, or meanings to the text, but reduce them into the sum total of the extra-textual pressures and of the readings and interpretations they have suffered through the ages. For Wood, cultural materialists thus appeared to argue that history totally determines texts and that, consequently, their readings were completely predictable ("Of course *King Lear* is sexist") and sinister.

Wood's comment set the tone for the ensuing debate. Like Wood, many other writers were very concerned about cultural materialists' devaluation of the text. The New Historicist and cultural materialist argument that they do not have any faith in the intrinsic value of literary texts (e.g. Goldberg 1990:462) and that value is essentially socially and discursively produced (e.g. Evans 13 September 1990:4) seemed to suggest to the traditionalists a fundamental repudiation of the value and meaning of Shakespeare's work. For instance, Graham Martin (1990:4) insisted that cultural materialists were wrong in arguing that Shakespeare's texts are cultural products, because in his view there is "something" about these texts which makes them such a peculiarly fertile site for the production of meanings. This "something", he suggested, is either that the written texts are "so riven with ideological contradictions . . . that no unifying account can ever be proposed" or that Shakespeare is "a dazzlingly accomplished writer in such a variety of styles", whose texts "energetically resist interpreters in the same degree that they feed a passion for appropriating them". In either case, the text has a certain objective status and certain power, no matter whether it is textual or authorial, to influence our interpretations or appropriations of itself. Another complaint in a similar tone was expressed by Boris Ford (12 July 1990:4), an eminent Shakespeare scholar: he was concerned that cultural materialists do not appear to enjoy, to be moved or restored by Shakespeare. In other words, he found it shocking that for these radical critics, Shakespeare's art is not a source for a personal aesthetic, emotional or spiritual experience, but a highly rational and ideological experience, one that questions Shakespeare's texts and, in particular, the canonized readings of them.

Still other commentators criticized the tendency by cultural materialists to politicize the text. It was Wood again who introduced this topic: in his letter (22 March 1990) he argued that cultural materialists consider Shakespeare essentially reactionary and complicit with the powers of the state of the day. This point, in turn, excited writers with a cultural materialist orientation to elaborate the idea of Shakespeare as an ideological product. For example, such critics as Martin Orkin (13 June 1991:4-5), and Ania Loomba (15 August 1991:4) made the case of the post-colonial Shakespeare. Orkin pointed out that the South African educational system has always privileged the author's intention and the authority of the text. In his view, this is in fact a political strategy to produce "submissive and

unquestioning subjects" who are not aware of the complexities in, and suggested by, the texts, as well as the complexities in their use of it as South Africans. In very much the same vein, Loomba (1991:4) wrote that, rather than focussing on the author and the author's text, literary criticism should focus on the ways in which Shakespeare was used within colonial education, and on how his plays interacted with the cultural practices of his day. For post-colonial readers, Loomba suggested, this approach is "a huge liberation" because, instead of "parroting tired praises of Shakespeare's 'complexity'", they can now assert their own varying responses to him. In short, both of these writers regarded texts as political by emphasizing Shakespeare's texts, not as embodiments of unchanging authorial meanings, but as cultural artefacts, or as media through which a dominant culture has tried to establish its hegemony.

As can be seen from the examples above, the debate was not only focussed on cultural materialism, but also on criteria for interpretation. What makes it particularly interesting is that the commentators were voicing their particular interpretive criteria in very explicit terms. The questions of authorial intention and text, text-immanency of meaning, the objectivity of the text, the readers' varied and conflicting social, cultural and historical identities, as well as the role and power of the institutions, ideologies and discourses were central issues in the debate. In more established forms of literary criticism this is perhaps more seldom the case. The negotiation of the meaning of literary texts by alternative critics thus involves an emphasis on the role of context as a determining factor in the assignment of meaning, and a radical marginalization of the power of the text. In the light of the above discussion of the nature of the interpretation of written texts, it could perhaps be asked, however, whether the complete marginalization of the text is an acceptable move. While it is admittedly true, as the alternative critics also argue, that context is clearly a powerful force affecting interpretation, at the same time it is equally true that the text does have quite a lot of power. It is not an empty sensory stimulus which can validly be made to mean anything that an interpreter wishes, but it has a great deal of power to affect, through its language, its interpretation. This implies that in order to appreciate the text, the interpreter should pay careful attention to the text.

The fervor of the Bardbiz debate shows that the problem of literary interpretation, of Shakespeare interpretation, in particular, is topical. Shakespeare, or Bardbiz, is a loaded business and no one, including the literary critics analyzed in this study as well as the present writer, can hope to be out of it. More specifically, the texts by Knight, Dollimore, and Leppänen, too, must be seen in the broader context of Bardbiz, of the multiple and even conflicting values and ideologies within which Shakespeare's texts are located. (For different accounts of the development of

Shakespeare criticism in the twentieth century see Viswanathan 1980; Drakakis 1985:1-26, Grady 1991 and Taylor 1989.)

## 5.2 Literary criticism and *King Lear*

If Shakespeare criticism is a plural business, so is the criticism written about *King Lear*. To begin with, it has been uncertain what the official text of *King Lear* is, whether it is the First Quarto (originally published in 1608) or Folio version (published in 1623). Kenneth Muir (1990:241) points out that, until recently, all editions of the play were based on both of the original texts. Even if it was usually agreed that the Folio text was the better, editions usually included passages and even whole scenes from the Quarto. Recently, however, it has been argued that it is a mistake to conflate the two texts (see e.g. Taylor and Warren 1986). The reason for this is that there are clear differences between them: the Folio text is, for example, longer and more theatrical. It is also important to see that both texts have an integrity of their own which has been distorted by the earlier practice of conflation (Wells and Taylor 1990:943). Consequently, it has been argued that the Folio and Quarto represent two separate versions of the play. For this reason the new Oxford edition of the complete works by Shakespeare, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (1988), includes both of the texts.

The controversiality of *King Lear* has also been shown in the numerous adaptations to which the play has been subjected in its history. Often, it seems, the sombre and cruel tragedy of Lear, the horrible blinding of Gloucester and the death of Cordelia have proved too much for readers and theatre audiences. An extreme example of this attitude is Nahum Tate: in 1681 he produced an adaptation of the play which had a happy ending with Cordelia in love with Edgar, and with Lear restored to the throne. This sanitized version held the stage throughout the eighteenth century (see e.g. Leggatt 1988:4). Sometimes, adaptations have also been triggered by more contemporary interests: a Finnish example of this is the Marxist adaptation by Matti Rossi in 1972 which attempted to convert the play into a tragedy depicting the collapse of pre-capitalist/capitalist society (see also Leppänen 1988).

The controversiality of *King Lear* is also clear in the number of critical comments that the play has received in its history. In the twentieth century, in particular, the proliferation of critical literature has been tremendous. It was A.C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) that set the tone for much later criticism in considering *King Lear* Shakespeare's greatest achievement, but not his best play (Bradley 1969:83). Bradley intro-

duced many questions, such as whether the play is well constructed, whether it can be acted, whether it is pessimistic, whether the opening scene is credible, etc., which subsequent generations of critics have returned to. In spite of the fact that later critics do not always agree with Bradley, they nevertheless, as Muir (1990:244) points out, "agree that most of these questions should be asked." Most significantly, Bradley (1969:97) suggests that the play might be entitled *The Redemption of King Lear* and argues that

there is nothing more noble and beautiful in literature than Shakespeare's exposition of the effect of suffering in reviving the greatness and eliciting the sweetness of Lear's nature.

In other words, Bradley introduced the theme of Lear's possible growth and maturation, a theme which later critics have also addressed time after time.

In his introduction to *King Lear* Alexander Leggatt (1988:xi) argues that in the twentieth century this play has replaced *Hamlet* as the play most commonly regarded as Shakespeare's masterpiece. The explanation to this, in Leggatt's view, is that, unlike earlier generations who found the play's story-telling untidy and its vision cruel, modern audiences find the play somehow more familiar. This is because modern audiences are more aware of, and used to, violence and atrocities occurring in the world as well as to unconventional and not necessarily realistic means of picturing them in the theatre. In short, Leggatt argues, *King Lear* can now be appreciated more than ever before. This may well be true, and the play can perhaps more easily find its place and voice in our era.

Nevertheless, it is equally true that the play has not been domesticated completely. In this century, the play has been examined, for example, for its sources, its characterization, imagery and symbolism, and for its potential Christian or agnostic undertones (for overview of criticism see Muir 1990). As in post-modern Shakespeare criticism in general, in *King Lear* criticism alternative approaches have also been offered. To mention a few, in addition to Dollimore and his cultural materialist reading of the play, such critics as Terry Eagleton (1986), from a left-wing deconstructive perspective, Kiernan Ryan (1989) from a humanist Marxist perspective, and Kathleen McLuskie (see e.g. 1985), from a post-structuralist feminist perspective, have challenged earlier 'established' approaches to the play and suggested new readings which center on such problems as reading against the grain, power, property, gender, sexuality and misogyny.

In sum, *King Lear* has been, and continues to be, an interesting critical challenge. Partly because of this, it will also be an interesting analytical challenge to examine the (possibly variant) linguistic strategies

with which literary critics have interpreted the play and mediated their particular interpretive criteria to readers.

### 5.3 Literary critical essays as a text type

Literary criticism and its linguistic and discursive features, conventions and strategies have not been studied much. Recently, however, there have been signs that this may be changing: academic writing seems to be developing into an interesting topic for linguistic, discourse analytic and stylistic study both in the U.S.A. and Britain (see, for example, the collection of essays on academic writing in Nash 1990). This growing interest may be related to a new kind of self-reflectiveness within academic communities, to a concentration on the ways with which literature studies, for instance, address their readers, and, in particular, how they manage (or do not manage) to socialize undergraduates or otherwise uninitiated people into their discourse conventions.

Literary criticism is a heterogeneous field. In Ronald Carter's and Walther Nash's view (1990:147-8) its diversification shows in the way it is generally regarded as a complex act socially, psychologically, politically and aesthetically. As Carter's and Nash's (1990:152-172) case analyses demonstrate, there is a great deal of variation in, for example, the ways in which literary critics picture their own role in criticism: the roles they adopt range from 'autocratic' experts to 'democratic' colleagues of the readers. The internal diversification of writing about literature is also emphasized by Diane Belcher. She (1992: 4) argues, referring to a study carried out by Bazerman (1988), that a problematic feature in discourse on literature (as in the discourses within the humanities and social sciences in general) is "the instability of the rhetorical universe", the fact that the conventions and potential audience for writers within these disciplines may be diversified. In addition, it seems, the diversity of literary criticism derives also from the fact that there are at least two sub-fields, academic criticism and popular, column-journalism and periodical review, which share some of their conventions, but which also have conventions specific to their field only.

In spite of the diversity of the field, there is also something that all forms of literary criticism, as well as of academic writing in general, share. Nash (1990:28-9) points out that there exists a Western tradition of academic writing, which is observed in schools and higher education in Europe and the United States. This tradition was initiated in Classical times, and it was mediated to us by clerical writers of the Middle Ages. It involves practices of, and recommendations for, rhetorical structure and

management of language in writing. It also involves a number of 'moral' maxims: maxims of truth, accuracy, lucidity, and impersonality. Nevertheless, these virtues may also be flouted or violated, deliberately or not, for the purpose of self-protection, self-esteem, or elitism, for example.

One feature which is also common to all forms of literary criticism is, according to Carter and Nash (1990:147-8), that it is usually agreed that the primary function of literary criticism is judgement. In their view, judgement involves four acts, evaluation (the assertion that a work is good, bad, etc.), functional assessment (a declaration that the work is (in)adequate to its professed purpose, or to the purpose read into it by the critic), correction, and interpretation (some statement about the meaning of the work; including possibly the act of reinterpretation). Another typical feature, and major function, of criticism in Carter's and Nash's view is argument: mostly, arguments accompany judgements, particularly in academic literary criticism. According to Carter and Nash an argument involves a "principlial" argument (the presentation of a general thesis) and a demonstration (e.g. citation, close examination, classification and comparison of details). A third major distinguishing characteristic of literary criticism in Carter's and Nash's (1990:150) and Nash's (1990:25) view is that there is in literary criticism, in popular or journalistic criticism in particular, an affective or persuasive element. This is "the expression of a creative impulse, an indulgence of the critic's temperament, an outburst of pleasure, or testiness, a mischievous impulse to amuse or beguile the reader" (Carter and Nash 1990:150).

On the level of language these shared functions are manifest in what Carter and Nash refer to as the three critical keys to critical style. These are generalization, modality, and affectiveness. By generalization they refer to how the critic attempts to formulate powerful general statements about an author or text. Modality, in turn, refers to the extent to which the critic modalizes his/her judgements and arguments with modal structures. Finally, affectiveness means the amount of affective elements, imagery, figurative language and persuasion, for example, the critic includes in his/her text. (Carter and Nash 1990:151-152; see also Simpson 1990).

It has been argued by Susan Peck MacDonald (1990:30) that literary criticism, particularly current 'vanguard' criticism, is generally 'difficult'. As linguistic indicators of this difficulty she mentions sentence length, syntactic complexity, and complex and shifting terminology. Because of these features, she argues, current literary criticism is not very "readable".

In sum, previous research into literary critical style and discourse conventions suggests that there seems to be both variation and uniformity in literary criticism. There exist several forms of literary criticism, of

which academic criticism is only one, and critics may also define their role and function in various ways. What is common to most forms of literary criticism is, however, that its main functions are judgement, argument and persuasion, and that they use such linguistic strategies as modality, generalizations, affectiveness, sentence length, syntactic complexity and terminology, among others, to realize these functions. In addition, what also binds the heterogeneous field of literary criticism together is the awareness of the existence of a common underlying tradition of rhetorical structure, linguistic conventions and moral maxims in Western academic writing.

#### 5.4 The motivation for the choice of the data

Some of the reasons behind the choice of the essay by Knight and Dollimore are perhaps obvious by now. From the point of view of literature, the topicality of the conflict between traditionalists and post-modernists in Shakespeare studies makes the analysis of the two essays interesting. Knight's essay is an example of the poetic tradition of Shakespeare criticism; Dollimore's essay, in turn, is cultural materialist. An initial observation on the two essays could be that, in theory, they seem to assign a different amount of power to the text. Knight considers the text to be, besides a temporal and experiential entity, also an objective, structural and spatial construct. Dollimore, in turn, considers the text to be, not spatial and experiential, but cultural, historical and ideological. It would thus seem that the two critics' negotiate the meaning of the play differently by relying on different interpretive criteria: Knight seems to emphasize the role of the text in interpretation, whereas Dollimore seems to emphasize the role of context. Further, they can also be regarded as suggesting to readers two different interpretive lenses through which *King Lear* has been, can or should be looked at. Therefore, the two essays are selected as research data: it will be an interesting challenge to attempt to find out whether the two critics' apparently different theoretical and critical orientations are manifest on the level of the language of the essays, of the linguistic strategies with which they suggest their interpretive criteria.

A more technical reason behind the choice of these two essays is that their status as texts is similar. First, both Knight and Dollimore can be characterized as academic critics: their genre and implied audience is similar. Second, both texts are chapters in a collection of essays by their respective authors. Third, both texts have been reprinted as individual essays in other publications, which gives them a certain independent status as texts. Fourth, both texts are about the same length: Knight's essay is 17

pages long (6151 words), and Dollimore's essay 15 pages long (5769 words). The two texts can thus be considered comparable.

One final reason for focussing on the interpretation of *King Lear*, is the present writer's longtime interest in the text. In 1984, I wrote my M.A. thesis on the idea of order in a number of Shakespeare's dramas, including *King Lear*. This was a study influenced by 'old historicism', and it argued that the idea of order in Shakespeare's drama changed gradually from a more or less orthodox Tudor notion to a more complex and humanistic one. In 1988 I wrote my Licentiate thesis on a Finnish Marxist translation of *King Lear* by Matti Rossi. This study suggested to me the idea of literary interpretation as recontextualization. With the present study my focus has shifted from the play itself to texts written about it as lenses which refract and mediate the text in different ways. With these studies, I have thus moved from 'old' historicism to new historicism, and from the text itself with its text-immanent meanings ('order') to the text as a forum where the readers, author and context meet and even struggle for power.

To summarize, this section has attempted, first, to specify the materials chosen for the present analysis from both a literary and stylistic-linguistic perspective; second, it has explained the more particular motivation behind the choice of the two essays as data. From the literary camera angle criticism written about *King Lear* is interesting because it reflects the changing, various and even conflicting views of Shakespeare's work, in general, and of this play, in particular. It was shown above that the question of interpretation of Shakespeare's dramatic texts is a highly loaded and topical one: recent radical criticism, one example of which is Dollimore's work, has challenged many of the fundamental assumptions and values of earlier 'old' historicist, and humanist criticism, such as represented by for example Knight's work. From a stylistic and linguistic camera angle, it is interesting to find out what linguistic conventions the critics use to mediate their interpretive criteria, and whether these are in any way related to the conventions that earlier research has suggested as typical of literary criticism. More particular reasons behind the choice of the two essays as research data are that they represent an interesting analytical challenge, for theoretically and critically they clearly represent radically different outlooks on *King Lear*. It will be interesting to see whether and in what ways their different orientation becomes manifest in the language used by the critics. In addition, their choice is motivated by the fact that their text type and status as texts is similar; and by the present writer's history.

## 6 THE MEDIATION OF INTERPRETIVE CRITERIA IN LITERARY CRITICAL ESSAYS BY G. WILSON KNIGHT AND JONATHAN DOLLIMORE

In this chapter I shall analyze G. Wilson Knight's essay '*King Lear* and the comedy of the grotesque' (1930/1959), and Jonathan Dollimore's '*King Lear* (c. 1605-6) and essentialist humanism' (1984/1989) for the purpose of identifying, examining and comparing the linguistic strategies used by the critics to mediate a certain set of interpretive criteria for their readers. The analysis will also include a discussion of where its findings will be related to what either the two critics themselves (outside the essays), or other scholars, have written about their interpretive criteria. For the reader's reference, the essays are included in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

### 6.1 G. Wilson Knight's '*King Lear* and the comedy of the grotesque'

G. Wilson Knight originally published his essay on *King Lear* in a collection of essays on Shakespeare's tragedy, entitled *The Wheel of Fire* in 1930. Since then the essay has been widely reprinted. Knight suggested a whole new approach to the study of Shakespeare's drama, which, instead of focussing on the examination of plot, characters, or the historical context of the dramas, emphasized the plays as poetic artefacts. Essentially, his project involved internalistic or "intrinsic" commentary, where everything

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was left to the commentator and the text (Viswanathan 1980:47). In doing this, he was extremely influential: as Grady (1992:90) points out, his poetic, or "spatial" technique of analysis became widely adopted and permeated critical practice in the heyday of New Criticism from the forties through the sixties.

Next, the analysis of the essay will be presented. The analysis follows the steps labelled in the previous section; the first one deals with the notion of text:

### 6.1.1 The notion of the text

In this section I shall examine what kind of notion of the primary text there is in Knight's essay. To give an answer to this, I shall look at the ways in which the critic quotes, comments, refers to, and characterizes the text of *King Lear* (hereafter *KL*). The text is quoted 62 times, and referred to 14 times. The number of words quoted is 1274, which adds up to 20.7 % of the total amount of words used in the essay (6151). One fifth of the essay thus consists of quotations, which clearly indicates that Knight relies a great deal on the primary text as a basis for his interpretation. A total of 40 (64.5 %) of the quotations are separated from the rest of the text by indentation and spacing. The rest of the quotations, 22 cases (35.5 %), are embedded within Knight's own text. Further, 44.7 % of the quotations are at least two lines long; the rest are shorter than this.

With the exception of the first two introductory paragraphs, every paragraph of the essay contains quotations. A particularly interesting example of this is the ending of the essay. There Knight, after having built up his interpretation of the play as a comedy of the grotesque, suggests a completely new level of meaning for the primary text. He does this by first giving a quotation from *KL* and then using it to suggest his interpretation. Interestingly, the quotation is nine lines long, whereas Knight's contribution is eight lines long. As this is the final paragraph of the essay, the amount of space and prominence devoted to the primary text is particularly noticeable.

It is important to see that Knight uses quotations to illustrate his interpretation, as arguments, or evidence for them, like this:

From the start, the situation has a comic aspect. . . . It is childish, foolish - but very human. So, too, is the result. Sincerity forbids play-acting, and Cordelia cannot subdue her instinct to any judgement advising tact rather than truth. The incident is profoundly comic and profoundly pathetic. It is, indeed, curious that so storm furious a play as *King Lear* should have so trivial a domestic basis: it is the first of our many incongruities to be noticed. The absurdity of the old King's anger is clearly indicated by Kent:

Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow

Upon the foul disease.

(I i 166)

The result is absurd.... (161)<sup>13</sup>

This extract shows how Knight typically relates his own interpretive statements ("the situation has a comic aspect"; "the incident is profoundly comic and profoundly pathetic."; "the result is absurd") to the text of *KL* by referring to or quoting it. It is also interesting to see how he relates to the primary text with his own interpretation: the strategy, "the absurdity . . . is clearly indicated", which has a categorical, unmodalized statement in the passive voice which is again characteristic of Knight. More will be said about this strategy later on, but it is sufficient to point out here that Knight seems to regard the status of the primary text as evidence for his own interpretation as a given fact, which shows in the way he does not modalize his statements, or present further arguments to back them up.

What is more important to note at this stage is however that, judging by the quantity of citations from, and references to, the primary text it seems that Knight's interpretation of *KL* seems to be anchored fairly closely onto the primary text, which for example Carter and Nash (1990:172) regard as a feature of good critical style. Citations give the readers a chance to test the critic's interpretation against concrete textual evidence. A look at the number of the references to and quotations from the primary text in Knight's essay thus shows that *KL* appears to be important to the critic, and that he backs up his interpretation by numerous quotations from the primary text.

The next analytical question is how Knight characterizes his primary text. A partial answer to this question is that it seems that *KL* is both a play performed on stage and viewed by an audience, and a written text. Knight refers to *KL* as a play 16 times. A typical example is the following:

But indeed this recurrent stress on the incongruous and the fantastic is not a subsidiary element in *King Lear*: it is the very heart of the play. We watch humanity grotesquely tormented, cruelly and with mockery impaled: nearly all the persons suffer some form of crude indignity in the course of the play. (173)

In addition, Knight also states that the experience (allegedly) shared by him and his readers is that of watching a play ("we watch humanity"), and one in which there is a temporal progression of "situations" (161), "incidents" (161, 170), and "acts" (p. 162, 164) (here: "in the course of the play"). Moreover, the use of perceptual verbs such as *watching* and *seeing* is a typical feature of Knight's style. As will later be seen in connection with the analysis of the readers and context in Knight's essay, the use of

<sup>13</sup> The numbers at the end of the citations from Knight's text refer to the page numbers of the original essay, reprinted also in the Appendix 1.

such verbs is usually motivated by Knight's interpretive criteria, but it may be that their usage also relates to Knight's conceptualization of *KL* as a play performed on the stage which we as spectators watch.

In contrast to the numerous references to, and implications of, *KL* as a play, there are only two explicit indications in the essay that it is also a written text. These are the following:

Yet, as we close the sheets of this play, there is no horror, no resentment. (175)

and

Perhaps humor, too, is inwoven in the universal pain, and the enigmatic silence holds not only an unutterable sympathy, but also the ripples of an impossible laughter whose flight is not for the wing of human understanding; and perhaps it is this that casts its darting shadow of the grotesque across the furrowed pages of *King Lear*. (176)

Both passages suggest that *KL* is a text, a book with pages, which we can read and re-read. Knight's alternation between seeing *KL* as a play and a text, or perhaps even as both, is an indication that it is not a straightforward notion to him. In fact, when we look more closely at the ways in which he characterizes the play/text we see that this is indeed the case. For him, the play/text (hereafter referred to as simply 'text') seems to be a complex, multi-dimensional entity which is simultaneously spatial and temporal, a construct with a complex internal structure, and a temporal event where there is a series of acts and incidents unwinding in time. This is how Knight himself describes his approach in the beginning of *The Wheel of Fire*:

A Shakespearean tragedy is set spatially as well as temporally in the mind. By this I mean that there are throughout the play a set of correspondences which relate to each other independently of the time sequence which is the story. (1930/1959:3)

The two dimensions of the text become obvious if we look at the kinds of wordings - noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials and images that Knight uses when he writes about *KL*. There are in the essay two obvious lexical patterns which mediate two quite different, but interrelated, images of the primary text. The first pattern will here be called spatial, and the second temporal.

The **spatial pattern** pictures the text as a complex, and hierarchic construct with different structures and levels of meaning. First, there is in the essay a pattern of noun phrases which mediate an image of the text as a construct which has a definite theme, or "core", and various levels, or "regions". TABLE 1 lists this pattern as follows:<sup>14</sup>

**TABLE 1** Spatial noun phrases in Knight's essay suggesting that *KL* has a 'core' and a number of 'regions'

1.	the		heart	of Shakespearean tragedy (161)
2.	the		root	of the play (161)
3.	the	imaginative	core	of the play (161)
4.	the		basis	of the play (162)
5.	the		theme	of the play (162)
6.	the		heart	of this play (165)
7.	the		core	of the play (168)
8.	the	ridiculous	basis	of his tragedy (168)
9.	this	particular	region	of the terrible (168)
10.	the		playground	of madness (168)
11.	the		setting	of Lear's madness (168)
12.	this		territory	of the grotesque and the fantastic (170)
13.	the		back	of the tragedy (170)
14.	its	especial	province (170)	
15.	the	very	heart	of the play (173)
16.	the		texture	of the whole play (174)
17.	the	very	heart	of the play (175)

TABLE 1 shows that Knight uses noun phrases which suggest that the text has as core. These include "the heart" (1, 6, 15, 17), "the core" (3, 7), "the basis" (4,8), "the root" (2), and "the theme" (5). The four references to the text as having "a heart", and the reference to it as having "a root" are particularly interesting in this sense: they suggest that the core of the text is also somehow 'organic' and alive. These noun phrases clearly have a spatial value, too, for all of them suggest that the text is to be perceived as an object in space.

Moreover, Knight uses noun phrases which suggest that the text contains various 'regions'. These include "the region" (9), "the playground" (10), "the setting" (11), "this territory" (12), "the back" (13), and "its . . . province" (14). These kinds of spatial noun phrases suggest that the text is like a map which we can either perceive in front of us as a whole, or study bit by bit, by focussing on a particular "region", or theme. The critic is thus offering us a pattern of nouns used in their metaphorical senses to liken the structure of the text to the structure of a map.

In comparison with this pattern of map-images, the choice of the word "texture" (16) to refer to the structure of the text seems interesting.

<sup>14</sup> Phrases in this context refer to sentence-internal linguistic units which have their own structure and which function as constituents in sentences. These phrases may consist of a single word (as in *Lear* or *sees*), or of several words (*the old king*). They can be noun, verb, adjective, adverb and prepositional phrases; these phrases derive their names from the word class to which their head belongs (cf. Aarts and Aarts 1982:11).

According to a dictionary definition (Collins CoBuild 1989) 'texture' can denote

1. the way that something feels when you touch it;
2. its appearance, considered from the point of view of the quality and structure of the substance that it is made from;
3. its structure, for example whether it has lots of holes, or is very heavy and dense;
4. the impression of a piece of music or a work of literature on you as a result of the way its different elements are combined, so as to it is often possible to identify it as being composed or written by a particular person.

It seems that in Knight's use of the term both dimensions of the word are included. The 'touching-appearance' sense is also supported and emphasized by certain verb phrases in the essay. For instance, Knight writes of "smiles and tears interwoven here" (175), of humor being "inwoven in the universal pain" (176), of us "touch(ing) the unknown" (161), or being "in touch with the exquisitely pathetic" (173). The text seems to have a structure where different themes, like threads in a piece of cloth are interwoven, and which we can touch "to understand, and feel" (169) its texture. Simultaneously, the texture of the text can suggest the structure or style of Shakespeare's writing.

That the text has a complex hierarchic structure is also suggested by various other noun phrases. For example, consider Knight's first attempt in characterizing *KL* :

*King Lear* is great in the abundance and richness of human delineation, in the level focus of creation that builds a massive oneness, in fact, a universe, of single quality from a multiplicity of differentiated units . . . (160)

A similar view is also mediated in this extract:

But indeed this recurrent stress on the incongruous and the fantastic is not a subsidiary element in *King Lear*: it is the very heart of the play. We watch humanity grotesquely tormented, cruelly and with mockery impaled: nearly all the persons suffer some form of crude indignity in the course of the play. I have noticed the major themes of *Lear* and *Gloucester*: there are others. (173)

These extracts show how, besides having a "heart", *KL* has also other, subsidiary elements. On the whole, this pattern includes noun phrases such as "the whole" (175), which can be divided into several "elements" (168, 174, 175), "plane(s)" (171), "units" (160) or "themes" - such as the "*Lear*-theme" (163, 171, 174), the "*Gloucester*-theme" (163,169,171, 174), the "*hate*-theme" (172), the "major themes" (173), and the "main theme" (172).

Knight's essay has yet another noun pattern which contributes to the image of the text as a static spatial construct, namely, nominalizations. For example, he writes

The heart of a Shakespearean tragedy is centered in the imaginative, in the unknown; and in *King Lear* where we touch the unknown, we touch the fantastic. (168)

In this extract "the imaginative", "the fantastic", and "the unknown" are examples of nominalized adjectives. They appear to be used by Knight to refer to the themes of the text. That these nominalizations are spatial in value becomes obvious if we examine them in their co-text: for example, there seems to be a semantic link between them and the spatial verb phrases or noun phrases which often accompany them. TABLE 2 lists the other spatial nominalizations of the essay:

**TABLE 2 Spatial nominalizations in Knight's essay**

1.	(comedy of)	the	grotesque (160, title)
2.	(pain of)	the purely	tragic (160)
3.		the	comic (160)
4.		the	tragic (160)
5.	(centered in)	the	imaginative (161)
6.	(centered in)	the	unknown (161)
7.	(touch)	the	unknown (161)
8.	(touch)	the	fantastic (161)
9.		the	absurd (168)
10.		the	fantastic (168)
11.	(stroke of)	the	absurd (168)
12.	(region of)	the	terrible (168)
13.	(bordering on)	the	fantastic (168)
14.	(territory of)	the	grotesque and the fantastic (170)
15.		the	grotesque (171)
16.	(merged into)	the	ridiculous (171)
17.	(reflected into)	the	tragically-absurd (171)
18.	(stroke of)	the	grotesque and absurd (172)
19.	(quickened to)	the	grotesque and incongruous (172)
20.	(vision of)	the	grotesque,
		the	incongruous ,
		the fantastically	horrible (172)
21.	(prepared. . .for)	the	grotesque (172-3)
22.	(in touch with)	the	exquisitely pathetic (173)
23.	(stress on)	the	incongruous and the fantastic (173)
24.	(purification of)	the essentially	untragic (175)
25.	(grin of)	the	incongruous and absurd (175)
26.	(tragedy of)	the	incongruous (175)
27.	(shadow of)	the	grotesque (176)

TABLE 2 indicates that the most frequent spatial nominalization in Knight's essay are, not unsurprisingly, considering the title of the essay, "the grotesque" (8), "the fantastic" (5), and "the incongruous" (5). (Frequencies for the rest are: "the absurd" (4); "the tragic" (2); "the unknown" (2), "the terrible" (1); and "the comic" (1) and "the ridiculous" (1)).

Six of the nominalizations (5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 16) are embedded within a spatial noun phrase ( e.g. "the region of the terrible", "the territory of the grotesque and the fantastic") or preceded by a spatial verb phrase containing a preposition of location ("is centered in the imaginative", "bordering on the fantastic"). This, as was pointed out above, clearly adds to their spatiality. Seven of the nominalizations (2, 7, 8, 20, 22, 23) occur in a co-text which deals with the readers' (visual, affective, tactile) response, and two (11, 18) are explicitly associated with the author's technique (as in "the stroke of the absurd"); these will be dealt with later in the sections concerning the readers' and author's functions in the essay. On the whole, the examination of the nominalizations shows that Knight seems to use them when he is discussing the themes of *KL*. This finding is also supported by the fact that there are no spatial nominalizations between pages 162-167, where the critic is predominantly discussing the plot and building up enough evidence to be able to present his interpretive conclusions.

The nominalizations may be partly motivated by the fact that they are key-words in Knight's interpretation of *KL*. Their importance shows also in that their word class is often changed: for example, besides "the absurd", Knight uses the adjective "absurd", and the noun "absurdity". Analogously, there is alternation between the words "the incongruous", "incongruous" and "incongruity". In addition, there is often rewording and overwording in relation to the key-themes, adding synonyms, or near-synonyms. For example:

The core of the play is an absurdity, an indignity, an incongruity. (168)

The key-terms are also used in changing co-textual constellations: note for example:

As he becomes torturingly aware of the truth, incongruity masters his mind, and fantastic madness ensues . . . Gloucester's words hint a universal incongruity here: the fantastic incongruity of parent and child opposed. (162-3)

The reformulations Knight uses represent in fact a fairly typical strategy. Often, it seems, these reformulations could be taken as an indication of how difficult it is, in interpretation, to capture the meaning or effect that a particular text or text feature has.

On the basis of these kinds of nominal patterns, we already get an image of the primary text which is simultaneously organic and structural, alive and objective. Similarly, we get an idea that the text has a central meaning, and a number of more peripheral and less important 'regions', or planes of meaning, which, however, as will be seen later, are clearly related to, and in many ways similar to "the core".

As has been pointed out above, there is also a pattern of verb phrases which contribute to the image of the text as a spatial and static construct in the essay. In this context we shall only look at the kinds of verbs and verb phrases used with the noun phrases that mediate a spatial image of the text. Later in this section it will be seen how verb phrases are also important in mediating the function of the text in interpretation. TABLE 3 lists these verb phrases.

**TABLE 3 Spatial verb phrases in Knight's essay**

1.	the core of the play	is	an absurdity ... (168)
2.	This...	is	the basis of the play (162)
3.	It	is	the very heart of the play (173)
4.	It	is	the humour at heart of this play (165)
5.	which play	are	intrinsic in the texture of the whole (174)
6.	this . . . region of the terrible	is	the playground of madness (168)
7.	the heart of Shakespearean tragedy	is	centered in the unknown (161)
8.	the theme of the play	is	bodied . . . into a fantastic incongruity (162)
9.	these ghoulish horrors	find	a(n) . . . place in the tragedy (170)
10.	which	takes	as its . . . province this territory of the grotesque (170)
11.	which	leap	to vivid shape in the mockery of Gloucester's suicide (174)
12.	he	flashes	on us the ridiculous basis of his tragedy (168)
13.	the root of the play. . .	displays	. . . realities . . . absurd (161)
14.	I	shall notice	the imaginative core of the play (161)
15.	I . . .	cut out	the very heart of the play (175)
16.	we	are pointed	to this . . . fun at the back of the tragedy (170)

First, TABLE 3 shows that Knight uses the copula *to be* with noun and adjective phrases which refer to abstract entities which can be regarded as stable, e.g. "an absurdity", "the basis of the play", "the playground of mad-

ness", "intrinsic" (examples 1 - 8). Furthermore, the nouns functioning as subjects in these passages tend also to be abstract. Note, for example, "the core of the play" (1), and "this . . . region of the terrible" (6). The abstract nature of both the subject noun phrases and the complement noun and adjective phrases has the effect that the copula itself is used in its 'stative' sense.<sup>15</sup> The 'stative', static and spatial value of the copula is further emphasized by the fact that in each example the verb is in the non-modalized present tense. Often this means that Knight's interpretive statements are to be taken as universally valid, categorical assertions, a point which will be discussed in more detail later.

Secondly, we might note how Knight uses transitive and non-transitive verb phrases followed by an object, or an adverbial with a distinctively spatial value (9: "find . . . a place"; 10: "takes as its . . . province"; 11: "leap to vivid shape"). Here, too, Knight consistently uses verbs in the non-modalized present tense.

TABLE 3 includes a few examples with verb phrases which suggest that *KL* has a visual perceptual dimension as well (clauses 12, 13). Clause (12) suggests that a character of the play "flashes on us the ridiculous basis of his tragedy" and clause (13) that "the . . . dualism at the root of this play . . . displays . . . realities". A similar view of the text is also mediated by clauses (14), (15), and (16), which imply that the critic's or readers' interpretation of the text is a matter of 'noticing' (14), 'cutting out' (15), or being 'pointed to' (16) a particular element. Again, more will be said later about such choices and their function in the essay; suffice it here to point out how these verb phrases also suggest a view of the text as an objective and visual/perceptual entity in which different kinds of elements can be noticed, pointed out, and even cut out by either the critic or by the readers (as directed by the author's text).

There also seems to be a close interplay in the essay between spatial noun phrases and spatial verb phrases. A particularly interesting example of the verb-noun interplay is the following pair of sentences:

This particular region of the terrible bordering on the fantastic and the absurd is exactly the playground of madness. Thus the setting of Lear's madness includes a sub-plot where these elements are presented with stark nakedness, and no veiling subtleties. (168)

This passage shows a pattern of noun phrases - "this particular region of the terrible", "the playground of madness", "the setting" and "these ele-

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<sup>15</sup> *To be* can also have a 'dynamic' sense: according to Quirk and Greenbaum (1984:21), this is the case when it is used in the progressive, and when the noun or adjective phrase functioning as its complement indicates action, activity, and temporary or changing conditions. For example in 'He is being a nuisance again', the copula is clearly dynamic.

ments" - which clearly are spatial in nature in the sense that they imply that the text is a multi-layered spatial construct. These are accompanied with verb phrases which also gain a spatial value: the stative copula "is", the stative transitive verb "include", and, a non-finite phrasal verb "bordering on" which is embedded in a relative clause modifying the preceding noun phrase. Notice also how in the first sentence the nominalizations "the fantastic and the absurd" can be regarded as spatial, because they are used in connection with the expression "bordering on". Similarly, in the second sentence Knight uses a verb phrase "are presented" and two noun phrases (within a prepositional phrase) "stark nakedness" and "no veiling subtleties", which emphasize that the sub-plot in question is indeed something that we as readers can 'see'. Together the noun and verb phrases build up a complex composite image where the Knightian themes of *KL* - fantastic absurdity and madness, for example - are seen as regions and playgrounds on the map/tapestry of the text.

Next, TABLE 4 examines the kinds of adverbials (adverb phrases, prepositional phrases, noun phrases, and clauses functioning as adverbials) that Knight uses. It seems that, similarly to noun and verb phrases, there is a distinct pattern of spatial adverbials in the essay.

**TABLE 4 Spatial adverbials in Knight's essay:**

1.	the peculiar dualism	at the root of the play (161)
2.	the theme ... is bodied continually	into a fantastic incongruity (163)
3.	it is the sinister humour	at the heart of this play (165)
4.	there is . . . something satanically comic bedded	deep in it (169)
5.	the grotesque merged	into the ridiculous (171)
6.	reaches a consummation	in this bathos of tragedy (171)
7.	the insistent incongruities which leap	to vivid shape (174)
8.	which are intrinsic	in the texture of the whole play (174)
9.	we have . . . a stroke of technique	on the plane of plot-logic (171)
10.	the . . . element of the Lear-theme is . . . reflected	into the tragically-absurd (171)
11.	walk the tight-rope of our pity	over the depths of bathos and absurdity (168)

TABLE 4 illustrates how there is a pattern of prepositional phrases functioning as adverbials of place in the essay which contribute to the image of the text as a complex hierarchical construct. Again, in some cases the spatial value emerges from the interaction of the prepositional phrase with a distinctly spatial verb phrase, as in "the theme . . . is bodied . . . into a fantastic incongruity" (2). Moreover, these examples show that the text

could also be considered a three-dimensional, almost topographical construct: 'themes' are buried "deep in it" (4), and elements of the play "walk . . . over the depths of bathos and absurdity" (11). The following adverbial clauses have the same effect: they, too, seem to indicate to us that *KL*, in this context at least, is more an object than a chain of events:

**TABLE 5** Spatial adverbial clauses in Knight's essay

1.	in <i>King Lear</i> ,	where we touch the unknown, we touch the fantastic (161)
2.	it includes a sub-plot	where these same elements are presented with stark nakedness, and no veiling subtleties (168)
3.	the Gloucester-theme . . . giving us villainy	where the other shows cold callousness (172)
4.	horrors . . . of physical torment	where the other has a subtle mental torment (172)

If frequency is taken to be an indicator of the saliency of a stylistic feature, then the more frequent a feature is, the more important it can be regarded as an indicator of a particular writer's style. In the analyses of the noun phrases, verb phrases and adverbials above, this has been the underlying assumption. Nevertheless, it could equally well be argued that a stylistic feature, even though it is not frequent in a particular text, could gain stylistic prominence by its uniqueness. In Knight's essay such a feature could be the low number of temporal adverbials that suggest that the text 'always', 'forever', 'eternally', 'invariably', etc., 'is' or 'means' something in particular. In contrast, as will later be seen, there are a great many adverbials of time in the essay that refer to the frequency of the characters' or readers'/viewers' actions, to the characters or the readers of the play as 'doing' something in particular "now", "often" and "again". At the same time, as will also be demonstrated later, by for example consistently using the present tense and referring to his readers with the pronoun *we*, the writer builds up a common context for himself and his readers, thus suggesting that the text is bound to mean the same for every reader. Against this background, the suggestion of a universally shared interpretive experience, and the lack of adverbials suggesting this, the inclusion of the adverb "ever" in the second paragraph of the essay, where Knight is giving a sweeping (and spatial) definition of how Shakespeare's tragedy appears to him, seems extremely loaded:

The wonder of Shakespearian tragedy is ever a mystery - a vague, yet powerful, tangible presence; an interlocking of the mind with a profound meaning, a

disclosure to the inward eye of vistas undreamed, and but fitfully understood.  
(160)

After this preliminary synopsis, Knight refrains from using such generalizing adverbials of time. In a way it could be argued that he takes the universality of response for granted.

One interesting feature of Knight's essay is the extremely high number of adjectives that seem to have several different, but overlapping functions. For example, Knight uses them to interpret what the text, plot, or characters are like; to evaluate the text, features of the text, and the plot; and to express or describe what his responses to *KL* are like. As a consequence, we could distinguish between three adjectival functions in the essay: interpretive, evaluative, and expressive.

This categorization has some resemblance to the one suggested by Fairclough, who in turn has been influenced by Halliday's ideational-textual-interpersonal distinction of language functions. Fairclough (1989:110-119) makes the distinction between the experiential, relational and expressive values of language items. In his framework, experiential values have to do with how language choices code a particular representation of the world; relational values refer to how the use of particular wordings depends on, and helps to create social relationships between the participants; and expressive values deal with how a text producer evaluates reality. At this point, the experiential - here referred to as interpretive - values, like the expressive values, seem relevant for our purposes. Relational values of language choices will be dealt with in the analysis of the readers implied in Knight's essay.

More specifically, since we are interested in the strategies with which Knight mediates a view of the text as a spatial entity, our focus here will be limited to the kinds of adjectives that the writer uses in connection with the spatial noun phrases identified above.

It seems that the adjectives that Knight uses to modify the noun phrases mediating a spatial image of the text tend to be interpretive or evaluative. In some cases, however, it is difficult to judge what the exact value of an adjective phrase is, whether it is primarily interpretive, evaluative, or expressive, or possibly some, or even all of them. It seems that in these cases several values may be realized simultaneously, so that while Knight is for example interpreting an aspect of *KL*, he may be at the same time expressing his own response to it. In addition, adjectives often appear to mediate an image of the text which is equally spatial and temporal. In a way, adjectival choices thus function to merge together the two dimensions of the Knightian text. In this sense it could perhaps be argued that Knight's adjectives are in this sense multi-functional. Let us look at Knight's introductory summary again:

The wonder of Shakespearean tragedy is ever a mystery - a vague, yet powerful, tangible presence; an interlocking of the mind with a profound meaning ... *King Lear* is great in the abundance and richness of human delineation, in the level focus of creation that builds a massive oneness, in fact, a universe, of single quality from a multiplicity of differentiated units; and in a positive and purposeful working out of a purgatorial philosophy. But it is still greater in the perfect fusion of psychological realism with the daring flights of a fantastic imagination. (160-1)

In this passage there are adjectives which are clearly interpretive, i.e. they mainly describe what *KL* is like. These include "massive", "single", "differentiated", and "purposeful". There are also adjectives in it which are primarily evaluative, i.e. they evaluate how good or bad *KL* is, such as "vague", "powerful", "tangible", "profound", "great", and "greater", and "perfect". And there are also adjectives which are difficult to categorize, for example "daring", "fantastic" and "positive". The adjective "daring" could well be an evaluation of Shakespeare's technique (i.e. because daring, then good), but it could equally well be an expression of the writer's own personal and affective response (i.e. it feels daring to me). Analogously, "fantastic" could also be evaluative in function, implying that Shakespeare's imagination, as represented in the text of *KL*, is wonderful, but it could also be interpretive in the sense that "fantastic" is one of the keywords in the essay, with which Knight builds up an image of *KL* as a strangely comic tragedy. "Positive", in turn, is ambiguous because it can refer to Shakespeare's working of "purgatorial philosophy" as either confident or as not negative. In any case, adjectives seem to serve Knight well in fusing together what he takes as the spatial dimension of the text - Shakespeare's "art" - and what is dynamic in it - the critic's and/or readers' affective responses.

We shall return to this point later, and examine it, as well as other strategies with which Knight suggests the fusion of the two dimensions of the text. But, before that, let us have a closer look at Knight's adjectival choices. Firstly, TABLE 6 lists adjectives which seem primarily to be used to interpret and describe what *KL*, its elements, planes, levels, and themes are like:

**TABLE 6 Spatial interpretive adjectives in Knight's essay:**

1.	the	incongruous and fantastic	element of the Lear-theme (171)
2.	this	recurrent	stress on the incongruous (173)
3.	not a	subsidiary	element in <i>King Lear</i> (173)
4.	the	very	heart of the play (173)
5.	the	major	themes (173)
6.	the	insistent	incongruities (174)
7.	which are	intrinsic	in the texture. . . (174)
8.	this	main	theme (175)
9.	one	single	element of the play (175)
10.	the	very	heart of the play (175)

These adjectives help Knight to anatomize the text into hierarchic units, recurrent features, and into one essential center (the "very heart of the play"). They thus contribute to the mediation of the idea of the text as a structural entity.

The next category of adjectives is more heterogeneous. It includes adjectives which, as was suggested above, may have multiple functions. They seem to be used not only to interpret the text, but also to evaluate it and to express the critic's/readers' responses to it. TABLE 7 lists some typical examples.

**TABLE 7** Descriptive, and evaluative adjectives, and adjectives describing the readers' responses in Knight's essay

1.	[the tragedy] is	purposeless, unreasonable (174)	
2.	the tragedy is	most poignant (174)	
3.	the	uttermost	tragedy ... (175)
4.	the	most agonizing	of tragedies to endure (175)
5.	the	furrowed	pages of <i>King Lear</i> (176)
6.	a	vague, yet powerful, tangible	presence (160)
7.	a	profound	meaning (160)
8.	<i>King Lear</i> is	great	in . . . (160)
9.		so storm-furious	a play (161)
10.		so dire and stark	a limning of human destiny as is <i>King Lear</i> (171)
11.		positive and purposeful	working out of a purgatorial philosophy (160-1)
12.	it is	still greater (161)	
13.	The	peculiar	dualism at the root of this play (161)
14.	realities	absurd, hideous, pitiful (161)	
15.	its	peculiar	tension of pain (161)
16.	a	fantastic	incongruity (162)
17.	the	demonic	grin of the incongruous (175)
18.	a	cruel, ugly	sense of humour (165)
19.	the	sinister	humour at the heart of this play (165)
20.	the	macabre	humoresque (170)
21.	this	grim	fun ... at the back of the tragedy (170)
22.	this	hideous	sense of humour, at the back of the tragedy (170)
23.	this quality of	grimmiest	humour (175)
24.	something	saturnally comic	bedded deep in it (169)
25.	the	cosmic	mockery of the play (175)

These adjectives describe the tragedy, evaluate it, and express the critic's/ readers' responses to the text, to and its themes. They picture the tragedy as "fantastic" (17), "agonizing" (4), "uttermost" (3), "storm-furious" (10), and "most poignant" (2) when "purposeless" and "unreasonable" (1); "dire and stark" (11); and its pages as "furrowed" (5). The elements, themes, and planes of *KL* are considered, for example, "peculiar" (14), "fantastic" (17), and "demonic" (18). Adjectives also function to suggest that there is a sense of humor in the text which is "grim" (22), "ugly" (19), "cruel" (19), "sinister" (20), "hideous" (23), "macabre" (21), and "(saturnally) comic"

(25). Most of these adjectives are expressive and affective: in a way it could be argued that Knight is projecting his affective responses on to the text, and abstracting them as qualities of the text itself. He thus also fuses together description and evaluation of the text so that it is difficult to tell which is which.

The fact that Knight often nominalizes his key adjectives (e.g. "fantastic" and "grotesque") seems to support these observations. This strategy thus functions to establish the qualities assigned to the text, not only as descriptions of what *KL* is like, but also as its themes. We shall later see in more detail how this fossilization of initial affective impressions and intuitions as structural elements of the text builds upon the interpretation and description of the characters, incidents, acts of the play, in other words, on the temporal-dynamic dimension of the process of reading *KL*.

Another interesting pattern of adjectives in Knight's essay is represented by the expressions used to characterize the "technique" in the play. This pattern also emphasizes the image of the text as a spatial entity. Knight's argument runs typically like this:

We have a sublimely daring stroke of technique, unjustifiable, like Edgar's emphasized and vigorous madness throughout, on the plane of plot-logic, and even to a superficial view somewhat out of place imaginatively in so dire and stark a limning of human destiny as in *King Lear*; yet this scene is in reality a consummate stroke of art. (171)

As this extract shows, in referring to the "art" of *KL*, Knight is at his most evaluative. In fact, the following comprehensive list (TABLE 8) shows that the critic does not mention "art", "artistry" or "technique" without qualifying it with adjectives of a highly positive value.

**TABLE 8 Adjectives interpreting, evaluating or describing the technique of *KL* in Knight's essay**

1.	a	sublimely daring	stroke of technique (171)
2.	it is	most fearless artistic (174)	
3.	the stroke is	audacious, unashamed, and magical of effect (171)	
4.	a	consummate	stroke of art (171)
5.		consummate	art (172-3)
6.		masterful	artistry (172)
7.	Shakespeare's	masterful	technique (173)
8.	the	furthest, most exaggerated	reach of the poet's . . . (171)
9.	this	towering	stroke of the grotesque (172)

As TABLE 8 shows there are three kinds of adjective qualifying the technique of the work: the first (1 - 3) considers it for example "daring" and "audacious"; the second (4 - 7) praises it as "consummate" and "masterful"; and the third (8, 9) suggests an image of art as reaching or "towering" high. The last type is interesting in the sense that it relates to the image noted above, which suggested that the Shakespearean text has 'depths'. A rather curious image of the text as something reaching extremely high and extremely low is thus suggested. The text thus seems to be an even more complex construct than was suggested above, since, in addition to appearing as a hierarchical construct with different planes and a center, it appears as a map with regions and territories, and as something reaching both up and down.

It may be that the spatialization of the literary text is not that uncommon a strategy in literary criticism. As was pointed out above it is even possible that Knight's spatial technique became more or less a model for other critics. For example, like Knight, the New Critics certainly objectified the text and argued that it must be seen as a complex hierarchical construct. The spatialization of the text may thus be, or until the rise of constructivist and non-text-based critical approaches, may have been one of the conventions, that literary critics shared more generally. To validate this claim, of course, a larger sample of literary critical texts would have to be analyzed.

Analogously, the view that a text is, besides a spatial construct, also a temporal phenomenon and experience may also be something that is more universally shared by literary critics. In Knight's essay the **temporal dynamic dimension** of the text is mediated by a number of lexical patterns. As the following analysis will demonstrate, for Knight the text/play is temporal in two senses. First, it is temporal, because it is a temporal phenomenon, where there is a plot which unwinds in the course of the performance/reading; characters who experience the tragic actions; and incidents and situations. Secondly, it is temporal, because it is also concerned with its effect on viewers/readers, with their experience of the text. The first kind of temporality is mediated to readers by Knight's description and interpretation of the plot and the characters' actions, and the second is mediated by relating the play/text to the critic's and/or readers' responses.

More specifically, *KL* as dramatic action is shown in the way in which Knight analyzes it as having a temporal progression of events. And this takes place in spite of the fact that he states the opposite:

So I shall notice here the imaginative core of the play, and, excluding much of the logic of the plot from immediate attention, analyze the fantastic comedy of *King Lear*.(161)

In reality, he uses the next eight pages primarily to discuss the plot in an attempt to demonstrate how individual incidents in the play reveal his point that *KL* is a comedy of the grotesque.

A look at the kinds of noun phrase that Knight uses to mediate a notion of the text as a temporal experience implies that, instead of dealing with "the root" and planes and themes of the text, he is now concerned with the characters, their actions, and incidents. It could be argued that linguistically Knight's focus on the plot is indicated by the fact that the sentence topic, of which something is said, or the grammatical subject to which agency is assigned, is often a character, his/her actions, or characteristics. A typical example is the following:

Lear's instincts are themselves grand, heroic - noble even. His judgement is nothing. He understands neither himself nor his daughters:

Regan. 'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

Goneril. The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash. . . (I i 296)

Lear starts his own tragedy by a foolish misjudgment. Lear's fault is a fault of the mind, a mind unwarrantably, because selfishly, foolish. And he knows it: . . . (162)

Characters, such as Lear and Gloucester, are analyzed like this with considerable dedication. Here their prominence shows how "Lear", "he", or "Lear's fault" is consistently the sentential topic/grammatical subject who 'does' things, "starts his own tragedy", "understands nothing", "knows it". This has the effect that it is Lear, and not the readers or the critic, who is the active agent: the character is presented as independent from the fact that he really is a character in a play, and the object of the critic's or readers'/spectators' interpretive efforts. For example, in the passage above Knight does not indicate it any way that the fact that "Lear starts his own tragedy" is his interpretation, instead of a mere description of what allegedly happens in the play. It is interesting to see, however, that when the critic moves to the discussion of the 'themes' of the text, he starts to indicate his interpretive acts with explicit linguistic markers:

O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
Beat at this gate that led thy folly in,  
And thy dear judgement out!  
(I iv 294)

His purgatory is to be a purgatory of the mind, of madness. Lear has trained himself to think he cannot be wrong: he finds he is wrong. He has fed his heart on sentimental knowledge of his children's love: he finds their love is not sentimental. There is now a gaping dualism in his mind, thus drawn asun-

der by incongruities, and he endures madness. Thus the theme of the play is bodied continually into a fantastic incongruity. (162)

In this passage we see how Knight shifts his focus from Lear ("Lear has trained himself"), through a statement of what his actions mean ("there is now a gaping dualism in his mind, thus drawn asunder by incongruities"), to a statement of the play's main theme ("thus the theme of the play is bodied into a fantastic incongruity"). Again, this seems a typical strategy in the essay: the description of the characters' actions and characteristics functions as evidence for the establishment of the play's themes. Of course, it could be argued that this may be a typical characteristic of any criticism on Shakespeare's plays. It seems indeed sensible to assume that interpretation has to rely closely on the characters' actions and dialogue in order to be able to assert more general meanings or themes.

The focus on the characters of the play, linguistically realized by the noun phrases (proper names, titles, epithets, pronouns) functioning as grammatical subjects, is one indicator of Knight's conceptualization of the text as a temporal phenomenon, his references to the play as consisting of incidents is another. There is, in fact, a pattern of noun phrases in the essay which gradually builds up this idea. TABLE 9 is a list of these noun phrases.

**TABLE 9** Noun phrases used by Knight to imply a temporal progression in *KL*

1. the course of the action (161)
2. the situation (161)
3. the incident (162)
4. the situation (163)
5. the incident (164)
6. the situation (164)
7. the situation (164)
8. the most heart-wrenching of incidents (165)
9. a scene of wraith-like unreason (166)
10. this scene (167)
11. the first scene of this play (169)
12. an incident (170)
13. plot and incident (173)

The text also includes thus a course of events, a consecutive series of incidents, scenes and situations which embody, reflect and illustrate Knight's interpretive point. A very salient indicator of the fact that Knight considers *KL* temporal is also the number of adverbials of time that he uses to structure his account of the plot. TABLE 10 is a skeletal page-by-page list of these adverbials.

TABLE 10 Temporal adverbials in Knight's essay

1. - (160)
2. continually, often, from the start (161)
3. now, continually, in the beginning (162)
4. later, from the first signs, again (163)
5. at the beginning of his tragedy, intermittently, then, finally, again, recently, now, in the early scenes (164)
6. continually (165)
7. still, no longer, just, now, immediately, still (166)
8. then, swiftly, again, again, then, again, first, then (167)
9. from the start, now, for a short space, now (168)
10. now, again (169)
11. - (170)
12. then (171)
13. finally, throughout, continually, immediately, at this point, suddenly, now, just, now (172)
14. sometimes, often, again, by now, at the last (173)
15. again, again, after the death of her enemies, still (174)
16. temporarily (175)
17. at the last instant, sometimes (176)

This list, skeletal though it may be, nevertheless shows that in the essay there is a clear temporal progression in the description and interpretation of *KL*. Knight begins "from the start", and proceeds to the end, structuring his course with ample adverbial instructions, and anchoring the events of *KL* onto a common timeframe. In addition, he notes recurring events, which "continually", "often", "again" and "sometimes" foreground his interpretive points about *KL*. Consider, for example, how in the following passage Knight consistently signs both the dynamically emerging sequence of events in the play, and simultaneously links these events with his interpretation by using time adverbials:

Lear, late 'every inch a king', the supreme pathetic figure of literature, now utters the wild and whirling language of furthest madness. Sometimes his words hold profound meaning. Often they are tuned to the orthodox Shakespearian hate and loathing, especially sex-loathing, of the hate-theme. Or again, they are purely 'ludicrous', or would be, were it not a Lear who speaks them: ... (172)

Not only temporal adverbials, but also temporal verbs, tense, temporal clauses, and syntactic strategies suggesting a temporal progression of events are used to suggest to readers that the text is a temporal experience. In fact, there is a close interplay between these individual strategies, and together they have a great deal of power to mediate a notion of the

text as a temporal phenomenon. For example, let us look at the following passage:

His purgatory is to be a purgatory of the mind, of madness. Lear has trained himself to think he cannot be wrong: he finds he is wrong. He has fed his heart on sentimental knowledge of his children's love: he finds their love is not sentimental. There is now a gaping dualism in his mind, thus drawn asunder by incongruities, and he endures madness . . . As he becomes torturingly aware of the truth, incongruity masters his mind, and fantastic madness ensues. (162-3)

Several strategies for temporalizing *KL* can be identified in this extract. First, Knight uses the temporal verb "ensues" to signal the temporal progression of events. The same verb is used later again in the same function, in "the uttermost tragedy of the incongruous ensues" (175). Elsewhere, he also uses such temporal verbs as *start* (162, 169), and *follow* (164, 170). Second, the tense alternates from the future ("is to be a purgatory of the mind"), to the present perfect ("Lear has trained himself", "he has fed his heart"), and to the present ("he finds their love is not sentimental", "there is now a gaping dualism"). Third, Knight uses a temporal clause ("as he becomes torturingly aware of the truth") to show the temporal (and causal) relationship between Lear's becoming aware of the truth, and his madness. A similar example can be identified a couple of pages later:

Just as Lear's mind begins to fail, the Fool finds Edgar disguised as 'poor Tom'. (166)

And again:

As the world shakes with tempest and unreason, we endure something of the shaking and the tempest of his mind. Now his anger begins to be a lunatic thing, and when it rises to any sort of magnificent fury or power it is toppled over by the ridiculous capping of Edgar's irrelevancies: . . . (168)

Fourth, the first extract also shows how syntax, the ordering of clauses successively, can suggest temporal progression. For example, note the ordering of events in

Lear has trained himself to think he cannot be wrong: he finds he is wrong.

and in,

. . . incongruity masters his mind, and fantastic madness ensues.

In addition to a number of adjectives noted above which function to merge the spatial and temporal dimensions of the text there are a few examples of adjectives in the essay which, like the temporal adverbials,

structure the flow of events, or which signal the frequency of incidents in *KL* which, to Knight's mind, highlight his interpretive points. TABLE 11 lists these adjectives.

**TABLE 11 Temporal adjectives in Knight's essay**

1.	it is the	first	of our many incidents to note (161)
2.	from the	first	signs of Goneril's cruelty (163)
3.	in the	early	scenes (164)
4.	the	first	scene of this play (169)
5.	Regan's	final	witticism (169)
6.	we . . . have		
	our	first	sight of Lear (172)
7.	in the full		
	ecstasy of his	later	madness (173)
8.	the	final	grotesque horror in the play (174)
9.	it is the	last	hideous joke of destiny (174)
10.	the death		
	. . . is the	last	and most horrible of all the incongruities ... (174)
	the Fool . . . for	occasional	chorus (166)
11.	this	recurrent	stress on the incongruous) (173)
12.	the	insistent	incongruities (174 )

TABLE 11 shows how adjectives also contribute to Knight's construction of the text as a temporal phenomenon which has a beginning and an end, and where some incidents are "recurrent" and "insistent", whereas others are only "occasional".

In sum, the above analysis has shown that Knight uses various lexical and syntactic strategies for suggesting that *KL* is a temporal phenomenon. Moreover, like the spatial strategies, the temporal strategies are also clearly interrelated: noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials, adverbial clauses, syntax, and tense form a complex network strategy.

However, this is only half of the picture. The temporal dimension of the text also involves its effect on the readers. The notion and function of the readers in the essay will be discussed more systematically later; at this point, we shall only have a preliminary look at the kinds of strategies that Knight uses to argue that *KL* is also a viewing/reading experience. First, let us look at a passage which illustrates how in Knight's approach the text has a powerful influence on the readers.

Lear is the center of our attention, and as the world shakes with tempest and unreason, we endure something of the shaking and the tempest of his mind. (168)

This extract shows how the drama world of *KL* and the actual world of the readers/spectators are united in a common apocalyptic experience. This shared experience is implied, more specifically, by various linguistic strategies, which will later be shown to be typical in Knight's essay. First, Knight often uses the first person plural personal and possessive pronoun (*we-us-our*) to establish or, possibly, to market, his own interpretation as a universally shared one. Second, the use of the first person plural is accompanied by non-modalized verb phrases functioning as generalizations (such as "Lear is the center of our attention"; "we endure something of the shaking"). These generalizations categorically state that the critic's and his readers' experience is the same. Third, Knight uses perceptual, sensory words, illustrated here by the noun phrase "the center of our attention", and the verb phrase "endure". Fourth, the verb phrases are consistently in the present tense. This has the effect that not only the critic's reading experience appears as (allegedly) simultaneous to that of his readers, but also the actions and events of the play are closely connected with those of the readers/spectators. More specifically, it could be noted how the close connection between the *KL* "universe" and the readers'/spectators' world seems to be one of cause and effect, how the events depicted in *KL* appear to produce a powerful and allegedly identical response in everyone reading/watching the play. This idea of the play as a shared world is also supported by a couple of references in the text to "the Lear-universe" (160, 161, 163), which seems not only the world where the characters of the play are taken to live, but also one which shades into, and overlaps with the actual world of the readers/spectators of the play.

Similar strategies for suggesting that *KL* is an experience can be located in the following passage, too:

The Gloucester-theme is a certain indication of our vision and helps us to understand, and feel, the enduring agony of Lear. (168-9)

Again, the first person plural pronoun, non-modalized verb phrases in the present tense, and perceptual/cognitive, and affective verbs ("understand, and feel") are used to suggest a common experience of *KL*. Similarly, a cause-effect relationship between the text and readers is also suggested ("the Gloucester-theme is a certain indication of our vision").

The role of temporal, affective and dynamic adjectives in the mediation of *KL* as a universal reading experience could also be noted. Typically, in the formulation of his interpretive points Knight often includes adjectives. These phrases function to qualify, mostly in affective terms, the "basis", or "elements" of the text, which again enforces the close cause-and-effect relationship holding between the text and its readers. This can be seen, for example, in the following passage:

This is all the most agonizing of tragedies to endure: and if we are to feel more than a fraction of this agony, we must have sense of this quality of grimmest humour. (175)

The tragedy is (categorically) "the most agonizing", and its humor "grim-mest": there is definitely no hedging or relativizing about the effect of the text on readers/spectators.

It is also noteworthy how in none of the passages which deal with the viewing/reading of *KL* are there no adverbials of time which would tie up the readers' experiences with either a situational context of reading/watching the play, or with the temporal progression of events in the play. Instead, Knight writes about "the center of our attention", "our vision", and of "having sense of this quality of grimmest humour", using generalizations, and referring to 'our' experiences as universally "agonizing". In short, he presents the readers' responses as simultaneously spatial and temporal. They are spatial in the sense that they are, ultimately, geared towards the understanding of the themes of the play, and they are temporal, dynamic and affective in the sense that the text triggers powerful affective responses in them. The spatial and the temporal thus come together in the reading experience of *KL*.

This brings us to our next point, which is, as has already been suggested, that the two dimensions of the text in Knight's essay are not separate. The text - as a construct containing different kinds of levels - and the text's effect on readers are in a dynamic relationship of cause and effect. As we have seen, at the level of the language of the essay there are explicit indications of the two dimensions meeting, and even merging together. A particularly clear example of this is the following:

Now, when our imaginations are most powerfully quickened to the grotesque and incongruous, the whole surge of the Gloucester-theme, which has just reached its climax, floods as a tributary the main stream of our sympathy with Lear. Our vision has thus been uniquely focused to understand that vision of the grotesque, the incongruous, the fantastically-horrible, which is the agony of Lear's mind . . . (172)

This extract contains strategies which mediate a notion of the text as a spatial construct. These include, first, nominalized adjectives such as "the grotesque and incongruous". It was found out above that Knight uses nominalizations of this kind to refer to the central 'elements' or 'themes' of the play. In a way it could be argued that the nominalization of an adjective, or the fossilization of an experience by transforming, for example, '*King Lear* has a grotesque element' to 'the grotesque in *King Lear*', could be motivated by the critic's wish to emphasize that the structures of the play have their origins in the readers'/spectators' initial temporal and affective experience.

Secondly, in the extract there are other noun phrases which were identified above as spatial in value. These are "that vision of the grotesque", and the "Gloucester-theme". The former includes, in addition to a nominalized adjective, also the noun phrase "that vision". This phrase could well be taken to be a part of a visual pattern of lexical choices in the essay, which functions to suggest that the play is an object which can be 'seen' as an intricate picture, or a map. In this extract this idea is also mediated by the verb phrase "(our vision) has thus been uniquely focused". "The Gloucester-theme", as one structure within the text, could in turn be taken to be an indication of the complex and hierarchical object of the text. This idea could be supported by the contrast between "a tributary" and "the main stream of our sympathy" in the extract.

However, in this context "the Gloucester-theme" is not simply spatial in value. This is because its immediate co-text includes linguistic features which were specified above as temporal in value. For one thing, note the pattern of images suggesting a river or a flood: "the whole surge of . . . the Gloucester-theme . . . floods as a tributary the main stream of our sympathy". The idea of a theme as a flood-like natural force fits, in fact, quite nicely with the images of the text as having an organic heart or root. The text is thus mystified as something alive, besides something complex, spatial and hierarchic. Other features used as strategies for suggesting that there is a progression of events in the play are, for example, the use of a verb phrase whose tense is perfect and which also includes a temporal adverbial 'just'. In addition, the temporal clause at the beginning of the extract ("when our imaginations") also enforces the idea of the text as a successive series of events. In short, the text is not only spatial, but also temporal.

In the extract there are also features which suggest the reader response aspect of the temporal text. The use of the first person plural possessive pronoun in "when our imaginations are most powerfully quickened", in "the main stream of our sympathy", and in "our vision" is one of these features. In addition, the categorical assertion of the readers' response as uniform is also typical here. Note, for example, the categorical presupposition in "when our imaginations are most powerfully quickened to the grotesque", and the generalization in "our vision has thus been uniquely focused to". Moreover, the affective and dynamic nature of the readers' response is suggested by for example the use of the adverbs "powerfully", and by the reference to the readers' emotions as in "our sympathy".

Finally, there seems to be a one-way affective relationship between the text and the readers. As the expressions "our imaginations are powerfully quickened to" and "our vision has thus been uniquely focused to understand" demonstrate, readers are powerfully directed to under-

stand the text in a particular way. What triggers this 'understanding' is evidently something in the text: it is the text which makes us 'see' its meaning. A strategy for suggesting this is, for example, the use of "thus" to indicate a causal relationship between "the whole surge of the Gloucester-theme" and "our vision". An interesting feature is also the repetition of the noun "vision" in the same sentence: first it is introduced as "our vision", meaning the readers' understanding or response, and then it is reintroduced as "that vision of the grotesque, the incongruous, the fantastically-horrible". "Our vision" thus implies that we as readers "understand" the vision encoded in the text, i.e. its spatial structures of meaning.

Here is another example of the merging of, and dynamic relationship between, the static/spatial and dynamic/temporal dimensions of the text :

The core of the play is an absurdity, an indignity, an incongruity. In no tragedy of Shakespeare do incident and dialogue so recklessly and miraculously walk the tight-rope of our pity over the depths of bathos and absurdity. (168)

First, Knight uses strategies for spatializing the text. For example, having earlier established that the text has a core, he states that this core is "an indignity, an incongruity", thus wrapping his key concepts in yet another linguistic form. Secondly, he also temporalizes the text by referring to its "incident[s]" and "dialogue". It is interesting, too, how Knight again uses the technique of reformulation here in an attempt to specify the complexity of the meaning of the text: note his uses "an absurdity, an indignity, an incongruity", "so recklessly and miraculously", and "the depths of bathos and absurdity". Third, he introduces 'our' affective responses again, by mentioning "our pity". Again, Knight unites the spatial dimension and the temporal dimension of the text by merging together "the core of the play" and "our pity". He does this by using an intricate set of images which suggest that the temporal aspects of the text, "the incident[s] and dialogue", somehow alive and personalized, "walk the tight-rope of our pity". The image is not perhaps the happiest, but it could be interpreted to mean that the text produces pity in 'us', that there is perhaps again "masterful artistry" and daring involved, that there may be a certain tension, or balancing between the comic and the tragic, the grotesque and the absurd, in the reading of the text. This last point might be supported by the fact that this walking on the tight-rope takes place "over the depths of bathos and absurdity". Moreover, the reference to "the depths" suggests that the text is a three-dimensional landscape, and it relates to the pattern of images suggesting the "towering" artistry and meanings embedded deep in the text noted earlier. On the whole it seems that in this extract, in particular, it is difficult to tell where the text stops, and where the readers' re-

sponse begins, so seamlessly they are fused together by Knight's peculiar imagery.

In sum, judging by the fact that one fifth of the essay consists of quotations from the primary text, it could be argued that the text clearly is quite important to Knight. Furthermore, he uses the text, all through his interpretation, as evidence and illustration of his own interpretive points. In order to build up a particular notion of the primary text as a complex spatial and temporal entity, Knight uses two interrelated sets of linguistic strategies. To mediate a notion of the text as a spatial construct, the critic uses spatial noun phrases, nominalizations, verb phrases, locative adverbials, locative adverbial clauses, and spatial, interpretive, descriptive and evaluative adjectives. The phrases, particularly the noun and verb phrases that the critic uses to refer to the text or to its structures, were often found to function as images. They suggest, for example, that the construct of the text has various aspects: it is something visual that we can "see", and whose details we can examine bit by bit like a map; it is also something tactile that we can "touch" and which has various "inwoven" patterns, like a piece of cloth. The text may even be something organic and alive with "a root" or "a heart", and something multi-dimensional that reaches both high as a piece of "masterful artistry" and low, with "themes", "elements", or, simply, meaning buried deep in it. Moreover, Knight also uses a 'negative' avoidance strategy to mediate a particular aspect of the text. This is the lack of generalizing temporal adverbials, which would suggest that the core and the elements of the play are universally and eternally true and unchangeable. Instead, it was argued that this is something that Knight seems to take for granted. It was found also that there is an interplay between the different strategies, and that together they form a complex network strategy which powerfully mediates a notion of the text as spatial. A particularly interesting relationship was discovered to hold between the adjectives and the nominalizations in the essay. The fact that Knight often nominalizes the adjectives which describe the text or the critic's/readers' response to it, was taken as a piece of evidence for the way in which the critic establishes his interpretation. In this case, he fossilizes the qualities assigned to the text, or initial affective reader responses as themes of the play by converting adjectives into nominalizations. Or, put the other way round, he may imply that the source of the readers' affective and interpretive responses are within the text, in its thematic structures. Adjectives thus function to merge together, or show the causal relationship, between the text and readers. Knight's reformulations are also interesting: it seems that he often uses them to suggest that the meaning of the text is not simple and straightforward and that, therefore, it is not easy to capture it.

To suggest that the text is also temporal and experiential Knight uses the following strategies. Firstly, he refers to *KL* as not only a construct, but also a temporal phenomenon, evolving in time. Secondly, in his discussion of the plot of the play, he assigns agency to the characters and their actions, thus presenting them as active beings doing things on their own, independent of the critic's/readers' interpretations of them. Thirdly, there is also a temporal pattern of lexical choices which mediates a notion of the play as evolving in time: this includes temporal noun phrases, adjectives, verb phrases, adverbials, clauses and syntax suggesting a temporal ordering of events. Fourthly, to suggest that the text has an experiential aspect as well, the critic uses the first person plural personal pronoun, generalizations, the present tense, and phrases suggesting that interpretation is a perceptual sensory process of absorption. These strategies, among others, help the critic to establish also that the process of the readers' interpretation is co-temporaneous and identical with his own interpretation of *KL*.

Finally, the spatial dimension and the temporal dimension of the text are merged together by Knight's frequent references to the play as simultaneously spatial and temporal, and, as noted above, to the relationship of cause and effect between the text and readers. On the whole, Knight suggests a notion of the text according to which it is both extremely complex, and, it could be argued, extremely closed.

### 6.1.2 The function of the text

The next analytical question is what function the primary text has in the interpretation according to Knight. Partly, the answer has already been given above: the text obviously has a great deal of power in the determination of meaning. The text is the trigger that activates the readers' 'vision', 'feeling' and 'understanding'. In this section I shall look more closely at the strategies with which Knight establishes this function of the text.

Relevant subquestions to be asked in this connection are: (i) Is it stated, implied, presupposed, or left unsaid that the text is a/the source of meaning; (ii) is agency given to the text; and (iii) how is the potential 'text' meaning presented (modalized, or generalized)? In the course of the analysis of the notion of text in Knight's essay it already became obvious that the essay includes several explicit statements that the text is indeed a (if not, the) source of meaning in interpretation. In fact, in his explication of the plot Knight quite systematically repeats his central claim, that "the core" of the play is "an absurdity", "an incongruity", and that all the various 'elements' relate to or reflect this core. Nowhere in the essay does Knight deny that the text is a source of meaning. In contrast, having es-

tablished and re-established the text's function in interpretation he also implies and presupposes it several times.

The first statement in the essay that the primary text is a source of meaning can be located as early as in the second paragraph. Let us look at this extract again (cf. p. 147):

The wonder of Shakespearian tragedy is ever a mystery - a vague, yet powerful tangible presence; an interlocking of the mind with a profound meaning, a disclosure to the inward eye of vistas undreamed, and but fitfully understood. King Lear is great in the abundance and richness of human delineation, in the level focus of creation that builds a massive oneness, in fact, a universe, of single quality from a multiplicity of differentiated units; and in a positive and purposeful working out of a purgatorial philosophy. But it is still greater in the perfect fusion of psychological realism with the daring flights of a fantastic imagination. The heart of Shakespearian tragedy is centered in the imaginative, in the unknown; and in King Lear, where we touch the unknown, we touch the fantastic. The peculiar dualism at the root of the play which wrenches and splits the mind by a sight of incongruities displays in turn realities absurd, hideous, pitiful. This incongruity is Lear's madness: it is also the demonic laughter that echoes in the Lear universe. (160-1)

This is an introduction to the elements of the play: Knight starts with fairly general and abstract statements of the text's meaning, and proceeds, step by step, towards the specific statement of (his view of) the central and essential meaning of *KL*. As an introduction this passage actually is extremely difficult. For example, it is syntactically and terminologically very complex and it contains a great many co-ordinated elliptical clauses, complex noun phrases modified by prepositional phrases (some of them elliptical, too), subordinated clauses, and difficult terminology. To get a clearer idea of the way in which Knight develops his ideas, the passage is tabulated in TABLE 12. The table is divided into six sections: each section includes one sentence. The sentences are further divided into clauses, and each clause is numbered and presented separately. Moreover, for clarity's sake, elliptical clauses have been completed within square brackets.

TABLE 12 The introductory paragraph of Knight's essay

1.	The wonder of Shakespearean tragedy	is	ever a mystery -
2.	[it]	[is]	a vague, yet powerful, tangible presence;
3.	[it]	[is]	an interlocking of the mind with a profound meaning,
4.	[it]	[is]	a disclosure to the inward eye of vistas undreamed, and but fitfully understood.
5.	<i>King Lear</i>	is great in	the abundance and richness of human delineation,
6.	[it]	[is great in]	the level focus of creation that builds a massive oneness, in fact, universe, of single quality from a multiplicity of differentiated units
a			
7.	and [it]	[is great in]	a positive and purposeful working out of a purgatorial philosophy.
8.	But it	is still greater in	the perfect fusion of psychological realism with the daring flights of a fantastic imagination.
9.	The heart of		
10.	Shakespearean tragedy and in <i>King Lear</i> , where we touch the unknown,	is centered in  we touch	the imaginative, in the unknown;  the fantastic.
11.	The peculiar dualism at the root of this play which wrenches and splits the mind by a sight of incongruities	displays in turn	realities absurd, hideous, pitiful.
12.	This incongruity	is	Lear's madness;
13.	it	is	also the demonic laughter that echoes in the Lear universe.

A general comment that could be made on the basis of this extract is how the text or one of its aspects often occurs in the subject position in the clauses. From the beginning up to clause (9), the text, or some aspect of the text, is perceived as the agent which 'is' or 'does' something. In these clauses the text is related neither to the critic's/readers' interpretation nor is it less explicitly related to an interpretive agent by the use of the passive

voice (and possibly an agent construction). In clause (10), in turn, the subject function is given to 'us', instead of the text. Nevertheless, here, too, the co-text, clause (11) in particular, assures us that the ultimate agent is still the text, which "wrenches and splits" our mind, forcing on us its meaning.

An other general comment that could be made about this extract is the categorical nature of Knight's statements. The extract contains thirteen finite verb phrases. Six of them are represented by the copula *to be* (if the ellipsed copulas are included, too, their number is eleven). These verbs are used in the present tense, and they are non-modalized. In the same way the rest of the finite verb phrases ("builds", "touch", "touch", "wrenches", "splits", "displays", "echoes") are also used in the non-modalized present tense. Following Carter and Nash (1990:151), it could be argued that Knight relies here on the strategy of generalization. In Carter's and Nash's terminology, the statements containing the copula *to be* could be labelled as "major generalizations", and those containing other verb phrases in the present tense denoting habitual action, custom or proclivity "symptomatic generalizations" (e.g. "that builds a massive oneness" (6), "which wrenches and splits the mind" (11), "which displays . . . realities" (11)). There are also examples of the "consensus generalization" in the extract, which usually expresses general agreement and whose linguistic symptoms include the use of the inclusive pronoun 'we', 'everybody', or a noun phrase denoting a general category of persons, and of a verb expressing consent, e.g. 'agree', 'consider', 'declare', 'pronounce', 'find' (as in "where we touch the unknown, we touch the fantastic" (10)). As shall later be seen in more detail, generalizations are in fact a systematic strategy for presenting interpretive statements in the essay.<sup>16</sup>

An analysis of the sentences one by one and an attempt to transform them into less complex forms (in spite of the fact that the transformations may not be any more understandable than the original ones and that they are not to be taken as 'the meaning' of the sentence, but as an interpretation of it) shows that Knight begins, in (1), with a general statement of what *KL* is about: it is "a mystery". In the elliptical clauses (2), (3) and (4) he then specifies his initial claim, introducing different aspects of the mystery of *KL*: it is a mystery because, although it is vague, it is also powerful, because it locks the readers'/spectators' minds with profound meaning, and because it opens up meanings previously unknown, and only partially understood. In clauses (5), (6) and (7) Knight moves to the evaluation of the play. He explicitly asserts that "*King Lear* is great", and "still greater" because it shows or has an "abundance and richness of human delineation", a "level focus of creation", "a positive and purposeful

<sup>16</sup> According to Carter and Nash (1990: 151) there is one further category of generalization: the minor, or constrained generalization, where verbs of appearance or transitional process are used, as in '*King Lear* seems difficult'.

working of a purgatorial philosophy", and a "perfect fusion of psychological realism with . . . fantastic imagination. All of these noun phrases contain abstract wordings. In addition, they are internally complex. Clearly, these features contribute to the fact that the passage appears to be difficult; at the same time, they indicate how Knight is once more struggling hard to convey an idea of the text as a complex construct.

In clauses (9) and (10) Knight finally comes to his most important statement of the meaning of *KL*, one which, as we saw above, he repeats throughout the essay. Clause (9) is particularly interesting in the way in which it suggests that the text has a "heart" as presupposed knowledge.<sup>17</sup> (That this assumption is a presupposition is obvious if it is tested by the negation test: it is not affected by the negation of the sentence. Note also that the phrase has a definite article, even though Knight has not introduced the notion before.) He thus presents an important assumption of the primary text as already established knowledge. What makes this even more remarkable as a strategy for mediating both a particular notion and a function of the text is that this is the first time Knight writes about *KL* as having a core.

Clause (10) brings us to the relationship between the text and its reading. In (10) Knight argues that the internalization of "the heart" of the play by readers is simply a matter of "touch[ing]" it. As a verb referring to reading *touch* is a curious choice, for it refers to reading as a tactile experience, where the meaning of the text can perhaps be more felt than discovered or constructed. Note also that a similar notion of reading as an unproblematic, perceptual process of absorption was already suggested in (3) where it was stated that "the mind" interlocks with "a profound meaning", and in (4) where the play-text is considered to disclose "vistas" of meanings to readers.

In clauses (9) and (10), too, Knight uses expressions that are very abstract and general, e.g. "centered in the imaginative, in the unknown", and "where we touch the unknown, we touch the fantastic". As he has not yet given any concrete examples of these aspects of the play, these kinds of abstract wordings do not tell much to the reader.

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<sup>17</sup> Presupposition in this context means that a certain assumption is considered and presented as a given. For example, in '*King Lear*, which is a play about human suffering and redemption, was written in 1605-6.', the assumption that *KL* 'is a play about human suffering and redemption', is not explicitly stated, but presupposed. A linguistic criterion for identifying a presupposition is that it is preserved in negative sentences and statements; similarly there exists a number of so-called presupposition triggers, i.e. linguistic items which seem to generate presuppositions. In this case the assumption included in the non-restrictive (parenthetical) relative clause is not affected by the negation of the main verb outside the clause. Moreover, a non-restrictive relative clause can be considered one particular presupposition trigger. For a list of presupposition triggers and for a detailed discussion of semantic and pragmatic presupposition see Levinson 1983:167-225.

Having established the dualism of "the heart" of *KL* as something fantastic and unknown in (10), Knight then goes on to point out in (11) that this dualism has the capacity to display "realities, absurd, hideous, pitiful", in other words, to reveal yet other levels of meaning to readers. Again, the process of reading is a matter of the text showing something, and the readers absorbing it. Sentence (11) also contains a restrictive relative clause modifying the noun phrase "the peculiar dualism". This clause foregrounds the text's effect on the readers with powerful, affective and even violent verbs ("wrenches and splits the mind"). The dualism of the root of the play is thus pictured to affect the readers' psychology powerfully, if not almost physically, so that they gain "a sight" of the text's incongruities. In short, the text's power over the readers seems overwhelming, almost totalitarian.

The last two clauses of the extract, (12) and (13), present the text's theme somewhat more concretely: they suggest that one example of the pervasive incongruity in the play is Lear's madness, his "incongruous" laughter. Thus, the interpretive process in the essay starts with presenting such abstract ideas as "presence", "meaning", "vistas", "oneness", "philosophy", and ends up with an example of "the incongruous": Lear's laughter. However, as Lear's laughter is taken to echo also in the Lear universe, this brings us back to the beginning, where the absurd, and incongruous, are realized on the different levels and planes of the complex construct of the play-text.

This passage deals specifically with meaning and reading. It states that the text has the power to make readers see what it is about. It is packed with statements of the text's meaning. With this in mind, it is curious that Knight mentions the terms meaning and understanding only once. Instead, he insists on using his structural terminology of 'hearts', and 'elements', and his perceptual images of 'seeing' or 'touching' (or even suffering from) these structures of the text. What is obvious, however, is that 'the heart' and 'elements' of the play can be taken as Knightian images of meaning. Analogously 'seeing' and 'touching' can be seen as his images for reading and understanding the play.

Next, to show that these strategies for suggesting the text's function in interpretation are not uncommon in the essay, a number of other passages will be examined. These will include the statements where Knight is concerned with the meaning of different aspects and incidents of the text in relation to his central claim that "the root" of the play is an incongruity. First, TABLE 13 lists all of these passages. After that TABLES (14)-(18) tabulate a number of strategies in these passages which all in their own way assign a certain role to the primary text in interpretation.

**TABLE 13** Passages dealing with the function of the text in Knight's essay

1. Now in *King Lear* there is a dualism continually crying in vain to be resolved either by tragedy or comedy. Thence arises its peculiar tension of pain: and the course of the action often comes as near to the resolution of comedy as to that of tragedy. So I shall notice here the imaginative core of the play . . . (161)
2. This, then, is the basis of the play: greatness linked to puerility. Lear's instincts are themselves grand, heroic - noble even. His judgement is nothing. He understands neither himself nor his daughters: [a quotation] (162)
3. Thus the theme of the play is bodied continually into a fantastic incongruity, which is implicit in the beginning - in the very act of Lear's renunciation, retaining the title and addition of King, yet giving over a king's authority to his children. As he becomes torturingly aware of the truth, incongruity masters his mind, and fantastic madness ensues; and this particular fact of the Lear-theme is reflected in the Lear universe: [a quotation] . . . Gloucester's words hint a universal incongruity here: the incongruity of parent and child opposed. (162-3)
4. [quotation] . . . This is not comedy, nor humour. But it is exactly the stuff of which humour is made. (164)
5. [quotation] . . . Except for the last delightful touch - the antithesis of the other - that is a cruel, ugly sense of humour. It is the sinister humour at the heart of this play; we are continually aware of the humour of cruelty and the cruelty of humour. (165)
6. [quotation] . . . What shall we say of this exquisite movement? Is it comedy? Lear's profound unreason is capped by the blatant irrelevance of Edgar's couplet. . . ; then the two are swiftly all but united, for us if not for Lear, in the healing balm of the Fool's conclusion. It is the process of humour, where two incompatibilities are resolved in laughter. (166-7)
7. [quotation] This is the furthest flight, not of tragedy, but of philosophic comedy. The autocratic and fiery-fierce old king, symbol of dignity, is confronted with the meanest of men . . . Again this is the process of humour: its flash of vision first bridges the positive and negative poles of the mind, unifying them, and then expresses itself in laughter. (167)
8. Now, in madness, he flashes on us the ridiculous basis of his tragedy in words which emphasize the indignity and incongruity of it, and make his madness something nearer the ridiculous than the terrible, something which moves our pity but does not strike awe . . . [quotation]. . .  
This stroke of the absurd - so vastly different from the awe we experience in face of Timon's hate - is yet fundamental here. The core of the play is an absurdity, an indignity, an incongruity. (168)
9. This particular region of the terrible bordering on the fantastic and absurd is exactly the playground of madness. Thus the setting of Lear's madness includes a sub-plot where these same elements are presented with stark nakedness, and no veiling subtleties. The Gloucester-theme is a certain indication of our vision and helps us to understand, and feel, the enduring agony of Lear. (168-9)

(continues)

TABLE 13 (continues)

10. [quotation] . . . But then Edmund, wittiest and most attractive of villains, composed it. One can almost picture his grin as he penned those lines, commending them mentally to the limited intellect of his father. Yes -the Gloucester theme has a beginning even more fantastic than that of Lear's tragedy. And not only are the Lear effects here exaggerated in the directions of villainy and humour: they are even more clearly exaggerated in that of horror. The gouging out of Gloucester's eyes is a thing unnecessary, crude, disgusting: it is meant to be. It helps to provide an accompanying exaggeration of one element - that of cruelty - in the horror that makes Lear's madness. And not only horror: there is even again something satanically comic bedded deep in it. (169)
11. [quotation] . . . The macabre humoresque of this is nauseating: but it is there, and integral to the play. . . . We are clearly pointed to this grim fun, this hideous sense of humour, at the back of the tragedy: [quotation] (169-170)
12. The grotesque merged into the ridiculous reaches a consummation in this bathos of tragedy: it is the furthest, most exaggerated, reach of the poet's towering fantastically. We have a sublimely daring stroke of technique on the plane of the plot-logic . . . (171)
13. Now, when our imaginations are most powerfully quickened to the grotesque and incongruous, the whole surge of the Gloucester-theme, which has just reached its climax, floods as a tributary the main stream of our sympathy with Lear. Our vision has thus been uniquely focused to understand that vision of the grotesque, the incongruous, the fantastically-horrible, which is the agony of Lear's mind. (172)
14. We are in touch with the exquisitely pathetic, safeguarded only by Shakespeare's masterful technique from the bathos of comedy. (173)
15. [Quotation] . . . We remember: 'Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, the gods themselves throw incense' (v iii 20). Or do they laugh, and is the Lear universe one ghastly piece of fun? We do not feel that. The tragedy is most poignant in that it is purposeless, unreasonable. (174)
16. [Quotation] What do we touch in these passages? Sometimes we know that all human pain holds beauty, that no tear falls but it dewes some flower we cannot see. Perhaps humour, too, is inwoven in the universal pain, and the enigmatic silence holds not only an unutterable sympathy, but also the ripples of an impossible laughter whose flight is not for the wing of human understanding; and perhaps it is this that casts its darting shadow of the grotesque across the furrowed pages of King Lear. (176)

A general comment on the contents of these interpretive statements is that Knight repeatedly argues that "there is" a particular meaning element ("a dualism", "sinister humour", "macabre humoresque" in the text (1, 5, 11 ), that this meaning element is "the basis of the play" (2, 11), that it is "bodied" or "reflected in" various features of the text (3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, ), and that it has a certain effect on 'us', the readers, by making us "understand and feel" it (13, 14, 15, 16). In other words, Knight insists that there is

meaning in the text, and that the text has a great deal of power to direct interpretation.

A typical strategy that Knight uses to establish the role of the primary text in interpretation is generalization. More particularly, he uses major generalizations, symptomatic generalizations and consensus generalizations. TABLE 14 lists a sample of Knight's major generalizations.

**TABLE 14 Major generalizations in Knight's essay**

1.	there	is	a dualism crying in vain ... (162)
2.	This ...	is	the basis of the play ... (162)
3.	Lear's instincts	are	themselves grand ... (162)
4.	his judgement	is	nothing ... (162)
5.	the theme of the play ...	is	bodied continually into a fantastic incongruity ... (162)
6.	this particular fact of the Lear-theme	is	reflected in the Lear universe. (163)
7.	This	is	not comedy, nor humour. (164)
8.	But it	is	exactly the stuff of which humour is made. (164)
9.	the last delightful touch ... that	is	a cruel, ugly sense of humour. (165)
10.	It	is	the sinister humour at the hear of this play. (165)
11.	It	is	the process of humour ... (167)
12.	This	is	the furthers flight ... of philosophic comedy. (167)
13.	Again this	is	the process of humour ... (167)
14.	The stroke of the absurd ...	is	yet fundamental here. (168)
15.	The core of the play	is	an absurdity ... (168)
16.	This particular region of the terrible ...	is	exactly the playground of madness. (168)
17.	The Gloucester-theme	is	a certain indication of our vision ... (168-9)
18.	The gouging of Gloucester's eyes	is	a thing unnecessary ... (169)
19.	there	is	even again something satanically comic bedded deep in it. (169)
20.	The macabre humoresque of this	is	nauseating ...
21.	but it	is	there, and integral to the play. (170)
22.	it	is	the furthest, most exaggerated, reach of the poet's towering fantastically. (171)
23.	The tragedy	is	most poignant in ...
24.	that it	is	purposeless, unreasonable. (174)

TABLE 14 shows that Knight typically uses major generalizations when he is concerned with the assertion of the meaning or effect of a particular text passage, or the evaluation of the text. What is most significant in these uses is that they usually carry the implication that Knight's interpretive points are to be considered self-evident and categorically true. The implication here no doubt is that Knight's interpretive and evaluative points allegedly are what the text itself 'is' or 'means'. Similar observations can also be made on Knight's use of the symptomatic and consensus generalization: consider TABLE 15.

**TABLE 15 Symptomatic and consensus generalizations in Knight's essay**

1.	[Lear]	understands	neither himself nor his daughters. (162)
2.	incongruity	masters	his mind, . . .
3.	and fantastic madness	ensues. (162-3)	
4.	Gloucester's words	hint	a universal incongruity here . . . (163)
5.	something which	moves	our pity
6.	but	does not strike	awe. (168)
7.	the setting of Lear's madness	includes	a subplot
8.	where these same elements	are presented	with stark nakedness (168).
9.	not only are the Lear effects	exaggerated	in the directions of villainy . . .
10.	they	are . . . exaggerated	in that of horror (169)
11.	We	are . . . pointed	to this grim fun (170)
12.	our imaginations	are . . . quickened	to the grotesque . . . (172)
13.	our vision. . .	has . . . been focused	to understand that vision of the grotesque . . . (172)
14.	[we]	are safeguarded	only by Shakespeare's masterful technique . . . (173)
15.	we	are . . . aware	of the humour of cruelty . . . (165)
16.	This strike of the absurd so . . . different from the awe we	experience	in face of Timon's hate . . . (168)
17.	we	have	a . . . stroke of technique . . . (171)
18.	We	are in touch	with the . . . exquisitely pathetic . . . (173)
19.	We	remember:	'Upon such sacrifices . . . (174)
20.	We	do not feel	that. (174)
21.	Sometimes we	know	that all human pain holds beauty . . . (176)

TABLE 15 lists typical symptomatic (1-14) and consensus generalizations (14-21) used by Knight. Like major generalizations, symptomatic generalizations have the effect that Knight's interpretive points take the form of universally valid assertions. The consensus generalizations, in turn, could be taken to suggest that Knight's interpretation of the play is actually a shared experience, where readers more or less automatically respond to the text in a similar way.

A very interesting example of Knight's use of generalizations are also the cases where their co-text includes questions to the readers. Consider TABLE 16:

**TABLE 16 Questions and generalizations in Knight's essay**

1. What shall we say of this exquisite movement? Is it comedy? Lear's profound unreason is capped by the blatant irrelevance of Edgar's couplet. . . ; then the two are swiftly all but united, for us if not for Lear, in the healing balm of the Fool's conclusion. It is the process of humour, where two incompatibilities are resolved in laughter. (166-7)
2. We remember: 'Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, the gods themselves throw incense' (v iii 20). Or do they laugh, and is the Lear universe one ghastly piece of fun? We do not feel that. The tragedy is most poignant in that it is purposeless, unreasonable. (174)
3. What do we touch in these passages? Sometimes we know that all human pain holds beauty, that no tear falls but it dewes some flower we cannot see. Perhaps humour, too, is inwoven in the universal pain, and the enigmatic silence holds not only an unutterable sympathy, but also the ripples of an impossible laughter whose flight is not for the wing of human understanding; and perhaps it is this that casts its darting shadow of the grotesque across the furrowed pages of King Lear. (176)

In each of these passages listed in TABLE 16, Knight first poses one or more questions to the readers. It could be argued that, apparently, Knight uses these kinds of questions to suggest that there might in fact be several possibilities for interpreting the text. However, in passage (1) and (2) this suggestion is immediately invalidated by Knight's categorical denial of the possibility of plural interpretations: in spite of the questions which seemingly point to the contrary, the text remains closed. The linguistic indicator here is, not unsurprisingly, the use of generalization. In passage (1) the critic uses symptomatic generalizations ("Lear's profound unreason is capped . . .", "the two are swiftly all but united"), and a major generalizations ("it is the process of humour"). In (2) there is an even more powerful major generalization, "we do not feel that", which not only closes the text, but, as was pointed out above, also completely determines the readers' actions in interpretation. In passage (3), too, there is a question concerning the interpretation of a quotation from the play. The question is also followed by a generalization (in this case, the consensus generalization "we know"). However, somewhat unexpectedly, Knight neutralizes the categorical nature of the generalization by using an adverbial hedge "sometimes". The next sentence, too, contains adverbial hedges: "perhaps" is used there twice. These adverbials thus function to modalize the statements, to make them less certain. In comparison with

the rest of the essay, this last passage appears in fact distinctly less categorical. The reason for this may be that the critic is here suggesting a more general metaphysical meaning to the play. There, it seems, he perhaps feels that he has to proceed more cautiously.

Another strategy that Knight uses to suggest that his interpretation of the play is naturally and self-evidently true is his use of 'perceptual' verb and noun phrases to refer to the process of interpretation. TABLE 17 illustrates these.

**TABLE 17 Perceptual verb and noun phrases used by Knight to denote interpretation as a sensory process of absorption**

1.	we are . . .	aware of	the humour of cruelty . . . (165)
2.	its	flash of vision	. . . bridges the positive and negative poles of the mind . . . (167)
3.	he	flashes	on us the ridiculous basis of his tragedy . . . (168)
4.	the awe we	experience	in face of Timon's hate. (168)
5.	We	are in touch with	the . . . pathetic . . . (173)
6.	We	do not feel	that. (174)
7.	What do we	touch	in these passages? (176)

The readers' implied responses will be analyzed more systematically below, but at this stage it could already be noted how Knight seems to consider the process of interpretation as a state where readers are "aware of" or "in touch with" the text, or where they "experience", "touch" and "feel" it. In other words, interpretation is likened to a process where readers more or less passively absorb what the text actively shows, or "flashes on" them.

As will again be seen in more detail later, the text's considerable power and activeness in interpretation is also underlined in the essay by strategies which assign agency to it. TABLE 18 lists some of these strategies:

**TABLE 18** Assignment of agency to the text in Knight's essay

1. he flashes on us the ridiculous basis of his tragedy . . . (168)
2. The Gloucester-theme . . . helps us to understand, and feel, the enduring agony of Lear. (169)
3. But it is exactly the stuff of which humour is made. (164)
4. where these same elements are presented with stark nakedness . . . (169)
5. not only are the Lear effects . . . exaggerated in the directions of villainy . . . (169)
6. they are . . . exaggerated in that of horror. (169)
7. The gouging out of Gloucester's eyes is . . . disgusting: it is meant to be. (169)
8. We are clearly pointed to this grim fun . . . at the back of the tragedy. (170)
9. our imaginations are powerfully quickened to the grotesque . . .
10. Our vision has thus been . . . focused to understand that vision of the grotesque . . . (172)
11. We are . . . safeguarded only by Shakespeare's masterful technique . . . (173)

Two different strategies can be identified in TABLE 18 that suggest that the text is an active party in the determination of meaning. First, the text, its elements or the characters of the play are given agency by using them in the subject function in the sentence. Second, it is also suggested that some entity other than the readers direct and constrain interpretation, but it is not made clear what this entity is. It may be the text, or the author, or even both of them. The linguistic strategy used here is the passive with agent deletion.<sup>18</sup>

In passage (1) agency is assigned to a character of the play, and it is argued that he has the power to 'flash on us' the meaning of his behavior. In passage (2) agency is given to a theme of the play, and it is argued that it can 'help' the readers to "understand and feel" another theme of the play. What is also interesting here is the use of both a cognitive verb phrase ("understand") and an affective one ("feel") to refer to the readers' activities. Note also the causal relationship between the text elements which "are presented with stark nakedness" and the readers' cognitive and affective response to them.

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<sup>18</sup> In Fairclough (1989:50 and 124) there is a similar assumption: in his words the use of an inanimate entity as an agent in a text means that this agent is represented as the active and causal source of the process, or action in question. Furthermore, it is argued that the use of inanimate nouns, abstract nouns, and nominalizations can be ideologically motivated in that they can obfuscate agency, causality and responsibility. Similarly, also the use of passives, particularly agentless passives, may have a similar function. In the present study agency is interesting in the way in which the critic, by giving agency to a particular entity of the interpretive event, also gives interpretive power to this/these components. For example, if, as in Knight's case, the text or an element of the text frequently occurs in the subject position it is taken to imply that the text is given a considerable amount of interpretive power.

In passages (3)-(11) the passive with agent deletion is used to suggest that readers are indeed powerfully constrained, but it is not specified what the agent is. Passage (11) is in this respect exceptional in the whole essay, for there the passive clause also contains an agent: "Shakespeare's masterful technique". Both of these strategies suggest, it could be argued, that the text either explicitly or more implicitly constrains readers' choices in interpretation.

In sum, on the basis of this analysis it could be argued that the text appears to have a central role in Knight's interpretation. Its function as a source of meaning is continuously stated. The (almost) consistent generalizations suggest that Knight's interpretation is categorically and universally true and valid. The use of the inclusive pronoun *we* in connection with generalized verb phrases in the present tense mediates that the interpretation of *KL* is a shared and uniform process. Furthermore, perceptual verb and noun phrases picture interpretation as an unproblematic process of absorption of what the text contains. The assignment of agency to the text, its elements or characters, and the insistence on the causal relationship between the text and readers, emphasizes that the text is the powerful and active agent, and readers the passive and submissive receivers. Put together, all these strategies indicate that the text is extremely powerful; it is like a well-structured natural force. It is not only the encasement of its meaning, but it is also capable of making its meaning understood to readers. It could perhaps be argued that the text transfers its structural themes and elements into the readers' heads, where they are then transformed, almost magically, into universally identical affective and interpretive responses. Thus, even though Knight takes pains in mediating the text as a complex and multi-dimensional object/phenomenon, at the same time he insists that the text is closed, that there is, in spite of his occasional questions which would suggest the opposite, only one way to interpret it correctly.

A significant exception to this pattern is Knight's last interpretive statement of the essay. In contrast to all his previous interpretive statements, it is not a sweeping generalization, but a modalized one. The reason for this changed strategy may be that Knight, in leaving the "Lear-universe" with its levels and structures, and in suggesting that a more metaphysical logic of human suffering may be reflected in *KL*, feels less confident. In this case the text then appears to him no longer as absolutely closed, but as "perhaps" open to various interpretations.

The above analysis also showed how Knight gradually introduces an idea of the text as authorial by first implying, through the use of passive constructions, that there may be an intentional agent and design behind the text and its effect on readers, and, finally, by explicitly referring to the author's masterful technique as a source of influence in the inter-

pretation of the text. Next, we shall have a closer look at the notion and function of the author suggested in Knight's essay, and see if these preliminary observations can be validated.

### 6.1.3 The notion and function of the author in Knight's essay

In the analysis of the notion and function of the text in Knight's essay it was pointed out how the text is frequently characterized by the use of laudatory evaluative adjectives, and how it is subtly suggested that the text is really the author's text, the product of the author's design. Building on these observations, the notion and function of the author in the essay will be looked at in a more detailed way in this section. As it appears that there are no complex linguistic patterns to mediate a notion and function of the author, these two aspects will be dealt here with in the same section.

The first analytical question to be asked is whether the critic quotes, refers to, or comments on the author. A short answer to this question is that there are no direct references to the author in the essay. However, as our preliminary observations demonstrated above, the author is not totally irrelevant either. That he is not irrelevant shows, for example, in the way in which Knight uses a number of less direct strategies to indicate both his attitude towards the author, and to imply that he has a certain function in interpretation. To begin with, TABLE 19 lists the cases where the critic, in one form another, mentions the author's name, or some epithet such as "the poet".

TABLE 19 Noun phrases including an indirect reference to the author in Knight's essay

1.	the wonder	of Shakespearean	tragedy (160)
2.	the heart of	Shakespearean	tragedy (161)
3.	no tragedy of	Shakespeare (168)	
4.		Shakespeare's	England (169)
5.	the <i>Lear</i> of	Shakespeare's	youth (170)
6.	the tragedy of	Shakespeare's	maturity (170)
7.	the ... reach of	the poet's	towering (171)
8.		Shakespeare's	masterful technique (173)
9.		the poet's	purpose (175)

Knight mentions Shakespeare seven times, and uses the word "poet" twice. Although there are only two indirect references to Shakespeare as 'the poet', and thus very little evidence to draw any useful conclusions, it

may at least be hypothesized that the choice of this epithet may be related to Knight's insistence that *KL* is a complex spatial construct, in addition to a temporal phenomenon. Because the text is dual, it seems sensible to assume, that the author is also dual: he could simultaneously be seen as the constructor of the spatial artefact, a "poet", and a dramatist.

However, the words "Shakespeare", or "the poet" do not occur in these extracts independently, as for example in the subject or object function. Instead, these words occur either in the genitive (seven cases), or as an adjectival premodifier (two cases). Hence, Knight's focus seems to be Shakespeare's "tragedy", "technique", and "purpose", rather than the author himself, his biography, or psychology. This is in fact consistent with Knight's theoretical aims in interpretations: as was pointed out above, his approach can be seen as a reaction against earlier Romantic tradition which regarded literary texts as expressions of their author's ingenuity.

However, even though Knight is overtly more concerned with discussing and evaluating the "technique" of the text, rather than the author's "technique", it could be argued that he is covertly discussing and evaluating the author, too. It could even be argued that, in spite of the fact Shakespeare is not explicitly summoned, he is clearly lurking in the background. TABLE 20, which is a list of the references to "the technique" in the essay, attempts to prove this..

**TABLE 20** Clauses dealing with the "technique" of the work in Knight's essay

1.	we have a	sublimely daring	stroke of technique (171)
2.	this scene is a . . .	consummate	stroke of art (171)
3.	the stroke is	audacious, unashamed, and magical of effect. (171)	
4.	there is	masterful	artistry in all this (172)
5.	culminating in this	towering	stroke of the grotesque and absurd (172)
6.		consummate	art has so forged plot and incident (173)

In these passages, which all occur within two pages towards the end of the essay, Knight discusses the "technique", "art", and "artistry" in *KL*. Again, it could be argued that this is not all there is and that the critic is implicitly discussing the author's "art", rather than that of the text. The evaluative adjectives, "(sublimely) daring", "consummate", "masterful", and "towering", are here particularly revealing in this sense. The adjective "daring" merits a closer inspection, because, in spite of the fact that it is the "stroke of technique" that Knight labels as "daring", it is clear that the technique itself cannot be "daring". Obviously, it is the author who

has decided to be daring and who has used the technique. Analogously, the adjective phrase "masterful" could also be taken to qualify, indirectly, the author. It is the author who is the source of masterfulness, and the artistry identified by Knight is an outcome of the author's acts. In other words, even though Knight does not refer to the author directly, he clearly uses indirect strategies to do so. The use of these adjectives thus implies the existence of a human agent behind the "art" and "technique" of the text. It may be then that when the critic is apparently evaluating the text he is, in reality, evaluating Shakespeare as a writer.

In this sense clause (5) "consummate art has so forged plot and incident", is also striking. In this clause Knight apparently says that it is "consummate art" which is the responsible agent in the "forging [of] plot and incident". However, "art" clearly is not an animate human being which can do things to the text. It is obvious that this noun phrase is really a case of metonymy<sup>19</sup>, that Knight is here referring to Shakespeare. It is thus the author who is indirectly evaluated as "consummate", and who is behind the "forging" of "plot and incident". The use of metonymy could thus be regarded as another indirect strategy for suggesting that the author has a function in interpretation.

As was pointed out earlier, the function of the author in interpretation as a central issue often comes out in Knight's use of passive constructions. TABLE 21 is a more detailed list of typical passive clauses in the essay. In its analysis attention will be paid to whether the use of the passive can be seen to relate in any way to the notion and function of the author.

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<sup>19</sup> *Metonymy* is a trope in rhetoric, and it means that one entity is used to refer to another that is related to it. For example in the sentence 'I don't like to read Shakespeare.', 'Shakespeare' is used metonymically, instead of the phrase 'Shakespeare's plays/poems, etc.' A special case of metonymy is *synecdoche* where the part stands for the whole, as in 'I haven't seen *her cheerful smile* today' (see also Lakoff and Johnson 1980:35-6).

**TABLE 21** Passive clauses and the function of the author in Knight's essay

1.	the Fool	is used	as a chorus (163)
2.	The absurdity . . .	is contrasted	with the . . . fury (164)
3.	Lear . . .	is put	to the . . . shame (165)
4.	the two	are swiftly united	in the healing balm (167)
5.	the . . . dualism . . .	is ... more perfectly bodied	into the poetic symbol (167-8)
6.	his mind	is focused . . .	to the 'philosopher' (168)
7.	these . . . elements	are presented	with stark nakedness (168)
8.	Edmund	is given	a . . . tragic end (174)
9.	we	are clearly pointed	to this grim fun (170)
10.	we	are given	these noble . . . speeches (171)
11.	our imaginations	are powerfully quickened	to the grotesque (172)
12.	our vision	has thus been uniquely focused	to understand that vision (172)
13.	we	[are] safeguarded	only by Shakespeare's masterful technique (173)

TABLE 21 shows how Knight repeatedly relies on the use of the passive when he is dealing with the text and its elements, and their effect on the readers. Several comments could be made on the use of the passive with respect to the author's function in interpretation. Firstly, the passive voice is typically used for two purposes. As is illustrated by clauses (1)-(9), it is used to suggest that something is done to the text (by X), and, as in (10)-(14) that something is done to the readers (by X). More specifically, in the former group, a text element, which functions as the subject of the passive clause, is manipulated in some way, e.g. "used" for a certain purpose, "contrasted with" or "accompanied with" something else, "presented" in some way, and so on. In the latter group, where the subject of the passive clause are the implicit readers - "we", or "our imaginations", for example - it is argued that the readers are manipulated in some way. They are "pointed to" or "given" something; their imaginations are "quickened" or "focused"; they are even "safeguarded" by the author's technique. It is noteworthy how the latter group of verbs are explicitly *actional* in nature, in that they refer to an action (see Quirk and Greenbaum 1973: 359). The former group, in turn, contains verbs which are more *statal* in character, depicting more a state of affairs than action. (Other examples of *statal* verbs used by Knight were given in the discussion of the notion of the text. Sometimes these verbs, used within a passive construction, could also be taken as participial adjectives, which of course further emphasizes their *statal* nature. This is the case with for example the following clause: ". . . there is even again something satanically comic

bedded deep in it.") As it was noted above, these kinds of verb relate to the two dimensions - spatial and temporal - of the text.

Secondly, Knight also characterizes the manipulation of the text and of the readers. He uses adverbials such as "powerfully", "more perfectly", "clearly" or "uniquely" to suggest the manner of this manipulation. Clearly, these adverbials have a highly positive value, and they suggest very effectively Knight's favorable, if not reverent, attitude towards the author's technique, and, hence, indirectly towards the author.

Thirdly, as was suggested above, it seems that the passives have a dual function in the essay. While they, on the one hand, suggest that there is an intention, goal and purpose in the choices of the text elements, they, particularly when there is no agent included, obscure or efface the source of these intentions, plans, and purposes, on the other. In short, the use of the passive often appears as a handy avoidance strategy which frees the critic from having to state explicitly whether it is the text or the author that is the active agent in constraining the readers' interpretive activities in reading. Perhaps this issue is too problematic, and an open adherence to either of the two positions would create all kinds of tedious theoretical problems which would have to be dealt with. Equally well, it may be that the use of the passive allows Knight to imply that the source of meaning is either the text or the author, or, alternately the text or the author, or, possibly, both of them. The relationship between the author and text is thus intimate, so intimate, in fact, that it is difficult to draw a distinction between them. On the one hand, the text has a certain autonomous status as a complex construct; on the other hand, it is simultaneously a construct created by a particular writer who has had his own intentions, goals, plans and purposes when creating it.

Nevertheless, there is one example - sentence (14) - in TABLE 21 where the passive is *not* used to efface agency. This is because the sentence also includes an agent. Because it represents such a rare strategy, and because it very openly asserts the author's function in the interpretation of KL, it is perhaps worth looking at it more closely:

It is, indeed, well that we are, as it were, prepared by now for the grotesque. Laughter is forbidden us. Consummate art has so forged plot and incident that we may watch with tears rather than laughter the cruelly comic actions of Lear:

[quote]

Lear is a child again in his madness. We are in touch with the exquisitely pathetic, *safeguarded only by Shakespeare's masterful technique from the bathos of comedy.* (173, my italics)

In this passage agency is given alternately to an unspecified agent (text/author?) in "laughter is forbidden us", to "art" (as a metonym for the author) as in "consummate art has so forged plot and incident", to "us" as in "we may watch with tears", to Lear in "Lear is a child again", and finally in the last non-finite passive clause to "Shakespeare's masterful technique". (Once again, this also illustrates the fact that there are several dimensions involved in the Knightian interpretive process.) The last clause is, in fact, a very categorical assertion of the function and power of the author in interpretation. Its categorical nature is indicated, not only by the use of the agent construction, but also by its symptomatic generalization and the choice of the powerful verb *safeguard*. The author's technique, or, more precisely, the author using a certain technique, thus appears to have a tremendous amount of power here to control the text's interpretation.

Here is another example of the use of a passive construction to indicate that there is an explicit purpose involved in the text:

The gouging of Gloucester's eyes is a thing unnecessary, crude, disgusting: *it is meant to be*: it helps to provide an accompanying exaggeration of one element . . . (169, my italics)

Again, the passive voice is used to suggest that there is a goal and purpose in the choice of the particular text elements. In spite of the fact that this time an explicit agent is not mentioned, there is no doubt that there would not be an intentional being behind the choice of these elements. This is because Knight uses the word *mean* here. The vagueness of agency suggested by the use of an agentless passive is thus compensated by the use of the verb *mean*, which furthermore expresses a symptomatic generalization.

The fact that there seems to be an authorial purpose and meaning involved in the interpretation of *KL* is suggested by the use of other strategies as well, besides passivization. For example, a rare reference to the author's purpose can be located on page 175 of the essay, where Knight is taking pains to assert that his interpretation of *KL* is actually what the poet himself must have meant. There he writes that

nor does the use of the words 'comic' or 'humour' here imply disrespect to the poet's purpose: rather I have used these words, crudely no doubt, to cut out for analysis the very heart of the play . . . (175)

What Knight is arguing here is that (i) he is respectful to the author, that (ii) there exists something called "the poet's purpose" (which is presented as presupposed knowledge), and that (iii) his interpretation has focused on the essential heart of the play. It is interesting that Knight does not state that his interpretation is in accordance with the poet's purpose, but

leaves the readers to do the inferential work and bridge these two assumptions. More particularly, the connection between the two clauses is not shown explicitly, by the use of a logical connector, for example, but with the use of a colon which clearly functions as a subtler strategy for suggesting that there *is*, nevertheless, a connection. It is also noteworthy that, in spite of the fact that this is the first reference to the "poet's purpose" in the essay, Knight introduces it as presupposed, as established before. A clear linguistic indicator of this is the use of the definite article with the phrase. It seems then that the existence of the authorial intention and its contents is thus taken for granted. Yet it has not been established: Knight has continually shown how the core of the play is "bodied" into various elements of it, but he has nowhere asserted that the core equals the poet's purpose. And, even now, he in a way smuggles the idea in by using a presuppositional strategy and a vague signalling of a logical relationship between the two propositions.

Nevertheless, against the background of the frequent agentless passivizations in the essay, these explicit references to the author's purpose and meaning by the use of agent, the verb *mean*, and the reference to "the poet's purpose" gain special prominence. It is obvious that the author has a special role in interpretation.

In sum, it has been seen how Knight prefers to use indirect strategies to mediate both the notion and function of the author. Explicitly, he does not describe or characterize the author. In this respect, the notion of the author is not so easily traceable as the notion of the text. However, the critic uses a number of indirect strategies to imply both his view of the author and of his function in interpretation. Firstly, the critic avoids referring directly to the author. Instead, he refers to the "technique" or "art" in *KL*, and qualifies it with adjective phrases of a highly positive value. In addition, it seems that the critic occasionally uses such expressions as "the art" metonymically to refer to the author. By the use of these indirect strategies Knight manages to avoid tackling the problem of whether the text is the embodiment of the author's intention, and, to suggest, simultaneously, that the author has a role in the interpretation of the text. For one thing, as could be seen in Knight's use of laudatory adjective phrases and adverbials, the critic seems to have a very high, even reverential, attitude towards the author. Secondly, Knight's use of passive constructions was also found to function as another indirect strategy for implying the function of the author. More particularly, it was argued that the use of the agentless passive suggests that while there is a plan and purpose involved in the text, the source of this plan and purpose is not clear. At times it seems it may be the text, at other times it seems it is the author, or both. Nevertheless, in addition to the indirect strategies that Knight uses to imply that the author may indeed have an important function in inter-

pretation, he also openly states this a few times. He does this by, for example, using a passive construction with the author as the agent who manipulates his readers through his "masterful" text, or by referring to the "poet's purpose". Consequently, it could be concluded that the notion of the author in the essay seems a highly positive one, and that he seems to have an important function in Knight's implicit model of interpretation. In spite of certain equivocation about the relationship between the text and the author (where does the text stop and the author begin?), it seems that for Knight the author, through his text, has power - at times even a great deal of power - to make readers interpret the text in a certain way.

#### 6.1.4 The notion and function of the readers

This section will explore the strategies Knight uses to suggest, firstly, a notion and function of himself as a reader of *KL*, and, secondly, a notion and function of his implied readers. In addition, I shall point out what the relationship between the critic and his readers, between the readers and the text, and between the readers and the author appears to be like, and whether there is any interaction between them.<sup>20</sup>

##### 6.1.4.1 The critic as a reader

Knight does not explicitly characterize himself as a reader of *KL*. As with the notion and function of the author, he uses more indirect strategies to suggest how he pictures himself in the interpretation of the text.

One linguistic feature whose use and co-text may show something of the notion and function of the critic in the essay is the use of the first person singular personal and possessive pronoun *I/me/my*. TABLE 22 gives a comprehensive list of Knight's uses of these pronouns in their immediate co-text (my italics).

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<sup>20</sup> In this context the term 'reader' covers, not only the reading aspect of the interpretation of *KL*, but also its viewing aspect. It is important to remember that Knight implies that the interpretation of the play is both a reading and viewing event.

TABLE 22 Pronouns *I/me/my* in Knight's essay

1. So *I shall notice* here the imaginative core of the play, and excluding much of the logic of the plot of the play, analyze the fantastic comedy of *King Lear*. (161)
2. The very thought seems a sacrilegious cruelty, *I know*, but ridicule is generally cruel. (163)
3. This illustrates the exact quality *I wish to emphasize*: the humour a boy - even a kind boy - may see in the wriggles of an impaled insect. (170)
4. *I have noticed* the major themes of *Lear* and *Gloucester*: there are others. (173)
5. The death of *Cordelia* is the last and most horrible of all the horrible incongruities *I have noticed*. (174)
6. That cruelty would be less were there not this element of comedy which *I have emphasized*, the insistent incongruities (174)
7. Now in this essay it will, perhaps, appear that *I have unduly emphasized* one single element of the play, magnifying it, and leaving the whole distorted. (175)
8. It has been *my purpose to emphasize*. (175)
9. *I have not exaggerated*. (175)
10. Nor does the use of the words 'comic' and 'humour' here imply disrespect to the poet's purpose: rather *I have used these words*, crudely, no doubt, to cut out for analysis the very heart of the play (175)

To begin with, even though there are not many explicit references to the critic in the essay, it seems that they are fairly evenly spread throughout it. As early as on the second page, where Knight specifies his goals in the essay, he uses "I" (1). As in this case, it seems that, on the whole, the first person singular personal or possessive pronoun is used whenever the critic is dealing with his own intention, or purpose in writing the essay. An exception to this pattern is perhaps sentence (2): there the use of the pronoun may be triggered by the critic's wish to add an interactional signal, a kind of anticipatory comment to his readers' potential responses. In all the rest of the sentences the co-text of the pronoun is very similar.

The first person singular personal or possessive pronoun is used with the verbs "notice" (1, 4, 5), "emphasize" (3, 6, 7, 8), "exaggerate" (9), "use - cut out" (10). These verbs, as seems to be typical of Knight, are consistently in the form of non-modalized, generalizing statements. What is, moreover, "noticed" by the critic are the core, elements, and themes of the play. The verb phrases are once more revealing in the way they suggest that interpretation is an unproblematic sensory process where certain elements of the text can, first, be noticed, second, emphasized and exaggerated, and, finally, even cut out by the critic. In particular, the verb phrase "cut out" complemented by "the heart" strikes us as interesting here, for it seems to suggest a conglomerate image of interpretation as almost a surgical process. It was argued above that the use of the image of "the

heart" to denote the central meaning of the play, has the effect that the text can be seen as something alive. However, surely when "the heart" is "cut out", there can no longer be any life left.

Be that as it may, it could perhaps be observed that in Knight's essay the critic's function as a reader resembles that of a teacher, who directs his readers' (pupils') attention to certain elements in *KL*, emphasizes their importance, and, finally, in front of their inquisitive eyes, cuts out the "very heart of the play".

In doing this he appears to be, moreover, a rather authoritarian teacher. The presentation of the interpretation as self-evident, by systematically generalizing all interpretive statements and by suggesting an image of interpretation as a sensory process of absorption, for example, does not mediate to us that this is the critic's personal view of *KL*. Instead, it suggests to us that his interpretation is the universal truth about *KL*. This shows very clearly in the by-now familiar extract in which Knight gives a summary of his main tenets:

Now in this essay it will, perhaps, appear that I have unduly emphasized one single element of the play, magnifying it, and leaving the whole distorted. It has been my purpose to emphasize. I have not exaggerated. The pathos has not been minimized: it is redoubled. Nor does the use of the words 'comic' and 'humour' here imply disrespect to the poet's purpose: rather I have used these words to cut out for analysis the very heart of the play . . . (175)

In spite of the fact that Knight first appears to take into consideration his readers' potential critical comments by "it will, perhaps, appear that I have unduly emphasized one single element", in the end, he boldly asserts once more that his interpretation has not been mere subjective fabrication, but only what the text suggests. The apologetic hedge is thus very superficial, almost like a bribe to readers, to make them accept Knight's interpretation as self-evident as he himself wants to present it. His summary then continues by adding a more universal dimension to *KL*; he writes that the "very heart of the play" is

the thing that man dares scarcely face: the demonic grin of the incongruous and absurd in the most pitiful of human struggles with an iron fate. It is this that wrenches, splits and gashes the mind till it utters the whirling vapourings of lunacy. (175)

Here is a statement of the play's meaning which is presented as *the* truth about *KL*, and which has an identical, powerful, affective and violent effect on "the mind" (Lear's, ours, everyone's?). And not only is this the truth about *KL*, it is apparently the truth of human existence in general, for

so deeply planted in the facts of our life is this unknowing ridicule of destiny, that the uttermost tragedy of the incongruous ensues . . . (175)

The facts of Lear's life are thus identical to the "facts" about "our" life. Not only does Knight appear to know then what *KL* is about, but he also seems to know what human life is about. The use of the term "facts" is in this sense very interesting, for Knight seems to assume that they are indeed something that are given and self-evident, rather than something that can be debated or variously established. In short, Knight seems to imply that he knows the truth about 'us', and that, therefore, he can teach it to 'us'. Surely, this is an *ex cathedra* interpretation.

The fact that the critic appears to be an authoritarian teacher of correct interpretation also means that he has a great deal of power. Part of his power clearly derives from the fact that he is an institutionalized 'better reader', who, thanks to his status as a professional academic literary critic, has the right to present his interpretation to others, and expect that it is to be accepted as a valid piece of literary critical writing. This observation is in fact similar to what the sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and J-C. Passeron (1990:108) have written on the use of "magisterial language" in pedagogic action. In their view,

magisterial language derives its full significance from the situation in which the relation of pedagogic communication is accomplished, with its social space, its ritual, its temporal rhythms; in short, the whole system of visible or invisible constraints which constitute pedagogic action as the action of imposing and inculcating a legitimate culture. In designating and consecrating every agent appointed to inculcate as worthy to transmit that which he transmits, the institution confers on professorial discourse a *status authority* . . .

However, even though this is a crucial predeterminant of the critical activity, the critic's power cannot be considered wholly the product of "the situation" of literary critical activity, but also of the set of underlying interpretive criteria chosen by the critic. In Knight's case, his text-based model of interpretation clearly gives him a perfect excuse for implying that his interpretation is the correct one, the only one that is true to the text.

In sum, the analysis above showed that the critic does not make many references to himself, or characterize himself as a reader of *KL*. In the few cases when he does, however, refer to himself, his primary motivation seems to be the statement of his particular intentions, aims and purposes in the interpretation. In this sense, he thus makes it explicit that the essay represents his view of the play. Similarly, he also makes his objectives clear. In spite of the rarity of references to the critic, he is not unimportant in interpretation, quite on the contrary. As the analysis of his use of the first person singular personal pronoun and the verb phrases

used with it show, his function in the interpretation of the text seems to be that of a discoverer of meaning. He is a discoverer, because interpretation appears to be an essentially sensory process of absorption to him. In addition, since he is a professional academic critic, he also functions as a mediator: it is the critic who 'notices', 'emphasizes' and 'cuts out' meanings from the text and presents them to readers as something which the text self-evidently foregrounds. In doing this, he is clearly rather authoritarian. With respect to his interpretive criteria, this is, however, not surprising, for if interpretation is considered an unproblematic process of internalization, the critic's role is bound to be unproblematic, too. More specifically, if it is assumed that meaning is in the text, and that it can be cut out from it by a competent professional critic, it is not necessary to relativize, modalize or hedge about it, but it can be presented as if it were categorically true and universally sharable.

#### 6.1.4.2 The implied readers

What was said above of the temporal dimension of the text relates to both the image and function of the readers in the essay, in particular, to the readers' experiences of, and responses to the text. In this section we shall look more closely at the kinds of strategies Knight uses to refer to, imply and address his (implied) readers and analyze what they indicate about the notion and function of the readers in this essay. Importantly, Knight seems to assume that the implied readers of his essay are also readers of the play.

First, readers are repeatedly referred to throughout the essay. This is done by means of the use of the inclusive first person plural personal and possessive pronoun (49 cases). Secondly, there are two cases where the pronoun *one* is used. Third, there are in the essay a number of cases where Knight uses such metonymic noun phrases as "the mind" which could be interpreted to refer to, not only to his own mind, or to those of the play's characters, but also to the readers' minds in general. To begin with, TABLE 23 gives a list of Knight's uses of the first person plural personal pronoun in its subjective case (*my italics*).

**TABLE 23 Use of the first person plural personal pronoun, subjective case, in Knight's essay**

1. *in King Lear, where we touch the unknown, . . .* (161)
2. *we touch the fantastic.* (161)
3. *we are in touch with potential comedy . . .*(164)
4. *that is . . . a truth we should realize .*(165)
5. *we are continually aware of the humour of cruelty . . .*(165)
6. *What shall we say of this exquisite movement?* (166)
7. *we forget that he is dissimulating.* (168)
8. *we endure something of the shaking and tempest of his mind.* (168)
9. *so vastly different from the awe we experience in face of Timon's hate . . .* (168)
10. *we start with humour in bad taste.* (169)
11. *We are clearly pointed to this grim fun . . .* (170)
12. *We are given these noble descriptive and philosophical speeches . . .*(171)
13. *We have a sublimely daring stroke of technique . . .* (171)
14. *At this point we suddenly have our first sight of Lear . . .* (172)
15. *we are . . . prepared by now for the grotesque.* (172)
16. *we may watch with tears . . . the cruelly comic actions of Lear . . .* (173)
17. *We are in touch with the exquisitely pathetic . . .* (173)
18. *We watch humanity grotesquely tormented . . .* (173)
19. *Again, we have incongruity . . .* (174)
20. *The death which . . . Stavrogin singled out as the least heroic . . ., or rather, shall we say, the most hideous and degrading . . .* (174)
21. *We remember: 'Upon such sacrifices . . .* (174)
22. *We do not feel that.* (174)
23. *as we close the sheets of this play, there is no horror, nor resentment.* (175)
24. *if we are to feel more than a fraction of this agony,* (175)
25. *we must have sense of this quality of grimmest humour.* (175)
26. *We must beware of sentimentalizing the cosmic mockery of the play.* (175)
27. *Why have we that strangely beautiful account of Cordelia's first hearing . . .* (176)
28. *What do we touch in these passages?* (176)
29. *Sometimes we know that all human pain holds beauty,* (176)
30. *that no tear falls but it dewes some flower we cannot see.* (176)

Judging by the number of cases where "we" are given the subject function, and, consequently, agency, by Knight, it would appear that readers are in fact an important and active party in the interpretation of *KL*. However, as we have already seen, this is only apparently so. Even in these clauses there are obvious indicators that readers are in reality subservient to the text, and that they are expected - even required - by Knight to perform in a certain way. For instance, that readers are subservient to the text is indicated by the use of passive constructions (e.g. clauses 11, 12, 13, and 15), which assign agency, not to the readers, but to the text or, possibly to the author. That the readers have no power to divert from Knight's normative interpretation is suggested by his consistent generalizations, and by (the

rarer, but very strong) use of deontic modality of obligation (clauses 24, 25, and 26).

Most importantly, the use of the pronoun "we" itself, used in connection with these strategies (even though it may be an established and useful way of addressing and summoning the readers in literary critical, or argumentative writing such as the present study) ties potentially heterogeneous audiences together very effectively. It suggests that "we" are together in the reading/viewing, and interpretation of *KL*. Firstly, a few of these pronouns are used with a verb phrase which suggests that "we" as readers share (with Knight) the same experience of *KL*: "we start" our interpretation of *KL* "with humour in bad taste" (10), "we have our first sight of *Lear*" (14), "watch humanity grotesquely tormented" (18) and "close the sheets of the play" (23) together in the allegedly shared reading/ watching event. Secondly, the pronoun "we" is used in a co-text which mediates that our affective responses, too, are identical. For example, "we endure something of the shaking and tempest of [*Lear*'s] mind" (8), "we may watch with tears the cruelly comic actions of *Lear*" (16), and "we experience awe" (9) together. The common affective response seems to work the other way, too: it is not only the case that "we" generally feel about *KL* in the same way, but that, on a certain point, "we" equally categorically "do not feel" (22) it in a certain way. As was pointed out above, this clause is interesting again in the sense that it is preceded by a question "Or do they [gods] laugh, and is the *Lear* universe one ghastly piece of fun?" which apparently signals that the critic is here hesitant, that he is poised between at least two alternative interpretations of the scene. Predictably, this is just an illusion, for the openness of the text is most emphatically denied by the categorical negation in (22).

Thirdly, there are also cases in the essay where the pronoun "we" is used in connection with a verb phrase denoting the absorption, experience, knowledge and comprehension of the text, or of receiving something from the text. For example, the pronoun is used in clauses which suggest that "we" "touch" or "are in touch" with an element of the text (clauses 1, 2, 3, 17), in clauses which suggest that "we remember" (21), or "forget" (7) something of the play; in clauses which argue that "we are aware of" (5), or "we have" (13, 19) an element or theme of the play. Further, there are a few passive clauses which suggest that "we" are "pointed to" (11) or "given" (12) some elements of the text to make us understand it better. As we have seen above, passive constructions usually function in the essay to assign agency either to the text, or to the author - the readers have none of it. This is true here, too.

The modalized clauses are a special and exceptional case here. Against the background of Knight's usual strategy of generalization, the few cases where he modalizes his interpretive statements or arguments

stand out. In clauses (4), (24), (25) and (26) Knight uses a deontic modal auxiliary of obligation to suggest that he considers the truth of a proposition expressed by the clauses as necessary, or obligatory<sup>21</sup>. In these clauses, by using such auxiliaries as "must", "should", or a deontic verb phrase "are to", he openly directs and controls his readers. An opposite example of modalization is, as was pointed out above, the use of the epistemic modality of possibility in the final paragraph of the essay, where Knight introduces a possible 'deeper meaning' to the play. This paragraph is characterized by the use of such epistemic modality markers as "perhaps", or "sometimes" (29). In these cases, Knight thus appears to be less sure, or committed to the truth of his interpretive statements: instead of asserting that 'we' know that all human pain holds beauty, he much more cautiously suggests that "sometimes we know that all human pain holds beauty". Possibly, then, as suggested by the use of epistemic modality here, at this level of Knight's interpretation there is room for more readerly interpretations, interpretations which would not necessarily be in agreement with Knight's 'deeper meaning'.

Nevertheless, on the whole this analysis of the use of the pronoun *we* in its co-text has shown that readers are, or must be, a uniform group to Knight. As indicated by Knight's almost systematic generalizations and the use of the present tense, the critic and his implied readers are together in the experience of reading *KL*. "We do not feel" what the text apparently tells us not to feel. The text is closed, and the readers passive, subservient to the text. Meaning is in the text, and the text functions as a trigger for the readers' cognitive and affective response.

These observations are further strengthened if we look at the uses of the first person plural pronoun in its objective case (TABLE 24, my italics).

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<sup>21</sup> Modality refers to a speaker's attitude toward or opinion about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence and toward the situation or event described by a sentence. In linguistics it is customary to distinguish between *epistemic* and *deontic* modality. The former most often indicates the speaker's confidence, or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition, whereas the latter indicates how desirable a speaker sees a certain action or event. Modality is very commonly expressed by modal auxiliaries. Other means of expressing it are adverbs (*possibly, perhaps*), clauses (*I'm sure that . . .*) and mood. (For a systematic account of modality see e.g. Coates 1983, 1987, Simpson 1990).

**TABLE 24 Use of the first person plural personal pronoun, objective case, in Knight's essay**

1. the Fool is used as a chorus . . . *pointing us* to the absurdity of the situation (163)
2. the dynamic fury . . . finally *gives us* those grand apostrophes . . . (164)
3. then the two are . . . *unified, for us*, if not for Lear . . . (167)
4. he *flashes on us* the ridiculous basis of his tragedy . . . (168)
5. and *helps us* to understand and feel the enduring agony of Lear . . . (169)
6. The Gloucester-theme . . . *giving us* direct villainy . . . (172)
7. The note of forgiving chivalry *reminds us* of the deaths of Hamlet and Laertes. (174)

The pronoun is here used in three different syntactic functions: as a direct object, an indirect object and a prepositional complement. When it is used as a direct object (1, 5, 7), the implication is that the text is a source of influence which points "us" to, helps "us" or reminds "us" of something. When the pronoun functions as an indirect object (2, 6), the implication is that the text is a source of influence which gives its readers something. Finally, when the pronoun functions as a prepositional complement (3, 4) the implication is that the text is a demonstrator, or a displayer which shows its readers something of itself. In all of these three cases the readers thus appear as objects for the text's effects.

Knight's use of the first person plural possessive pronoun also suggests similar findings to us; consider TABLE 25 (my italics):

**TABLE 25 Use of the first person plural possessive pronoun in Knight's essay**

1. it is the first of *our many incongruities* to be noticed. (161)
2. increasing *our pain* by his emphasis on a humour . . . (163)
3. Lear is the center of *our attention* . . . (168)
4. something which moves *our pity*, but does not strike awe . . . (168)
5. incident and dialogue . . . walk the tight-rope of *our pity* . . . (168)
6. The Gloucester-theme is a certain indication of *our vision* . . . (168-9)
7. to tune *our minds* to a noble, tragic sacrifice. (171)
8. *our first sight* of Lear . . . (172)
9. Now, when *our imaginations* are . . . quickened to the grotesque . . . (172)
10. the Gloucester-theme . . . floods as a tributary the main stream of *our sympathy* with Lear. (172)
11. *Our vision* has thus been uniquely focused to understand that vision of the grotesque . . . (172)
12. so deeply planted in the facts of *our life* is this unknowing ridicule . . . (175)

Here the noun head following the pronoun is a good indicator of the kinds of roles the readers are given in Knight's essay. First, these heads include noun phrases denoting a shared affective response. Examples of this are "our pain" (2), "our pity" (4, 5), and "our sympathy" (10). Second, there are noun phrases which suggest a common experience of reading/watching *KL*. These include "our attention" (3), "our first sight" (8); "our minds" (7), and "our life" (13). The last one of these is particularly interesting because there Knight makes the bold move of stating that Lear's tragedy is everyone's tragedy, like this:

so deeply planted in the facts of our life is this unknowing ridicule of destiny, that the uttermost tragedy of the incongruous ensues . . . (175)

Third, there are noun phrases which suggest that Knight's interpretation is a shared one, as in "our many incongruities" (1), and "our vision" (11). What is noticeable, too, in these clauses is the way the readers' implied responses are again very clearly the product of the text's operations: for example, "our minds" "are tuned", and "our imaginations" "quickened" by the text. Once more Knight thus implies that the readers of *KL* are, or have to be, a uniform group: they experience, feel and interpret the text in exactly the same way the critic does.

There are in the essay two cases where Knight uses the pronoun *one* in a similar function to that of the first person plural personal pronoun, to include both himself and his readers in the common reading/interpreting event. These are the following:

1. In the theatre, one is terrified lest some one laugh: yet, if Lear could laugh - if the Lears of the world could laugh at themselves - there would be no such tragedy. (164)
2. One can almost picture his grin as he penned those lines, commending them mentally to the limited intellect of his father. (169)

There are, nevertheless, even more indirect strategies in the essay for referring to the readers and their responses. One such strategy is, again, metonymy. It has already been noted above how the critic uses such metonymic noun phrases as "our imaginations", or "our vision" in his arguments about the uniform reader responses, instead of referring directly to the readers. That this is not a completely uncommon strategy can be seen from TABLE 26 (my italics).

TABLE 26 Metonyms for the readers in Knight's essay

1. To *the coarse mind* lacking sympathy an incident may seem comic . . . (160)
2. which to *the richer understanding* is pitiful and tragic. (160)
3. The wonder of Shakespearean tragedy is . . . an interlocking of *the mind* with a profound meaning . . . (160)
4. [the wonder of Shakespearean tragedy] is . . .] a disclosure to *the inward eye* of vistas undreamed . . . (160)
5. The peculiar dualism at the root of the play . . . which wrenches and splits *the mind* by a sight of incongruities . . . (161)
6. the plot turns on the diverging tugs of two assurance in *the mind* . . . (165)
7. the sacrilege of the human body in torture must be, to a *human mind*, incongruous, absurd. (169)
8. the enigmatic silence holds not only an unutterable sympathy, but also the ripples of an impossible laughter whose flight is not for the wing of *human understanding* . . . (176)

It appears that "the mind" is indeed an important aspect of the readers for Knight. First, the use of the noun phrases "the mind" (1, 5, 6, 7), "understanding" (2, 8), and "the inward eye" (4) as indirect ways of referring to readers helps Knight to establish them as a fundamentally uniform group. There are no various human understandings and minds, Knight seems to imply, but one general, human understanding and one mind manifest in all the readers/viewers of *KL*. Readers thus read as one reader, as one mind, which of course fits very nicely with the idea that the text is taken both to contain its meaning and to transmit it to readers. In a way, the powerful text requires a passive, subservient and uniform readership. However, the totalitarianism of this implication is somewhat weakened by the critic's acknowledgement that there may be readers/viewers with a "coarse mind" (1), and those with "a richer understanding" (2).

The use of such metonyms is perhaps understandable if it is remembered that the text is, in addition to a spatial construct, also a temporal phenomenon, an experience in the readers' minds. Furthermore, *KL* obviously appears to Knight as a tragedy of the mind, of madness and incongruity. This observation is supported by the fact there is in the essay a pattern of lexical choices which center on the mind, madness and sanity. For example, this is how Knight describes the nature of Lear's personal tragedy at the beginning of his essay:

Lear's instincts are themselves grand, heroic - noble even. His judgement is nothing. He understands neither himself nor his daughters. . . . Lear's fault is a fault of *the mind*, a *mind* unwarrantably, because selfishly, foolish. . . . His purgatory is to be a purgatory of *the mind*, of madness. . . . there is now a gaping dualism in *his mind*, thus drawn asunder by incongruities, and he endures madness. (162, my italics)

The tragedy is "a tragedy of the mind, of madness." "The mind" is, in fact, one of the keywords in the essay. What makes it particularly important in the essay is the fact that often, as can also be seen in TABLE 26, the word is used with the definite article. Hence, it can refer generically to the "human mind", or it can refer to Lear's mind only, as was the case in the previous extract. Consequently, the noun phrase "the mind" may be used by Knight to fuse together Lear's mind, the readers' mind, even every human mind that has ever existed, or will exist. It is thus suitably vague: it can narrow down, or expand the scope of the tragedy from Lear's individual tragedy to a universal human tragedy, and back again.

In sum, these observations and the observations made above on the notion and function of the text, and the author suggest several strategies that Knight uses to mediate a particular notion and function of the readers. First, the critic's use of passive constructions suggesting that the text manipulates the readers in some way, and his use of deontic modality of obligation, show that readers are subservient to the text, or the author, or both. It is the (author's) text which is given agency, and which is, consequently, active in 'pointing' 'us' to or 'giving' 'us' certain elements of the text. Second, the critic's use of generalizations and inclusive *we* suggests that readers are a uniform group which reads like one reader. Third, Knight's use of noun and verb phrases referring to interpretation as perceptual process, suggests that readers are also passive. They simply receive what the text transmits to them, and respond to it in the allegedly identical way that Knight proposes. Put crudely, this means that the structural elements of the text, for example, the element of "sinister humour", produce corresponding affective and cognitive responses in readers. And, as was suggested above, it may also be that the process works the other way, too: the readers' affective and cognitive responses help them to identify the corresponding elements within the text. In this sense, interpretation seems a closed circuit, where the text triggers the readers to perceive what is embedded within it and where nothing (readers' background, culture, community, assumptions, beliefs, etc.) can in principle interfere with this process.

Fourth, the critic's use of the metonymic "the mind" also shows his emphasis on the affective and cognitive responses of the readers. In addition, it may be that "the mind" also functions to tie together the dramatic world, as well as the readers' world, in that it suggests that the play tells something essential about the human mind and existence. In Knight's implicit set of interpretive criteria readers thus have practically no power, or freedom: under the influence of the text, they appear to have no choice but to respond to it in the way (that Knight suggests) that the text suggests.

### 6.1.4.3 The critic - readers relationship

The next analytical questions are what the relationship between the critic and his readers is like, and whether there is any interaction between them. First, to provide an answer to these questions I shall have another look at the first person singular and the first person plural personal pronouns that Knight uses, and contrast them with each other. Second, I shall examine whether the critic uses any interactional conventions in his essay: in particular, whether he addresses, instructs, guides, and controls the readers, and if he does, what kind of strategies he applies. Third, I shall look at how Knight presents his interpretive points, whether or not he leaves inferential work to the readers by using syntactically long and complex sentences, and difficult terminology, for example.

To begin, Knight's uses of first person singular and plural personal pronouns indicates something of the way in which the critic perceives the relationship between himself and his implied readers. TABLE 27 lists these pronouns.

TABLE 27 First person singular and plural personal pronouns in Knight's essay

1. So *I shall notice* here the imaginative core of the play, and excluding much of the logic of the plot of the play, analyze the fantastic comedy of *King Lear*. (161)
2. The very thought seems a sacrilegious cruelty, *I know*, but ridicule is generally cruel. (163)
3. This illustrates the exact quality *I wish to emphasize*: the humour a boy - even a kind boy - may see in the wriggles of an impaled insect. (170)
4. *I have noticed* the major themes of *Lear* and *Gloucester*: there are others. (173)
5. The death of *Cordelia* is the last and most horrible of all the horrible incongruities *I have noticed*. (174)
6. That cruelty would be less were there not this element of comedy which *I have emphasized*, the insistent incongruities . . . (174)
7. Now in this essay it will, perhaps, appear that *I have unduly emphasized* one single element of the play, magnifying it, and leaving the whole distorted. (175)
8. *I have not exaggerated*. (175)
9. Nor does the use of the words 'comic' and 'humour' here imply disrespect to the poet's purpose: rather *I have used these words*, crudely, no doubt, to cut out for analysis the very heart of the play . . . (175)
10. in *King Lear*, where *we touch* the unknown, . . . (161)
11. *we touch* the fantastic (161)
12. *we are in touch* with potential comedy . . . (164)
13. that is . . . a truth *we should realize* . . . (165)
14. *we are continually aware of* the humour of cruelty . . . (165)
15. What *shall we say* of this exquisite movement? (166)
16. *we forget* that he is dissimulating . . . (168)
17. *we endure* something of the shaking and tempest of his mind . . . (168)
18. so vastly different from the awe *we experience* in face of *Timon's* hate . . . (168)
19. *we start* with humour in bad taste. (169)
20. *We are* clearly pointed to this grim fun . . . (170)
21. *We are given* these noble descriptive and philosophical speeches . . . (171)
22. *We have* a sublimely daring stroke of technique . . . (171)
23. At this point *we suddenly have* (our first sight of *Lear*) . . . (172)
24. *we are* . . . prepared by now for the grotesque. (172)
25. *We may watch* with tears . . . the cruelly comic actions of *Lear* . . . (173)
26. *We are* in touch with the exquisitely pathetic . . . (173)
27. *We watch* humanity grotesquely tormented . . . (173)
28. Again, *we have* incongruity . . . (174)
29. The death which . . . *Stavrogin* singled out as the least heroic . . . , or rather, *shall we say*, the most hideous and degrading . . . (174)
30. *We remember*: 'Upon such sacrifices . . . (174)
31. *We do not feel* that. (174)
32. as *we close* the sheets of this play, there is no horror, nor resentment. (175)
33. if *we are to feel* more than a fraction of this agony, (175)

(continues)

TABLE 27 (continues)

34. *we must have* sense of this quality of grimmest humour. (175)  
 35. *We must beware* of sentimentalizing the cosmic mockery of the play. (175)  
 36. Why *have we* that strangely beautiful account of Cordelia's first hearing . . . (176)  
 37. What *do we touch* in these passages? (176)  
 38. Sometimes *we know* that all human pain holds beauty, (176)  
 39. that no tear falls but it dewes some flower *we cannot see* . . . (176)

TABLE 27 shows that the critic's function in interpretation is both different from and similar to that of the readers'. It is different in the sense that, unlike the readers, the critic is the one who explicitly formulates and argues for an interpretation and markets it to the other readers of the play. As was pointed out in the connection of TABLE 22, he does this by making it clear, through the use of the first person singular personal pronoun, that the interpretation he details in his essay is only his. It is him only who 'notices' (1, 4, 5) 'emphasizes' (6, 7) and 'cuts out' (9) meanings for other readers to see. At the same time, his function is highly similar to that of other readers of the text. This is because he suggests, by using the inclusive *we* (passages 10-38), that his interpretation is, nevertheless, something that is more or less automatically triggered in all readers. It is clear that the use of the inclusive pronoun is thus a highly persuasive strategy for it helps Knight to naturalize his interpretation as the only possible one. In this it has exactly the same function as the strategies of generalization, the assignment of agency to the text, and the establishment of the causal relationship between the text and the readers.

Another way of saying the same thing is that the use of the inclusive pronoun could be seen as one particular politeness strategy. This view has been forwarded by, for example, Paul Simpson who has argued that the use of the pronoun *we* is closely related to the manipulation of presuppositions, and that it is a strategy of 'positive politeness' by which the writer includes his/her readers in the activity of interpretation, thereby calling upon their cooperative assumptions.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Simpson points out that the use of inclusive *we* functions pragmatically to soften the potential riskiness of the information presented, since it is regarded as knowledge shared by both the writer and readers (Simpson 1990: 90).

<sup>22</sup> The notion of positive politeness is derived from Brown's and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory, and it means that in interaction attention is paid to the interlocutor's "positive face", i.e. to his/her desire to be approved of by other people. There is also "negative politeness" which means that attention is paid to the interlocutor's "negative face", i.e. to his/her wish to be left alone and free to do whatever s/he wants to do.

In Knight's case it could even be argued that, not only does he market a view of interpretation as a shared interaction, but he also seems to imply that there is a world of values, beliefs, and assumptions which his readers share with him. What this also means is that language and meanings are shared, for only in a shared world with a static code of language can the text mean the same for everyone. Thus, as was seen above, potentially heterogeneous readers are forced into a homogeneous whole, which reads like one reader. The implied reader of Knight's essay is thus an ideal reader - a product of an ideal world.

Still other, and more explicit, directive and persuasive strategies in the essay are commands and questions to the readers. Both of these sentence types are interactional by nature in the sense that they directly address the readers, and require that they respond in some way. As could perhaps be expected on the basis of the rarity of markers of deontic modality of obligation, there are not many direct commands to the readers in the essay. In fact, there are only two (my italics):

1. He is not all wrong when he treats the situation as matter for a joke. Much here that is always regarded as essentially pathetic is not far from comedy. For instance, *consider* Lear's words:  
     I will have such revenges on you both . . .  
     (163, my italics)
2. The very thought seems a sacrilegious cruelty, I know, but ridicule is generally cruel. The speeches of Lear often come near comedy. Again, *notice* the abrupt contrast in his words:  
     But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;...  
     (163, my italics)

It is true that in both of these passages Knight uses a direct command to control the readers. Nevertheless, these commands are not that face-threatening since they only ask the readers to pay attention to particular points in the primary text. The rarity of both deontic modality of obligation and of direct commands to the readers suggests, consequently, that the critic is careful not to dominate and constrain the readers too openly. Instead, he uses subtler and more indirect strategies. And, as was demonstrated above, these subtler strategies work very well: the readers are inescapably in the critic's hands, without being fully aware that they are being directed, persuaded and controlled at all.

It was noted above that questions seem to be used by Knight to summon readers, and to signal that, apparently, the text is open to various interpretations. Nevertheless, this was shown to be an illusion, for the questions (except in the final paragraph of the essay) are always immediately followed by some statement which closes the text again. The questions thus appear as rhetorical strategies only, whose purpose is to draw the readers' attention to certain points, or to keep them (apparently) active

and involved. TABLE 28 is a comprehensive list of the critic's questions in the essay.

**TABLE 28 Questions to the readers in Knight's essay**

1. [quote] What could be more painfully incongruous, spoken, as it is, by an old man, a king, to his daughter? It is not far from the ridiculous. (163)
2. [quote] What shall we say of this exquisite movement? (166)
3. [after (2)] Is it comedy? Lear's profound unreason is capped by the blatant irrelevance of Edgar's couplet suggested by the word 'pelican'; then the two are swiftly all but unified (167)
4. We are given these noble descriptive and philosophical speeches to tune our minds to a noble, tragic sacrifice. And what happens? The old man falls from his kneeling posture a few inches, flat, face foremost. (171)
5. The death which Dostoevsky's Stavrogin singled out as of all the least heroic and picturesque, or rather, shall we say, the most hideous and degrading: this is the fate that grips the white innocence and resplendent love-strength of Cordelia. (174)
6. And is there, perhaps, even a deeper and less heart-searing significance in its humour? (175)
7. What smiling destiny is this he sees at the last instant of racked mortality? Why have we that strangely beautiful account of Cordelia's first hearing of her father's pain: [quote] (176)
8. [quote] What do we touch in these passages? (176)

In examples (1), (2), and (3) the question seems to be first used to create an illusion of the openness of the text. In all of these the question is, however, immediately followed by an interpretive statement, and, consequently, closure. In these examples, the question is then merely rhetorical in nature. In examples (4) and (5) the question seems to have a somewhat different function: in (4) it seems to be used for a dramatic emphasis and in (5) to introduce a specification, or correction of the critic's argument. In (6), (7), and (8), unlike in (1)-(3), the question is not followed by a categorical interpretive statement, but by a speculative interpretive suggestion. In these cases the question may indicate the critic's uncertainty, and cautiousness.

On the whole, it seems that questions thus have a number of functions in Knight's essay. Nevertheless, it seems relatively safe to argue that its use seems generally motivated by the writer's wish to reach out of the text and address the readers. In this sense, in spite of the fact that the readers are not given any real interpretive freedom or power by Knight, there is thus a hint of a critic-reader dialogue or interaction in the essay. By using questions, Knight at least acknowledges the existence of readers, and their responses to the text.

A similar, dawning awareness of literary criticism as a kind of dialogue with readers as well as previous/other critical positions is also manifest in certain sections of the essay where Knight is discussing the justification of his interpretation. This is most noticeable at the very beginning and end of the essay. At these points, when he is either introducing or summarizing his interpretation, Knight both anticipates potential criticism from other critics or readers, and responds to it. The anticipation of criticism is evident as early as in the first sentence of the essay:

It may appear strange to search for any sort of comedy as a primary theme in a play whose abiding gloom is so heavy, whose reading of human destiny and human actions so starkly tragic. Yet it is an error of aesthetic judgement to regard humour as essentially trivial. Though its impact usually appears vastly different from that of tragedy, yet there is humour that treads the brink of tears, and tragedy which needs but an infinitesimal shift of perspective to disclose the varied riches of comedy. (160)

Here Knight first speculates (note the use of epistemic modality of possibility) about the justification of his enterprise. He contrasts his own interpretation with the then 'established' view of *KL* which considers the play dark, gloomy and tragic. That this is the established view is not asserted, but again presupposed ("a play whose abiding gloom is so heavy"). Interestingly, after his cautious speculation of potential criticism, he categorically asserts that it is, nevertheless, "an error" to regard an interpretation like his as "strange". Finally, he again contrasts the 'usual' view of humour with his view which sees humour as shading into tragedy. It is interesting to see that Knight does not state that this view of humour is actually his own interpretation, but naturalizes it through the use of an existential construction ("there is humour") which presupposes, or takes for granted the existence of the phenomenon in question.

A similar strategy is used in the final summary of his interpretation. There he writes that

now in this essay it will, perhaps, appear that I have unduly emphasized one single element of the play, magnifying it, and leaving the whole distorted. It has been my purpose to emphasize. I have not exaggerated . . . Nor does the use of the words 'comic' and 'humour' here imply disrespect to the poet's purpose: rather I have used these words, crudely no doubt, to cut out for analysis the very heart of the play . . . (175)

Here Knight uses the same expression as at the beginning of the essay "it may appear" to indicate that he is aware of the kinds of critical comments his interpretation may receive. In this case he is anticipating that the criticism may be directed to his focus on a single element of the play. However, as at the beginning of the essay, he immediately rushes to assert that

this criticism is totally unfounded, because the purpose of his essay has been "to cut out" what the author has inserted into the text. This categorical statement is somewhat softened by the parenthetical adverbial phrase "crudely, no doubt", which implies, self-consciously and modestly, that the potential criticism may be right on one point, namely that the manner and skill of the excavation of meaning is not perhaps the best possible. Clearly, this is a less weighty criticism than that concerning the 'strangeness' or the narrow focus of Knight's interpretation. Therefore, it is also easier to accept it. On his major point, in contrast, Knight is, as we have repeatedly seen, adamant. The indication of modesty and self-humiliation in connection with a minor issue is, in fact, a skilful interactional strategy for showing readers that their potential criticism is taken into account, and that they thus have a role in Knight's interpretation. This is also a very safe strategy: by directing the readers' critical attention to a minor point - the skill of the analysis - the critic avoids tackling the much more risky task of discussing and problematizing "the core" of his interpretation.

It may well be that this strategy of indicating sensitivity to potential reader responses is also motivated by the critic's wish to be polite to his readers. If we accepted Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1988) view of politeness, we could argue that the critic is here concerned with 'negative politeness' which means that he is deferential towards his readers, that he, following Brown and Levinson's definition of negative politeness, humbles himself and his capacities. (On negative politeness see Brown and Levinson 1978:183).

In his study of modality in Leavis's literary criticism, Simpson (1990:89) points out that Leavis uses, for example, epistemic modality of possibility and probability to mitigate, not the weighty and controversial information, but the less weighty and controversial information. In other words, the amount of detachment in Leavis's style is in inverse proportion to the weightiness or seriousness of the information presented - which is clearly in opposition to what Brown and Levinson's politeness theory argues. According to Brown and Levinson's view, the more categorical a presentation of information is, the less it pays attention to 'the negative face' of the addressee. In this light, Simpson points out, the lack of mitigation in the presentation of weighty and controversial information in Leavis's essay is thus a curious paradox.

In Simpson's view (1990:91), the explanation to this paradox could be that for Leavis interpretation is really subjective in nature:

if there is an understanding among critics that responses to texts are largely subjective value judgements, then there is no reason why categorical assertions, or unmodalized language generally, should not be used.

In Knight's case, however, this explanation does not perhaps work so well. As we have just seen, similarly to Leavis, Knight uses strategies which present important information about the meaning of the literary text in question as self-evident and given, whereas he, on less important issues, shows consideration for the readers' potential critical responses. In his case a more appropriate reason as to why he presents weighty information as self-evident is that he uses the text as an absolute interpretive criterion. Since his interpretation is what the text 'means', there is no need to problematize, mitigate or modalize his interpretive statements. His position actually implies that there is very little freedom left for readers to improvise or to provide "subjective value judgments". However, on the issue of the skill of criticism, which depends more directly on the critic than the text, Knight can afford to show consideration for the readers' face, almost as a bribe, to assure them that they, too, are important and active agents in the interpretation of the text.

Our next question is whether the critic guides the readers in the interpretation of *KL*, and if so, what strategies he uses. Clearly, Knight's strategies of generalization and the inclusive pronoun *we*, which help the critic to establish his interpretation as self-evident, are relevant here, too. However, it could be argued that if the text, or, more concretely the quotations on which Knight relies in his interpretive moves, are self-evidently taken to 'mean' what the critic argues them to mean, this strategy includes very little actual analysis to support the interpretation. Interpretation is then more an act of asserting, rather than constructing, the text's meaning.

The way the critic structures his essay, for example the fact that he states the focus of his interpretation explicitly in the second paragraph of the essay, has no doubt the effect of guiding and instructing the readers through the essay. However, we shall concentrate on two other strategies here which seem related to the critic-reader relationship. These are syntax and terminology. In particular, we shall briefly examine whether Knight's syntax and the use of terminology contribute to the presentation of his interpretation, whether they work to guide readers by clarifying the critic's interpretive points, or whether they work the opposite way, and end up misleading the readers.

Why these strategies may be worth examining is that it has been argued by, for example, Susan Peck MacDonald (1990:34) that current literary criticism is not very readable. It is not considered readable, because, as quantitative analyses of sentence length in academic writing have shown, literary criticism has longer and more complex sentences than, for example, fictional and journalistic writing (for more details see, for example, Broadhead et al. 1982, Berkenkotter et al. 1988, Marckworth and Bell 1967); similarly, it has a high proportion of difficult terminology. Both

these factors have been argued to be responsible for reducing readability (Peck MacDonald 1990:38).

On the whole Knight does not seem to use particularly long and complex sentences or difficult terminology. Rather, he seems to vary the length and complexity of his sentences and to use relatively 'easy' terms. However, on certain crucial points he prefers longer and syntactically more complex sentences. Most markedly, both the introductory summary of the play's themes (160-1) and the final paragraph (176) are interesting in this sense. Consider, once more, the introductory summary:

(1) The wonder of Shakespearean tragedy is ever (i) a mystery - (ii) a vague, yet powerful tangible presence; (iii) an interlocking of the mind with a profound meaning, (iv) a disclosure to the inward eye of vistas undreamed, and but fitfully understood. (2) *King Lear* is great (v) in the abundance and richness of human delineation, (vi) in the level focus of creation that builds a massive oneness, in fact, a universe, of single quality from a multiplicity of differentiated units; and (vii) in a positive and purposeful working out of a purgatorial philosophy. (3) But it is still greater in the perfect fusion of psychological realism with the daring flights of a fantastic imagination. (4) The heart of Shakespearean tragedy is centered in the imaginative, in the unknown; and in *King Lear*, where we touch the unknown, we touch the fantastic. (5) The peculiar dualism at the root of the play which wrenches and splits the mind by a sight of incongruities displays in turn realities absurd, hideous, pitiful. (160-1, my enumeration)

There are five sentences in this extract. Sentence (1) contains 39 words, and its syntactic complexity derives from the listing of four noun phrases functioning as subject complements in the sentence. Phrases (iii) and (iv), in particular, may cause problems for the readers, for they are internally complex. Both of them are post-modified by two prepositional phrases; phrase (iv) also has two non-finite co-ordinate clauses postmodifying the noun phrase/prepositional complement ("vistas undreamed, and but fitfully understood"). Sentence (2) contains 58 words, and its complexity is due to the distance between the adjective phrase functioning as subject complement ("great") and the postmodifying prepositional phrases (vi) "in the level focus . . . units", and (vii) "in a positive . . . philosophy". The phrases (vi) and (vii) are also internally complex: the first has an embedded relative clause, which, in turn contains two prepositional phrases functioning as adverbials; the second one has a post-modifying prepositional phrase. Sentence (3) contains 30 words, and, like the preceding sentence, it has an adjective phrase functioning as a subject complement, which, in turn is modified by a complex prepositional phrase. Sentence (4) has 26 words, and it is a compound sentence consisting of two simple sentences. Further, the latter of these has an embedded finite clause functioning as an adverbial modifier of the prepositional phrase "in *King Lear*".

Sentence (5) has 27 words; and its complexity derives mainly from the two post-modifiers of the noun phrase "the peculiar dualism". The first of these is a prepositional phrase and the second a lengthy relative clause. Note also how the modifiers "absurd, hideous, pitiful" come after their head word "realities".

On the whole all the sentences seem quite long in this extract: their average number of words is 36.0. If we compare this figure with the average number of words in literary criticism, 29.5 (as suggested by Broadhead, Berlin and Broadhead (1982)), we notice that here, at least, Knight is using unusually long sentences. They are also syntactically complex, particularly at the level of phrase, in the form of post-modifying structures. Because these modifiers themselves tend to be long and complex and separated from their head, the sentences, and consequently, the whole of the summary, may not be very tightly cohesive<sup>23</sup>. The internal complexity of the phrases may, however, be compensated for the repetition "*King Lear* is great" and "it is still greater", by the consistent use of the non-modalized present tense and generalizations.

Then again, the abstract lexical choices of the summary may represent another factor working in the opposite direction and reduce the clarity of the summary, especially as this is the first time that Knight refers to the major themes and planes of *KL*. Related to, and perhaps as a consequence of, Knight's tendency to use major generalizations, the extract contains a high number of nominalizations. Examples of these are "an interlocking of the mind with . . .", "a disclosure to the inward eye of . . .", "the abundance and richness of human delineation", "positive and purposeful working out of purgatorial philosophy".

Finally, put together, all these features, - length, complexity, abstract lexical choices and nominalizations - may have the effect that the summary is not very 'readable'. At this stage, then, it seems that a great deal of inferential work is left to readers, and that Knight is not being very helpful or instructive to them.

Similar observations can also be made on the final paragraph of the essay where Knight is suggesting the 'deeper' meaning to the play:

(i) Perhaps humour, too, is inwoven in the universal pain, (ii) and the enigmatic silence holds not only an unutterable sympathy, but also the ripples of an impossible laughter whose flight is not for the wing of human understanding; (iii) and perhaps it is this that casts its darting shadow of the grotesque across the furrowed pages of *King Lear*. (176, my enumeration)

<sup>23</sup> The terms *cohesion* and *coherence* have been popularized by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Cohesion refers to the linguistic - phonological, lexical, grammatical, lexical semantic - of linking sentences into larger units. Coherence, in turn, usually refers to the underlying development and connectivity of propositions (cf. Kintsch and van Dijk 1978; Widdowson 1979).

There is only one sentence in this extract, and it contains 59 words. It is also syntactically complex in that it contains four co-ordinate clauses. Clause (ii) is, furthermore, internally complex as it includes a correlative construction "not only" - "but also", and a noun phrase post-modified by a relative clause. Clause (iii), in turn, is a cleft sentence which also contains a noun phrase post-modified by a prepositional phrase. It is noteworthy, too, how Knight uses such abstract expressions here as "universal pain", "an unutterable sympathy", "the wing of human understanding", and "shadow of the grotesque" which, as such, do not perhaps say very much to readers. Clearly, this extract is in the same sense 'difficult' as the previous one - the length of the sentence, its internal complexity, and abstract vocabulary all contribute to the fact that the readers have to do a great deal of inferential work.

However, in this context it may be that Knight's purpose is not at all to be helpful to readers. The frequent reformulations, examples of which can also be located in the introductory summary, for example, that Knight uses to depict the characteristics of the text or the readers' responses to it are a good example of this. As was noted earlier, these reformulations may be motivated by the critic's wish to emphasize how difficult it is to express precisely what the text 'means' or 'does' to readers in an unstraightforward manner. In other words, the 'difficulty' of the text may function to suggest that, even though in Knight's approach text meaning and effect are allegedly predetermined by the text, they are at the same time essentially complex. In this sense, the passage above may be a perfectly valid introduction to the play, for it mediates very effectively Knight's view that *KL* is not a simple, straightforward and realistic piece of art. Describing it with simple clear prose would reduce it into something that, according to Knight, it is not, namely 'easy' or 'simple'. To put it otherwise, following Colin MacCabe's ideas (1987:ix-x), it could be argued that such complex ideas as Knight's can only be expressed in a complex style.

What this analysis seems to suggest is that 'readability', or 'clarity' are not unproblematic notions. They are not unproblematic, because, as Peck MacDonald (1990:51-3) points out, the purpose of literary criticism may not necessarily be the transfer of information as efficiently as possible. Other functions and purposes may be at play, too. In spite of this, Peck MacDonald (1990:58) is of the opinion that literary critics have a moral duty to aim at "readability" and "clarity" by writing "responsible, specialist prose" which would allow the uninitiated to the discourse communities of literary criticism. The question remains, however, whether for example in Knight's case the uninitiated readers might have got a better idea of the play if Knight had used shorter sentences, less complex modifications, more concrete lexical choices, and more verbs of action instead

of nominalizations. And in what sense would this possibly have been 'better'?

Nevertheless, Knight is not 'difficult' all through his essay. For example, after having outlined his main ideas in the introductory chapter, he moves to the discussion of the plot. In this section of the essay he uses a much less complex style:

[quote] (1) This is not comedy, nor humour. (2) But it is exactly the stuff of which humour is made. (3) Lear is mentally a child; in passion a titan. (4) The absurdity of his every act at the beginning of his tragedy is contrasted with the dynamic fury which intermittently bursts out, flickers - then flames and finally gives us those grand apostrophes lifted from man's stage of earth to heaven's rain and thunder: [quote] (163-4, my enumeration)

This extract illustrates how in the discussion of the plot, Knight typically uses shorter sentences. In addition, these sentences are clearly syntactically less complex than those in the introductory summary. Even sentence (4), which contains an embedded relative clause, is not that demanding. This is because Knight explicitly indicates the temporal progression of events referred to in the clause by using such temporal adverbs as "intermittently", "then" and "finally". Notice also how he uses concrete words and verbs of action, for instance, "stuff", "a child", "bursts out", "flickers", "flames", "heaven's rain and thunder". Moreover, the critic's familiar generalizations, and the use of the first person plural *we* and the third person singular *he* here contribute to the concrete, 'here-and-now' quality of the interpretation. As a matter of fact, many of the strategies already noted in connection with the temporal dimension of the text and the notion and function of the readers are also a good illustration of the concreteness and 'clarity' of Knight's style. In other words, when Knight is concerned with the temporal and experiential dimension of the text, he uses a simpler style to tie up the dramatic action and its implications with the readers' experiences. These strategies thus illustrate how, in this context Knight's style in a way guides the readers and directs them to gradually accept his point.

Even a tentative analysis of this kind clearly indicates that 'difficulty' and 'easiness' of texts and styles are highly relative notions. They must be related to the writer's topic and aims. In Knight's case his aim clearly is not to give a readable or comprehensible picture of *KL*, but to give a picture which mediates, by its language and style, too, the complex nature of his topic.

In sum, it was shown above how the critic uses a number of strategies which are concerned with the establishment and maintenance of the relationship between the critic and the readers. The analysis of Knight's use of the first person singular and first person plural personal pronoun

indicates that while Knight clearly shows that the interpretation he presents is of his design, he also powerfully persuades his readers to accept that it is simultaneously a shared interaction in a shared world, under the umbrella of shared values, beliefs and assumptions. Thus, in spite of the rarity of explicit strategies, such as direct commands or deontic modality of obligation with which Knight openly directs readers, he actually does not leave them much freedom. His use of questions is also indicative of his underlying normativity. This is because his questions, which apparently propose that there may be more ways than one in which a particular text extract can be interpreted, are really rhetorical in nature. This is because they are usually followed by a categorical interpretive statement which closes the text again. Nevertheless, it was argued that by posing questions to readers, Knight shows signs of considering literary criticism as a kind of dialogue with other readers/critics of literature. Other features which may also indicate the critic's budding awareness of literary criticism as a dialogue are his hedges and acknowledgement of potential reader criticism. However, he only takes into account potential criticism on minor, but not major, points of his interpretation. The use of such a strategy was argued to function as a bribe to readers, to assure them that they, too, have a role in the interpretation of the text. On major points, in contrast, the critic is categorical: they are presented as self-evidently and universally true, with no mitigation or hedging. The critic also uses a number of strategies to guide his readers in the interpretation of the text. More specifically, he uses a 'difficult' style, long and syntactically complex sentences, abstract terminology and nominalizations as strategies for guiding and persuading readers to accept his notion of the text as a complex spatial construct. Analogously, he uses also an 'easy' style, shorter and less complex sentences and concrete lexical choices, to make them accept the temporal, experiential dimension of the text.

In short, the analysis has shown how the relationship between the critic and the readers is an ambivalent one. It is one of solidarity and togetherness, because the text, meaning, language and the world allegedly is the same for both Knight and his readers. At the same time, it is also one of inequality, because the critic obviously has more power in the interpretation of *KL* than his readers. He is the magisterial and institutionally acknowledged demonstrator of meaning who has the right to impose his interpretation on other readers, to persuade them to accept it, and to control their activities. In spite of the occasional signalling of acceptance of potential criticism from readers, there is no real interaction between the critic and the readers implied in the essay. This is because in Knight's essay interpretation appears to be a one-way process whereby the text both contains and transfers its meaning, via the critic, to readers. Using the same logic there is no real interaction between the text and the read-

ers, or the author and the readers, or all of them. The readers are passive and submissive, and without any real power and freedom of interpretation, they give nothing to the interpretation, but just absorb what the critic suggests the author has inserted into the text.

### 6.1.5 The notion and function of context

In this section I shall examine whether context is referred to or implied in Knight's essay, and if so, what strategies the critic uses to do so. Context means here the non-linguistic context, and it is divided into the categories of situational, institutional and socio-cultural context.

#### 6.1.5.1 The situational context

The first analytical question to be asked here is whether the situational context - the time, place, and participants, of the interpretive event - is specified, left unspecified or presupposed in the essay. As was pointed out above that the participants are alternately or simultaneously readers of the text and viewers of the play. Analogously, Knight seems to consider *KL* both a text and a play. It could thus be argued that for the critic the situational context for the interpretation of *KL* is both a reading event and a viewing event. The following passages are one example of how this shows in the essay:

1. In the theatre, one is terrified lest some one laugh: yet if Lear could laugh . . . (164)
2. Yet as we close the sheets of this play, there is no horror . . . (175)
3. and perhaps it is this the casts its darting shadow of the grotesque across the furrowed pages of *King Lear*. (176)

It is interesting that Knight does not directly assert that the interpretation of *KL* is simultaneously/alternately a reading or a viewing event, but rather presents it as a given. The linguistic indicator here is presupposition. In (1) what is presupposed is that *we are in the theatre*, in (2) it is that *King Lear has pages*, and in (3) it is that *King Lear has (furrowed) pages*.

These are the only relatively direct references in the essay to the situational context where either the text as an objective entity, or the theatre are mentioned. On the basis of these observations it could however be argued that the situational context *per se* does not have a function in interpretation, for it does not seem to affect the interpretation in any way. Essentially, the text is simultaneously something that is, or can be, read and viewed.

#### 6.1.4.2 The institutional context

The second question here is whether the institutional context is specified, not specified or taken for granted in the essay. In other words, the question is whether, for example, literature and literary criticism; or more generally, other texts, textual traditions, genres, approaches, etc., are referred to in the essay, and if so, what strategies Knight uses to do so. This question deals specifically with intertextuality and its function in the essay.

There are several levels of intertextuality in the essay. Knight makes references to (1) comedy and tragedy; (2) other texts by Shakespeare; (3) other authors, texts by other authors, literature, and drama; and (4) philosophy and religion. In addition, he makes a couple of very indirect references to (5) previous literary criticism. Next, these different aspects of the institutional context will be examined one by one in an attempt to get an idea of what their notion and function is in Knight's essay.

To begin with, there are in the essay quite a number of references to the genres of "comedy" and "tragedy". TABLE 29 is a comprehensive list of their occurrences in the essay (my italics).

TABLE 29 References to "tragedy" and "comedy" in Knight's essay

1. *King Lear* and the *comedy* of the grotesque (160, title)
2. It may appear strange to search for any sort of *comedy* as a primary theme in a play whose abiding gloom is so heavy . . . (160)
3. Though its impact usually appears vastly different from that of *tragedy*, yet there is a humour that treads the brink of tears . . . (160)
4. and *tragedy* which needs but an infinitesimal shift of perspective . . . (160)
5. to disclose the varied riches of *comedy*. 160
6. humour is an evanescent thing, even more difficult of analysis and intellectual location than *tragedy*. (160)
7. A shifting flash of *comedy* . . . both increases the tension, and suggests . . . a resolution and a purification . . . (160)
8. The wonder of Shakespearean *tragedy* is ever a mystery (160)
9. The heart of Shakespearean *tragedy* is centered in the imaginative . . . (161)
10. In pure *tragedy* the dualism of experience is continually being dissolved in the masterful beauty of passion . . . (161)
11. But in *comedy* it is not so softly resolved . . . (161)
12. therefore incongruity is the especial mark of *comedy*. (161)
13. Now, in *King Lear* there is a dualism continually crying in vain to be resolved either by *tragedy* . . .
14. or *comedy* . . . (161)
15. and the course of the action often comes as near to the resolution of *comedy* . . . (161)
16. as to that of *tragedy*. (161)
17. I shall . . . analyze the fantastic *comedy* of *King Lear*. (161)
18. Much here that is always regarded as essentially pathetic is not far from *comedy*. (163)
19. The speeches of Lear often come near *comedy*. (163)
20. This is not *comedy*, nor humour. (164)
21. The absurdity of his every act in the beginning of his *tragedy* . . . is contrasted with the dynamic fury . . . which finally gives us those grand apostrophes . . . (164)
22. Again, we are in touch with potential *comedy* . . . (164)
23. Herein lies the profound insight of the Fool: he sees the potentialities of *comedy* in Lear's behaviour. (164)
24. the situation is excruciatingly painful, and its painfulness is exactly the quality which embarrasses in some forms of *comedy*. (164)
25. - if the Lears of the world could laugh at themselves - there would be no such *tragedy*. (164)
26. What shall we say of this exquisite movement? Is it *comedy*? (166)
27. This is the furthest flight, not of *tragedy* . . . (167)
28. but of philosophical *comedy*. (167)
29. Now, in madness, he flashes on us the ridiculous basis of his *tragedy* (168)
30. in no *tragedy* of Shakespeare do incident and dialogue . . . walk the tight-rope of our pity . . . (168)
31. The whole *tragedy* witnesses a sense of humour in 'the gods' . . . (169)
32. Yes- the Gloucester-theme has a beginning even more fantastic than that of Lear's *tragedy*. (169)

(continues)

TABLE 29 (continues)

33. these ghoulish horrors . . . find an exquisitely appropriate place in the *tragedy* of Shakespeare's maturity . . . (170)
34. We are clearly pointed to this grim fun . . . at the back of the *tragedy* . . . (170)
35. the grotesque merged into the ridiculous reaches a consummation in this bathos of *tragedy* . . . (171)
36. We are in touch with the exquisitely pathetic, safeguarded only by Shakespeare's masterful technique from the bathos of *comedy*. (173)
37. The *tragedy* is most poignant in that it is purposeless, unreasonable. (174)
38. that cruelty would be less were there not this element of *comedy* . . . (174)
39. so deeply planted in the facts of our life in this unknowing ridicule of the destiny, that the uttermost *tragedy* of the incongruous ensues . . . (175)
40. This is of all the most agonizing of *tragedies* to endure . . . (175)

TABLE 29 shows that there are 16 references to "comedy", and 24 to "tragedy" in the essay. As the title of the essay, '*King Lear* and the comedy of the grotesque' already indicates, Knight's aim is to argue for an interpretation of the play which shows that, contrary to what is customarily claimed, the play is not only a tragedy but also a comedy. He starts off by indicating that the play can be seen as "a comedy of the grotesque" (1), and that, by implication, "comedy" is "a primary theme" (2). He then discusses on a general level how "tragedy" and "comedy" intermingle in literature (3-7, 10-12). He states that there is "humour that treads the brink of tears" (3), "tragedy" "which needs an infinitesimal shift of perspective to disclose the varied riches of comedy" (4-5), and that "a shifting flash of comedy across the pain of purely tragic both increases the tension and suggests, vaguely, a resolution and purification" (7). What is noteworthy in this connection is how Knight again uses his affective and sensory wordings to anchor his interpretive moves in the readers' responses. For instance, he refers to "tears", and "pain" and refers to "a shift of perspective" which categorically "disclose" meaning to all the readers of the play.

After this he indicates the fundamentally ambiguous and mysterious nature of "Shakespearean tragedy" (8-9) as a preliminary step for his argument that in *KL* there is "a dualism" of tragedy and comedy (passages 10-17). He puts his case very explicitly in order to persuade his readers to accept his somewhat unexpected claim that the play is not only a tragedy but also a comedy:

In pure tragedy the dualism of experience is continually being dissolved in the masterful beauty of passion, merged in the sunset of emotion. But in comedy it is not so softly resolved--incompatibilities stand out till the sudden relief of laughter or its equivalent of humour: therefore incongruity is the especial mark of comedy. Now in *King Lear* there is a dualism continually crying in vain to be resolved either by tragedy or comedy. Thence arises its pe-

cular tension of pain: and the course of the action often comes as near to the resolution of comedy as to that of tragedy. So I shall notice here the imaginative core of the play, and, excluding much of the logic of the plot from immediate attention, analyse the fantastic comedy of *King Lear*. (161)

Again Knight skilfully ties together his appreciation of Shakespeare's tragedy ("masterful"), its affective and sensory elements/effects ("beauty of passion", "sunset of emotion", "sudden relief of laughter", "dualism crying in vain"). Finally, he labels the "fantastic comedy" thus identified as "the imaginative core" of the play. In these passages he is primarily concerned with establishing that, while *KL* contains elements of tragedy and comedy, comedy is really its "core". The clearest indications of this are (1) where Knight labels the play as "the comedy of the grotesque", (2) where "comedy" is presented as "a primary theme", and (7) where the expression "the shifting flash of comedy" is used.

An interesting feature of Knight's discussion of the characteristics of tragedy and comedy is that he does not specify where he derives their definitions, but leaves them very general. (The same goes for his reference to "some forms of comedy" in passage (24) in TABLE 29; there, too, he does not specify what forms he has in mind.) Moreover, as he presents these definitions with his usual categorizations, he mediates, once again, that these definitions are actually self-evidently true. The same effect is also emphasized by his use of presuppositions. In this passage, for example, the first sentence is packed with such presuppositions as *there is pure tragedy*, that pure tragedy can be characterized by such vague, abstract and affective epithets as *beauty of passion*, and a *sunset of emotion*. His interpretive point that in *KL* there is a dualism which can be resolved by either tragedy or comedy relies on assumptions which, because they are implicit and vague rather than explicit and well-defined, cannot be examined closely. Hence, even though Knight refers to the institutional context of genre conventions in order to back up his analysis, there is no way that his specific assumptions of the nature of tragedy and comedy, of the tragic and comic elements, or readers' affective "smiles and tears" responses can be questioned, problematized or even challenged. We just have to take Knight's word for them.

After this Knight moves on to the illustration of how the "dualism" of tragedy and comedy, the "comedy of the grotesque", is manifest in various themes and on various levels of the play (passages 18-36). To refer to these elements he occasionally uses such words as "humour" (e.g. pp. 160, 169), "fun" (e.g. p. 170), "smiles and tears" (e.g. 175) as paraphrases for "comedy" and "tragedy". Typically, Knight's strategy entails that first he discusses an incident of the play and then points out how it is an illustration of the element of comedy. For example, he states that "again, we are in touch with potential comedy" (22), "this is the furthest flight . . . of

philosophic comedy" (27-8), and "we are clearly pointed to this grim fun at the back of the tragedy" (34). Finally, in passages 37-40, Knight sums up his analysis on a more general level, and refers again to his central claim that the text contains an "element of comedy" (38). In a way Knight thus attempts in his argumentation to show that *KL* cannot be fitted into the traditional definitions of the genres of tragedy and comedy but that it has characteristics from both. In his view, this also makes the text highly unique, too.

The fact that Knight takes the text to embody comic and tragic elements can also be seen when his use of the adjectives "comic" and "tragic", and the adverbials "comically" and "tragically" are examined. TABLE 30 lists them as follows:

**TABLE 30 Use of the words "comic(ally)" and "tragic(ally)" in Knight's essay**

1. whose reading of human destiny and human actions so starkly *tragic*. (160)
2. To the coarse mind lacking sympathy an incident may seem *comic* . . . (160)
3. which to the richer understanding is pitiful and *tragic*. (160)
4. So, too, one series of facts can be treated by the artist as either *comic* . . . (160)
5. or *tragic* . . . (160)
6. *The comic* . . . (160)
7. and *the tragic* rest both on the idea of incompatibilities . . . (160)
8. (A shifting flash of comedy) across the pain of *the purely tragic* both increases the tension . . . (160)
9. From the start the situation has a *comic* aspect. (161)
10. The incident is profoundly *comic* and profoundly pathetic. (161)
11. We are given these noble descriptive and philosophical speeches to tune our minds to a noble, *tragic* sacrifice. (171)
12. Here the incongruous and fantastic element of the Lear-theme is boldly reflected into the *tragically-absurd*. (171)
13. Consummate art has so forged plot and incident that we may watch with tears rather than laughter the cruelly *comic* actions of Lear . . . (173)
14. Edmund's fate is nobly *tragic* . . . (174)
15. Edmund is given a noble, an essentially *tragic* end . . . (174)
16. and Goneril and Regan, too, meet their ends with something of *tragic* fineness . . . (174)
17. Mankind is, as it were, deliberately and *comically* tormented by 'the gods'. (174)
18. He is not even allowed to die *tragically*. (174)
19. *King Lear* is supreme in that . . . it faces the very absence of *tragic* purpose . . . (175)
20. the *tragic* purification of the essentially untragic is yet complete. (175)
21. Nor does the use of the words '*comic*' and 'humour' here imply disrespect to the poet's purpose. (175)
22. Gloucester was saved from his violent and *tragic* suicide . . . (175)

TABLE 30 demonstrates that the adjectives and adverbials ("comic"/"comically" n = 7; "tragic"/"tragically" n = 15) consistently foreground the idea that the play contains both comic and tragic elements, which, in the play, are realized in such a way that the characters' actions or the incidents of the play are seen as "comic" or "tragic" (1-4, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22), or established, by the process of nominalization, as examples of the elements of "the comic" (6) and "the tragic" (7, 8).

That Knight is also concerned with demonstrating how *KL* relates to and breaks away from the genre conventions of tragedy and comedy can be seen in the following passages (passage 10-12, 24 in TABLE 29):

1. In pure *tragedy* the dualism of experience is continually being dissolved in the masterful beauty of passion, merged in the sunset of emotion. But in *comedy* it is not so softly resolved--incompatibilities stand out till the sudden relief of laughter or its equivalent of humour: therefore incongruity is the especial mark of comedy. (161, passages 10-12 above)
2. the situation is excruciatingly painful, and its painfulness is exactly the quality which embarrasses in some forms of *comedy*. (164, passage 24)

Occasionally, the critic also uses "tragedy" to refer to one, or all, of Shakespeare's tragedies (8, 9, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37). For example, in passage (8) he refers to "Shakespearean tragedy", and in (37) to *KL* as a "tragedy".

There are then three different, and partly overlapping, levels at which Knight discusses "comedy" and "tragedy". These levels are the abstract and general (and largely presupposed) level of genre; the level of the text's meaning, where the characteristics of tragedy and comedy are realized as 'elements' or 'themes'; and the concrete level of Shakespeare's texts. However, as Knight does not specify or define explicitly his categories of tragedy and comedy, he takes crucially important notions in terms of his interpretation for granted. In terms of the readers' activities, this implies that there is not much explicit evidence on the basis of which they can judge or critically examine Knight's interpretive moves, which means that they are once more strongly persuaded to agree with Knight's interpretation.

Another aspect of the institutional context that Knight refers to are other works by Shakespeare. TABLE 31 lists these as follows:

TABLE 31 References to other works by Shakespeare in Knight's essay

1. He [Lear] repeats the history of Troilus, who cannot understand the faithlessness of Cressid. (165)
2. In *Othello* and . . .
3. *Timon of Athens* the transition is swift from extreme love to revenge or hate. (165)
4. The movement of Lear's mind is less direct: like Troilus, he is suspended between two separate assurances. (165)
5. Therefore Pandarus, in the latter acts of *Troilus and Cressida*, plays a part similar to the Fool in *King Lear*: both attempt to heal the gaping wound of the mind's incongruous knowledge by the unifying, healing release of laughter. They make no attempt to divert, but rather to direct the hero's mind to the present incongruity. (165)
6. It is incongruous, impossible. There is no longer any 'rule in unity itself' <sup>1</sup> (footnote: *Troilus and Cressida*, V ii 138.) (166)
7. The unresolved dualism that tormented Troilus and was given metaphysical expression by him (*Troilus and Cressida*, V ii 134-57) is here more perfectly bodied into the poetic symbol of poor Tom: and since Lear cannot hear the resolving laugh of foolery, his mind is focused only to the 'philosopher' mumbling of the foul fiend. (167-8)
8. The absurd and the fantastic reign supreme, Lear does not compass for more than a few speeches the 'noble anger' (II iv 279) for which he prayed, the anger of Timon. (168)
9. The mock trial is instituted. Lear's curses were for a short space terrible, majestic, less controlled and purposeful than Timon's but passionate and grand in their tempestuous fury. (168)
10. This stroke of the absurd - so vastly different from the awe we experience in face of Timon's hate - is yet fundamental here. (168)
11. The macabre humoresque of this is nauseating: but it is there, and integral to the play. These ghoulis horrors, so popular in Elizabethan drama, and the very stuff of the *Lear* of Shakespeare's youth *Titus Andronicus*, find an exquisitely appropriate place in the tragedy of Shakespeare's maturity which takes as its especial province this territory of the grotesque and the fantastic which is Lear's madness. (170)
12. *Lear*. I will die bravely, like a bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> [footnote: This is to be related to *Anthony and Cleopatra*, IV xii 100,
13. *Measure for Measure*, III i 82,
14. also *Hamlet*, IV iv 62.] [quote continues] (173/176)
15. Edmund alone steers something of an unswerving tragic course, brought to a fitting, deserved, but spectacular end, slain by his wronged brother, nobly repentant at the last: [quote]. The note of forgiving chivalry reminds us of the deaths of Hamlet and Laertes. (174)
16. *King Lear* is supreme in that, in this main theme, it faces the very absence of tragic purpose: wherein it is profoundly different from *Timon of Athens*. (175)

TABLE 31 shows that there are 16 references to other Shakespearean plays in the essay; *Timon of Athens* is referred to 5 times; *Troilus and Cressida* similarly 5 times; *Hamlet* twice; and *Othello*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*

and *Titus Andronicus* once each. Moreover, 10 of these references (1-5, 8-10, 15) are specifically to the characters of the plays in question; extracts (6), (7), (11) and (16), in turn, could be interpreted as references to textual elements, or themes in other plays, whereas the rest (12, 13, 14) are references to a similar image of facing death as a bridegroom/ bride in these plays.

A typical reason why Knight refers to another text by Shakespeare is that he wants to point out similarities, or differences, between their characters' personalities, fates, or behavior. Passages (1-6), (8-9), and (15) are examples of this pattern. In (1) Knight refers to *Troilus and Cressida* for the purpose of arguing categorically (note the generalizations) that Lear's fate and behavior is similar to Troilus's. Even though Knight refers to texts in passages (1-2), it could be argued that these references indirectly also deal with the characters - this time Othello and Timon. The immediately preceding (1) and following (4) sentences also suggest this. In passage (4) Lear's mind is once more compared with Othello's, Timon's and Troilus's, and it is categorically stated that he is less like the first two, and more like the last one. In (5) it is pointed out that there is a connection between Pandarus - a character in *Troilus and Cressida* - and the Fool in *KL*. Passage (6), which is a quotation from *Troilus and Cressida*, is used for describing the incongruity of Lear's mind. The implication here may be that similarly to Troilus, who finds no "rule in unity itself", Lear is also faced with the incongruous when his daughters treat him badly. The trouble with this quotation, as with all of Knight's references to Shakespeare's plays, is that nowhere does Knight tell us what edition of the play(s) he is using, which may cause problems if readers wish to track these kinds of quotation down and work out their relevance to *KL*. Finally, in passages (8-9) Lear's behavior is compared to that of another Shakespearean character, Timon, and in (15) his fate is compared to those of Hamlet and Laertes.

Passages (7), (11) and (16) represent a rarer strategy. In (7) Knight shifts his focus from the characters' actions to the similar themes or elements 'expressed by', or 'bodied into', *King Lear* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Obviously, as Knight's spatial expressions indicate, he moves in this passage from the temporal dimension to the spatial one. A similar move is also evident in (16): there, too, Knight is concerned with comparing, not Shakespearean characters, but the themes of *KL* and *Timon of Athens*. Moreover, in passage (11) Knight points out a connection between *KL* and *Titus Andronicus*: in his view, both plays contain an element of "macabre humoresque". Notice how he puts his case: instead of asserting it, he embeds his point within a non-restrictive elliptical relative clause, which presents the proposition [*which are*] *the very stuff of the Lear of Shakes-*

peare's youth *Titus Andronicus* as presupposed. Again, an important interpretive statement is presented as a given, as not a statement at all.

Passage (10) is an indication that Knight has not forgotten the readers' responses either. He introduces 'our' responses to *Timon* and *Lear*, and states, again categorically, that they are fundamentally different.

Passage (12-14) is the only one of its kind in the essay: here Knight makes a comment about an expression and image used by Shakespeare which suggests that death is faced as a bride/bridegroom. Similar to passage (6), these references to the primary text may cause a problem for readers, because Knight does not indicate what edition he himself is using, and (different editions of the play may divide the scenes and line numbers of the play differently). Knight thus seems to take the existence and universality of the edition of the text for granted.

On the basis of this analysis it could be argued that Knight uses other texts by Shakespeare in the same way as *KL*. They, too, are spatial and temporal in nature. They, too, have their various themes and elements, realized in the characters' actions and incidents of the plays, and responded to by readers in a universally identical way. These texts are then compared to the characters' actions and features of *KL*: similarities and differences are pointed out. It may be that by referring to other texts by Shakespeare, Knight wants to create the impression that the whole of Shakespeare's production is one massive piece of art, through which different themes and elements run, and which can, in principle, be treated in the same way as single plays, as simultaneously spatial and temporal. The references can thus help to create a wider perspective for the scrutiny of the incidents, events, themes and elements of *KL*.

Besides Shakespeare, Knight also mentions other authors, their work; and literature and drama in general. TABLE 32 lists these, with their immediate co-text.

**TABLE 32** References to other authors, their texts, literature and drama in Knight's essay

1. Sometimes a great artist may achieve significant effects by a criss-cross of tears and laughter. Tschehov does this, especially in his plays. (160)
2. *King Lear* is roughly analogous to Tschehov where Macbeth is analogous to Dostoievsky (160)
3. Shakespeare's England delighted in watching both physical torment and the comic ravings of actual lunacy. The dance of madmen in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* is of the same ghoulish humour as Regan's plucking Gloucester by the beard: the groundlings will laugh at both. (169)
4. These ghoulish horrors, so popular in Elizabethan drama, and the very stuff of the *Lear* of Shakespeare's youth, *Titus Andronicus*, find an exquisitely appropriate place in the tragedy of Shakespeare's maturity. (170)
5. She [Cordelia] is hanged by a common soldier. The death which Dostoievsky's Stavrogin singled out as of all the least heroic and picturesque, or rather, shall we say, the most hideous and degrading: this is the fate that grips the white innocence and resplendent love-strength of Cordelia. (174)
6. The tragedy is most poignant in that it is purposeless, unreasonable. It is the most fearless artistic facing of the ultimate mate cruelty of things in our literature. (174)

In passages (1), (2) and (5) Knight shows signs of accepting the position that literary texts are not interpreted in a vacuum but that they can be interpreted through other texts, and that this kind of interpretation can add to their meaning. Typically, when Knight shows that there is a connection between *KL* and another literary text, he often uses his strategy of generalization (e.g. "Tschehov does this"; "Macbeth is analogous to Dostoievsky") Passage (5) is particularly interesting in this sense, for there Knight manages both to point out the connection between *KL* and Dostoievsky, and to obscure his own interpretive move by which this connection is produced. In doing this he uses three different strategies. First, he does not directly quote Dostoievsky's Stavrogin (there are no quotation marks or reporting clause). The lack of these features makes the reported speech look like what Leech and Short (1981:325) refer to as "free indirect speech" (FIS). In their view (1981:334), FIS is often used for the purpose of distancing the reader from the original speaker's or character's words. This is possible because FIS is a form where "the authorial voice is interposed between the reader and what the character says". Clearly, Knight's use of FIS in the presentation of Stavrogin's speech functions here in this way: it obscures to whom the speech or thought *hanging is the least heroic and picturesque of deaths* ultimately belongs. Is it Knight's interpretive move? Or Dostoievsky's? Or even Stavrogin's? Second, Knight does not indicate that he himself is explicitly involved here as an interpretive agent but uses once more the inclusive pronoun *we* to indicate that the party allegedly

responsible for the immediately following interpretive move "or, shall we say, the most hideous and degrading" is himself *with* all of his potential readers. Third, in this passage, too, Knight relies on his familiar strategy of generalization (e.g. "this is the fate" ) which again assures us that his reporting of Dostoevsky and the interpretive move which presents it as relevant in connection with Cordelia's death are in a way self-evident and natural. What is also interesting in passage (5) is that Knight does not indicate precisely what the novel is that he is referring to, but assumes that this is shared knowledge.

As in the case of Knight's references to other works by Shakespeare, his references to other literary texts or authors seem to function primarily to show analogous themes, which are perhaps partly shared in Western culture, art and literature, but which can also show different variations and emphases. Nevertheless, intertextuality is clearly not one of Knight's major concerns in the essay: the intrinsic analysis of the text is. Passages (3) and (4), too, are a good example of this. In these passages Knight categorically points out that there was, in Elizabethan drama, in Webster's work, in particular, a similar, and popular, theme as in *KL*. Again, by relating the theme of "ghoulish humour" to Elizabethan drama, Knight seems at least to be aware of both the literary and the socio-cultural context of *KL*. However, he does not develop this idea any further, so that it remains, like (1) and (2), another side remark.

Finally, in (6), the critic gives a categorical evaluation of *KL* in relation to 'our literature'. This extract is interesting in the way it shows the process of canonization in work: this shows in the very loaded presupposition in the extract, according to which *there is something which is our literature*. Within this apparently well-defined and universally recognizable set of literary works Shakespeare is evidently the apex. In other words, there is a canon, and Shakespeare is the most canonical of all.

In sum, references to texts by other authors, to drama and literature is not Knight's major focus. They - marginal as they may be - nevertheless show that Knight, despite his text-centeredness, occasionally points out intertextual connections when they seem particularly relevant to him, thus implying perhaps that he acknowledges that texts are not read in a textual vacuum. Furthermore, when he does so, he typically presents his observations as categorical, generalized statements of facts. These references also show that once more the critic presents important issues as given: this is evident, for example, in the way in which he presents Stavrogin's speech as self-evidently relevant to the interpretation of the scene depicting Cordelia's hanging, how he fails to mention the title of the novel by Dostoevsky to which he is referring to, and how he presents "our literature" as a well-defined set.

In addition, the critic makes two very general references to philosophy and religion, too. First, he mentions stoicism, like this:

[quote] Gloucester thanks him, and rewards him; bids him move off; then kneels, and speaks a prayer of noble resignation, breathing that stoicism which permeates the suffering philosophy of this play: [quote]. (171)

What is noteworthy here is how Knight, relying on a very typical strategy of his, interprets Gloucester's behavior by presenting the interpretation as presupposed. More specifically, what he takes for granted is that *there is stoicism which permeates the suffering philosophy of the play*. Once again he thus assumes that a particular element of the play is a given. Furthermore, the reference to stoicism is a very general one; Knight does not attempt to describe, or discuss it any more than this in his essay. Neither does he refer to any particular philosopher, or philosophical discussions of stoicism. The reason behind this lack of explication may be that this is a less important point for Knight.

Knight also relies on presupposition in his reference to religion:

It is this that wrenches, splits, gashes the mind till it utters the whirling vapourings of lunacy. And, though love and music - twin sisters of salvation - temporarily may heal the racked consciousness of Lear, yet, so deeply planted in the facts of our life is this unknowing ridicule of destiny, that the uttermost tragedy of the incongruous ensues . . . (175)

In this extract Knight suggests that "love" and "music" are related to and instrumental in "salvation". In the same way as in the previous example the reference to "salvation", which as a word has a strong religious/Christian connotation, occurs in an elliptical non-restrictive relative clause, which is to say, that it is presented as presupposed. The implication here may be then that *KL* is, for Knight, an essentially Christian play, or that it at least has elements which could be given a Christian interpretation. Obviously, this is an important interpretive point, and one over which scholars have had disputes from Bradley onwards. Since it is such an important ideological point, it might be asked whether it is justified to present it as a given, and whether it would really require more explication?

Finally, the essay contains two passages which could be regarded as - again very indirect - references to previous literary criticism on *KL*. The first can be located on the second page of the essay, where Knight begins his explication of the plot of the play, and the second in connection with the interpretation of a particular incident in the play:

1. From the start, the situation has a comic aspect. It has been observed that Lear has, so to speak, staged an interlude, with himself as chief actor, in which he

grasps expressions of love to his heart, and resigns his sceptre to a chorus of acclamations. It is childish, foolish - but very human. So, too, is the result. (161)

2. He [the Fool] is not all wrong when he treats the situation as matter for a joke. Much here that is always regarded as essentially pathetic is not far from comedy. For instance, consider Lear's words: [quote]. (163)

What is to be noticed here is that Knight does not directly quote, or refer to, specific critics but uses the more indirect strategy of passivization with agent deletion to point out on a highly general level to the findings of earlier commentary ("it has been observed", "much here that is always regarded"). In terms of speech presentation the use of the passive could be referred to, following again Leech and Short (1981:323), as a particular case of the narrative report of speech acts (NRSA).<sup>24</sup> In Leech's and Short's view NRSA is a form which is used to "merely report that a speech act (or number of speech acts) has occurred, but where the narrator does not have to commit himself entirely to giving the sense of what was said, let alone the form of words in which they were uttered". Moreover, Leech and Short (1981:324) point out that this form is useful "for summarizing relatively unimportant stretches of conversation".

Recall that Knight's use of the agentless passive usually suggests that there is an intentional agent behind the activity at hand, but that this agent is a faceless, general entity. Evidently, any attempt to relate his interpretation to the interpretations by other critics of *KL* would be an irrelevant and futile enterprise for Knight, for, as we have seen, his whole venture is based on the assumption that the interpretation of the text equals to the uncovering of its text-immanent meaning. Since his focus is the text, a dialogue with other critics over interpretive points is unnecessary or unimportant. Here, too, the use of the passive NRSA proves a useful strategy for, with its help, Knight is able to summarize on a very general level what other critics have written about the issue at hand, and gloss over such (allegedly) unimportant details as who the specific critics are, and what the exact expressions used by them are like. The most he does, in fact, is to refer to observations by other critics either to gain support for his own interpretation or to indicate in what respects they differ from his views. Notice, for example, how in passage (1) he ties up the observation presented by other critics that Lear "has staged an interlude" with his own interpretation "it is childish, foolish - but very human", using his characteristic strategy of generalization. In this context, this has the effect that he signals that the observation by earlier commentary is accepted as such, as naturally correct. Passage (2) is, in contrast, less ap-

<sup>24</sup> In this context writing is considered compatible with speech. Consequently, Knight's comments on what other critics have written about *KL* can be examined in terms of how he presents their 'speech'.

proving. In this passage Knight contrasts (using again NRSA) what earlier criticism ("much here that is always regarded as essentially pathetic"), with his own interpretive point ("is not far from comedy"). In a way it could be argued that, while he uses an observation presented by earlier criticism to build up his own point, he simultaneously implies that this criticism has been insufficient.

The rarity of Knight's references to what other critics have said about *KL* and the highly indirect strategy of NRSA that he uses to report their views indicate that other critics and what they have said about the play are not important to Knight. No particular literary critics are referred to by name, none of their comments are quoted or referred to explicitly and no particular literary critical approaches are examined, discussed, or criticized. It may be that if he had related his interpretation to other interpretations it would have forced Knight to reconsider the function of literary criticism, for if he had to deal with different and conflicting interpretations of one and the same text, he would also have to reconsider and problematize his own interpretation. In other words, he would perhaps openly have to choose between a position according to which literary interpretation is considered a pluralistic activity, and a position according to which there is only one correct interpretation of the play. Knight's lack of willingness to relate his interpretation to other interpretations could, in this light, also appear as another avoidance strategy, and a strategy which allows him to focus solely on the text, on the scrutiny of the meanings within the text. Implicitly, then, his position is one which argues that there is only one correct way to interpret *KL*, and this is the text-based way, his way.<sup>25</sup>

The analysis above showed that Knight relates *KL* and his interpretation of it to various aspects of the institutional context. Firstly, in specifying the genre of the play he refers to the definitions and conventions of tragedy and comedy. However, he does not make it clear where he derives his definitions of the genres, but leaves them open and presupposed. Secondly, the critic makes a number of references to other plays by Shakespeare, compares *KL* to them, and points out similarities and differences in terms of characters' actions and the themes of the plays. In principle, he seems to regard all of Shakespeare's work as a huge spatial-temporal text, where there are similar/different characters, events, incidents and themes. What makes these references problematic is that, because he does not specify what editions of the plays he uses, he seems to take the texts, in this sense, too, for granted. Similarly, he introduces major interpretive points as presupposed. Thirdly, the critic refers to oth-

<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, since Knight's day the number of critical writings has increased exponentially. Consequently, it is no doubt much more difficult today not to take into account, or at least to signal awareness of, what others have said about literature and on the ways how their observations affect our own interpretations of texts.

er authors and their texts a few times. These intertextual references, which usually are in the form of categorical statements, could be interpreted again as indicating that Knight is to a certain extent interested in finding underlying similarities/differences in Western literature. It could also be argued that these references may demonstrate that Knight is at least aware of the fact that literary texts can be interpreted by relating them to other texts, and that this may have an effect on their interpretation. Fourth, Knight makes two references to philosophy and religion. In both cases he once again presents major interpretive points as presupposed. Finally, by using the strategy of NRSA to refer to earlier commentary on *KL*, Knight also relates his interpretation, albeit very indirectly, to literary criticism. Typically, he leaves this reference, too, very general and non-specific.

The number of Knight's references to various aspects of the institutional context thus shows that this critic is not wholly unaware of it. It seems, however, that for him the institutional context, as a particular set of assumptions about literature and interpretation, is not a force which affects, constrains or even determines the interpretation of a literary text. Rather, it seems to be a body of texts, or knowledge, which can be treated in the same way as *KL*, as a set of spatial and temporal constructs with their own embedded elements and meanings. Its function in interpretation is, at the most, to provide a point of comparison. In any case, the institutional context is something that is distinctly outside the text, and, consequently, outside the focus of Knight's intrinsic interpretation.

### 6.1.5.3 The socio-cultural context

The final question in this section is whether Knight specifies the socio-cultural context within which he interprets *KL*, or whether he leaves it unspecified or presupposed. A short answer to this question is that the critic does not pay much attention to the explication of this aspect of context. An exception to this is perhaps the following, which relates the interpretation of *KL* to the original socio-cultural context of the play, "Shakespeare's England" and to the more specific context of "the uneducated", and "the groundlings". Most probably, this reference could be taken as an attempt to show something of the social and cultural reasons for including both horror and comic scenes within *KL*:

The sight of physical torment, to the uneducated, brings laughter. Shakespeare's England delighted in watching both physical torment and the comic ravings of actual lunacy. The dance of madmen in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* is of the same ghoulish humour as Regan's plucking Gloucester by the beard: the groundlings will laugh at both. (169)

This discussion of the social and cultural factors as influences on *KL* is not developed further. Instead, it is immediately followed by another, psychological suggestion why there is "ghoulish humour" in *KL*:

Moreover, the sacrilege of the human body in torture must be, to a human mind, incongruous, absurd. (169)

"The human mind" is bound to respond to "ghoulish humour" in a certain way. A universally valid psychological motivation for this particular element of the play is thus offered. The reference to "the human mind" in fact reveals something essential about Knight's notion and function of the socio-cultural context of reading *KL*: it shows, once again, that Knight assumes that he and his readers share the same world. As was seen above, many of his strategies - generalization, the use of the inclusive *we*, the emphasis on interpretation as a sensory process of absorption, the assignment of agency to the text, and the description of readers' responses as identical and universal, for example - are clearly based on the idea that readers are, or must be, a homogeneous group with homogeneous values, beliefs, and assumptions. Moreover the argument that the text means the same for everyone is based on an idea that there is a fixed relationship between words and their meanings, and that this code is shared by everyone. In short, even though there are practically no references in the essay to the particular socio-cultural context of Knight's interpretation of *KL*, there is a very powerful implicit assumption in the interpretation that this context is the same for Knight and all of his potential readers. Or better, Knight's normative and magisterial strategies suggest that this context must be the same for himself and all of his potential readers. Another way of putting this is that the interpretation of *KL* is not only the interpretation of the text itself, but an interpretation of the world: the interpretation of the text mediates to 'us' values, beliefs, even ideologies - covert though they may be - not only about the text, but about the world, life, and human existence.

Thus, there is a relation between the context and the text - the text can be what Knight wants it to be only in a certain kind of world. This idea of a shared socio-cultural, even psychological, perhaps even ideological world is, however, an implicit one, which is to say that it may be all the more powerful and formative. The critic mediates his world and world view as disguised: his position that interpretation is the discovery of the text-embedded meanings is a handy means of covering his own position. The readers have not got much choice but to accept the implicit position and socio-cultural context suggested by Knight, for, as it is not explicit, it is not easy to disagree, question, or challenge it.

In conclusion, we have seen how Knight relates the interpretation of *KL* to situational, institutional and socio-cultural context. Our analysis

showed how the situational context of *KL* appears as both a reading and a viewing event. Secondly, it was observed that the critic made quite a few references to various aspects of the institutional context, to comedy and tragedy, to other works by Shakespeare, to other authors and their texts, to literature and drama, philosophy, religion and literary criticism, thus showing some awareness that literary texts are, or can be read intertextually. In spite of the number of these references, the institutional context is not central in terms of the interpretation of *KL*. At the most, it seems to be used by Knight for the purpose of pointing to similarities and differences of themes and textual elements. Occasionally, however, the critic uses the institutional context to smuggle in major interpretive points or issues as given. In addition, some of the references to the institutional context - to religion and philosophy, in particular - are left very general, and/or taken for granted, which means that important interpretive points are in a way camouflaged as minor, marginal, or self-evident. Similarly, the few indirect references to previous literary criticism show that Knight is not at all interested in relating his interpretation to other existing interpretations of the same text. Thirdly, even though Knight does not explicitly specify the socio-cultural context of his interpretation, it is obviously essential to the interpretation. This is because - through the use of various indirect strategies that propose a shared, and convergent interaction between readers - he suggests that the socio-cultural context must be the same for everyone. More specifically, this means that he and his readers must share the same language code, same values, beliefs, assumptions, even emotions, and ideologies. Only under these conditions can the text mean the same for everyone; only then can the critic argue that the meaning of the text can be discovered in the text by everyone. Paradoxically, then, the low number of references to the socio-cultural context of *KL* does not mean that it is unimportant; on the contrary, it is extremely important.

The above analysis also answers the question of whether there is a relationship or any interaction between context, text, author and readers. Because of his text-based position, Knight, in theory, considers everything that is outside the text peripheral, be it the author's intentions and assumptions, institutional and intertextual influences, or the socio-cultural or ideological situation. However, in reality, his interpretation cannot escape the influence of context: as was pointed out above, the implication of a shared socio-cultural context is actually one of the cornerstones of Knight's interpretive criteria. Without such an assumption, the text could not be argued to mean the same for all its readers. In this sense, then, Knight's interpretation is intimately dependent on context.

### 6.1.6 Summary and discussion

In this section I shall give a short summary of Knight's interpretive criteria and of the linguistic strategies he uses to mediate these criteria. In addition, these findings will be compared to what Knight himself as well as other scholars have written about his interpretive assumptions.

To begin with, as indicated by the high number of quotations from the primary text (one fifth of the essay), the text appears to be quite important for Knight as a source of evidence for his interpretation. The notion is mediated by two interrelated lexical and syntactic networks. The first of these contains what were referred to as spatial noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbials and clauses. The second contains corresponding temporal linguistic choices. On the basis of the analysis of these linguistic features it was argued that the text is dual, spatial and temporal in nature in Knight's essay. It is spatial in the sense that it is a complex and hierarchical construct with different levels and elements. It is visual like a picture or a map; tactile, like a piece of cloth; multi-dimensional, like a topographical map, or landscape; it may even be organic and alive in the sense that it has "a root" or "a heart". Simultaneously, the text is also temporal: it unwinds in time as a successive series of scenes, events and incidents; and it is experienced, "felt" and "understood" by readers/viewers. The two dimensions of the text are, moreover, linked together: by assigning agency to the text, and by implying that interpretation is a receptive process of internalization, the critic suggests that the text is the structural source of readers' affective and interpretive experiences. The function of the text is mediated, in turn, firstly by statements which openly assert that the text is a source of meaning, and, secondly, by presuppositions, by presenting the assumption that the text is a source of meaning as a given fact. The function of the text is also mediated by such strategies as generalization, which suggests that the critic's meaning statements are categorically true, and the use of the inclusive *we*, which suggests a shared and homogeneous reading experience. In short, the text functions as both the repository and transmitter of meaning: it seems to be the ultimate criterion of meaning.

At this point it is perhaps useful to look at what Knight himself, in his account of his theoretical framework, has said about the literary text, and how others have commented on his work, and relate it to the findings of the present analysis. In his *Wheel of Fire* (1930/1959) Knight, in addition to presenting his analyses of various plays by Shakespeare, also introduces his theory of interpretation. According to this theory,

one must be prepared to see the whole play in space as well as in time. It is natural in analysis to pursue the steps of the tale in sequence, noticing the log-

ic that connects them, regarding those essentials that Aristotle noted: the beginning, middle, and end. But by giving supreme attention to this temporal nature of drama we omit what, in Shakespeare, is at least of equivalent importance. A Shakespearean tragedy is set spatially as well as temporally in the mind. By this I mean that there are throughout the play a set of correspondences which relate to each other independently of the time sequence which is the story. (1930/1959: 3)

The play is both temporal and spatial, a progression of events and incidents, as well as a complex construct of "correspondences". This is exactly the notion of the text that was identified in Knight's essay.

Moreover, Knight states explicitly that the temporal dimension of the play is as important as the spatial. In Knight's view there is in Shakespeare "this close fusion of the temporal, that is, the plot-chain of event following event, with the spatial, that is the omnipresent and mysterious reality brooding motionless over and within the play's movement" (Knight 1930/1959:4-5). This means that

we should thus be prepared to recognize what I have called the 'temporal' and the 'spatial' elements: that is, to relate any given incident or speech either to the time-sequence of story or the peculiar atmosphere, intellectual or imaginative, which binds the play. (Knight 1930/1959:14-15)

As was seen above, in the analysis of Knight's essay, this is precisely what Knight does with *KL*. In spite of his initial statement in the essay not to deal with "the logic of the plot", he ends up discussing quite a number of different temporal elements of the play and showing how an "omnipresent and mysterious reality" is manifest in them. In addition, it is also important to remember that - contrary to what such literary scholars as Viswanathan (1980:63-121) and Grady (1991:92-108) seem to assume - the temporal dimension of the text in Knight's framework does not denote only the temporal progression of the plot, but also, and perhaps more importantly, readers' responses to the play. In other words, even though it would first appear that Knight's intrinsic interpretation focuses solely on the text, in reality this is not so: it is also centrally concerned with the text's effect on readers.

It has been pointed out (see e.g. Viswanathan 1980:64 and Grady 1991:94, 96, and 98-108 ) that Knight's theory of interpretation shows both continuity with the earlier Romantic and character-oriented tradition of Shakespeare criticism, and a break from it with an allegiance to the emerging literary movement of Modernism. His work showed continuity with the earlier tradition in the sense that Knight credits Bradley, in spite of his excessive emphasis on character criticism, for initiating spatial analysis by his idea of "atmosphere" (Knight 1930/1959:vii). In addition, Knight notes the importance of such Romantic Shakespeare critics as Col-

eridge and Hazlitt in beginning the general method of interpretation of the temporal aspect of plays, which he himself was to complement with his spatial method (see also Viswanathan 1980:64, and Grady 1991:107).

Knight's break from this tradition, in turn, was manifest, most clearly, in his vision of the Shakespearean play as a shape, in addition to an event. Unlike earlier critics he thus came to emphasize, not only the scrutiny of characters, their motives and intentions, the development of the plot, or the historical context of Shakespeare's drama, but also the play as extending in space, in the by now very familiar terms, e.g. this time by Viswanathan (1980:65), "rather like a map, or unrolled tapestry, or like a vast picture with certain elements . . . standing out like features on a relief map". It has been pointed out that it is specifically here where Knight's allegiance with the rise of modernism shows very clearly (see e.g. Viswanathan 1980:42-7, Taylor 1989:221-2). In Grady's words (1991:100) Knight's hermeneutics

is not only the innovation in Shakespeare interpretation that he claims it is; it is also a method closely paralleling and unconsciously modelled on the aesthetic innovations of the poetry and fiction of Anglo-American avant-garde of the Twenties. Knight is doing for the *reception* of Shakespeare what Joyce had done for the *production* of the novel: both writers re-function a received aesthetic form to downplay its temporality and emphasize a different kind of aesthetic structure that can conveniently be called 'spatial'.

As the above analysis indicates, the notion of the author in Knight's essay appears to be highly positive. This is evident in the frequent use of positive and laudatory adjectives and adverbials qualifying the author's technique. However, Knight does not often refer directly to the readers, but uses different circumlocutionary strategies to imply that the author has an important function in interpretation. For example, the critic refers to the author metonymically as "art" or "masterful artistry" which makes readers see, or understand the text in a certain way. Moreover, it was suggested that the use of the passive is another useful indirect strategy for Knight to propose that the author has power in interpretation. This is particularly clear in the one case where the author's "masterful technique" is the agent of the passive clause, and where the author is thus labelled as the responsible party for producing a certain kind of response in readers. However, it was found that the agentless passives have a similar function. In spite of the fact that they leave the source of the action - the text or author - denoted by the verb phrase unclear; they, too, propose to readers that there is some plan and purpose in the text. The author thus seems to have a great deal of power in interpretation: it is him who controls, through the text, the readers' activities.

If both the text and the author have power to direct and control the interpretation, so has the critic. His power is, however, of a different kind. It was seen above how, by using such strategies as generalizations, the suggestion that interpretation is a sensory process of absorption, and references to his own task as an unproblematic "noticing", "emphasizing", and "cutting out" of meanings from the text, Knight is able to suggest that he himself is only a mediator or a teacher, who demonstrates to others what the text contains. No doubt he is also a rather authoritarian teacher, who presents his interpretive statements as general and universal truths, without any attempt to modalize, relativize, or hedge them. Against his text-based model of interpretation, this is only natural: for if it assumed that the text contains and foregrounds its meaning, the process of interpretation must be taken as a process of discovery which does not need to be justified or relativized.

It has been pointed out by Grady (1991:93) that, besides the emphasis on texts as spatial constructs, there is in Knight's hermeneutics, another break with tradition: this is that, unlike the rising professionalism of the literary critics of the early twentieth century, Knight does not assign authority in interpretation to the critic, but to the author, and the text. His intrinsic criticism apparently leaves everything to the author's text - as the source of meaning - and the readers - as the discoverers of the text-immanent meaning. However, as we have seen, and as Grady also argues, this is in fact an illusion. In reality, Knight, like his fellow critics, is using his power as a professional and institutionalized 'better reader' in his interpretation of Shakespeare's plays.

However, his theory of the spatial-temporal interpretation assures his readers the opposite by insisting on the text-immanency of meaning, and on the unproblematic sensory nature of the reading/interpreting process. No doubt, this insistence was also a very skilful strategy for suggesting that, while the text so evidently is to be taken as a complex and multi-levelled one, it was also a safely closed one.

In contrast to the critic who appears as a magisterial teacher of the correct interpretation of *KL*, the implied readers of this essay appear as less competent and active agents in the interpretation. Firstly, the critic's use of the first person plural personal pronoun and generalizations suggests that readers are a uniform group and that they are together, with the critic, in the interpretation of the text. Secondly, the critic's use of the present tense suggests that the readers' interpretation evolves contemporaneously with the critic's interpretation. Thirdly, the critic's indirect and metonymic references to both readers and the characters of the play as "the mind" shows that the critic considers the play a tragedy of the universal "human mind". The metonymic "the mind" thus binds together the tragedy depicted in *KL*, and the readers' experiences. At times, Knight

openly controls the readers by using direct commands, or deontic modality of obligation. Mostly, however, he relies on subtler strategies, such as passive constructions, for directing the readers. At the same time, Knight also emphasizes togetherness, shared interaction and solidarity with his readers and signals that he is prepared to accept potential criticism from readers or other critics on minor - but not on major - points. The implication here is that the readers, including Knight himself, are in fact a uniform group with uniform goals, values, beliefs, language and meanings, that the interpretation of *KL* is a joint venture in a shared world. The relationship between the critic and the readers is thus an ambivalent one, for in spite of the fact that Knight assumes a shared interaction and world, he also assumes that he has more power in the interpretation of *KL* than his readers. Readers, in turn, appear not to have much real power and freedom of interpretation; they are at the mercy of the author's text and its embedded meanings, and of the critic's recommended reading. There is then no interaction between the text and the readers, between the author and readers, or between the critic and the readers: the process of interpretation is unidirectional, from the author's text, via the critic, to the readers.

The critic does not make many references to the situational, institutional or socio-cultural context in the essay. It seems that in theory none of them are very important to Knight. Nevertheless, it appears that in his framework the situational context involves both reading the text and viewing the play. The institutional context, in turn, appears to include the intertextual categories of tragedy and comedy, Shakespeare's other plays, other authors and their work, literature and drama, philosophy, religion and literary criticism. The relatively low number and generality of references to these institutional aspects of context showed that they do not seem particularly important to Knight. In fact, Knight considers the institutional context a kind of superordinate and more general spatial-temporal construct, and not a source of influence, assumptions, beliefs and values which can powerfully affect literary interpretation. Its function seems to be primarily to show similarities and differences of themes and textual elements. Knight's references to religion and philosophy and literary criticism were found to be particularly interesting in the way they present major interpretive points as presupposed, or minor ones. However, Knight's references to the institutional context could be interpreted as evidence that, in spite of his focus on the intrinsic analysis of the spatial - temporal text, he seems at least aware that literary texts can be read intertextually, and that this can affect or add to their meaning. Finally, despite the low number of references to the socio-cultural context, it was found to be of crucial importance to the interpretation of *KL*. It was seen how Knight consistently suggests that he and his implied readers

share the same language code, values, beliefs, even ideologies. It could be argued that a shared world is actually the precondition for a shared interpretation, for keeping the text closed, for embedding meanings within the text, for discovering the meanings in the text, and for teaching the correct way of discovering the meanings to others.

In conclusion, Knight's model of interpretation is a monistic one. There is, according to Knight, only one norm in interpretation, the author's text. It is also a normative model, for it requires from readers that they interpret the text in one particular way. Apparently, this model gives all the power in interpretation to the text, or, indirectly, to the author, but, in reality, it is worth asking, whether this is really true. It would perhaps be more valid to argue that it is the critic, legitimized and protected by his professional status and the assurance that meaning is text-immanent, who has most of the power. It is the critic who both presents the text as a complex whole, and closes it, it is he who "cuts out" meanings, and who assumes and mediates to the readers a shared language, world, and ideology within which the text can, and must, mean the same for everyone. Importantly, however, the critic's power is not made explicit; rather, his interpretation is presented as the natural one, one that can simply be noticed in the sensory process of absorption of the meaning of the text that interpretation clearly is to Knight. Thus, the apparently text-based model is a handy strategy for validating a basically idiosyncratic interpretation as universally true.

## 6.2 Jonathan Dollimore's '*King Lear* (c. 1605-6) and Essentialist Humanism'

Jonathan Dollimore first published his essay on *King Lear* in a collection of essays entitled *Radical Tragedy: Religion, ideology and power in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries* in 1984. Both the book and the essay turned out to be very successful: in 1989 the book was republished with a new introduction; and the essay has been reprinted as an example of the cultural materialist approach in Shakespeare studies by, for example, Drakakis (1992) in his *Shakespearean Tragedy*.

As the title of the book suggests, Dollimore considers the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries "radical" in the sense that it can subvert established values both in its own time and subsequently. Central assumptions in Dollimore's approach are that, instead of emphasizing "the universal human condition", he examines "cultural difference"; instead of "essence", "potential"; instead of "destiny", "collectively identified goals" (Dollimore 1989:271). An important part of his work is also the analysis of the assumptions and values of literary criticism dealing with these texts, and the relating to and/or distinguishing his own approach from these. Dollimore is very open about his relationship with earlier humanist criticism and criticizes its assumptions, conceptions and practices. At this stage, it is already obvious that Dollimore's approach is very different from Knight's intrinsic commentary.

In the same way as with Knight's essay, the analysis of Dollimore's essay will start with the examination of the linguistic strategies used by the critic for mediating a particular notion and function of the literary text. This will be followed by corresponding analyses of the author, readers and the context. Dollimore's mediation strategies will be compared to Knight's all through the analysis. Finally, on the basis of the analysis, Dollimore's implicit model of interpretation will be specified. (The essay is reprinted in Appendix 2 for the reader's reference.)

### 6.2.1 The notion of the text

In this section I shall examine in what ways the critic quotes, refers to and characterizes the primary text.

The total number of quotations from the primary text in the essay is 56. The number of words quoted is 514, which means that they represent 8.9 % of the total number of words (5769) in the essay. The corresponding percentage of words quoted in Knight's essay is 20.7 %. Hence, Dollimore uses quotations distinctly less than Knight.

A closer look at Dollimore's quotations reveals that there are other interesting differences, too. Most significantly, it seems that Dollimore's quotations are generally shorter than Knight's, and that they are more often embedded within his own text. A large number of Knight's quotations, 44.7 %, are two or more lines long, and 64.5 % of all of his quotations are separated from the rest of the text by indentation and spacing. In Dollimore's essay, in turn, only 25 % of the quotations are two or more lines long, and only 14 % of the quotations are separated from the rest of the text. Most of Dollimore's citations, 86 %, are thus embedded within his own text, and their status as quotations is signalled only by the use of the quotation marks or by a reference to the location of the quote in *KL* (as in, for example, "V.ii. 230"). The length of the embedded quotes varies from several lines to individual words within citation marks. For instance, there are fourteen quotations in the essay which consist of only one word. The way in which Dollimore uses these short quotations shows clearly that, unlike Knight who seems to use quotations for the purpose of illustrating and giving evidence for his interpretive points, Dollimore uses them more as illustrations of key issues in *KL* criticism and a means with which he is able to address, discuss and criticize the ways in which other critics have dealt with the text. As an illustration of this consider TABLE 33: it lists all of Dollimore's one-word quotations with their immediate context:

TABLE 33 Individual words quoted by Dollimore

1.		'Pity'	is a recurring word in <i>Lear</i> . (191)
2.	where a king has to share the suffering of his subjects in order to		
3.	a conception of social justice (albeit dubiously administered by the	'care' . . . (191)	
4.	we see him . . . boasting of having killed the	'Heavens', l. 68)	whereby 'distribution should undo excess/ And each man have enough (Iv.i. 72-3). (192)
5.	More important than Lear's pity is his	'slave'	that was hanging Cordelia. (193)
6.	His admission that authority is a function of	'madness'	- less divine furor than a process of collapse . . . (195)
7.	and	'office' . . .	
8.	power itself is in control	'power' (197)	
9.	we see the cherished norms of human kind-ness shown to have no	'justice' (l. 166) (197)	
10.	Ironically, yet predictably, the	'natural'	sanction at all (197).
11.	[Gloucester] is . . . offering in <i>exchange</i> for Edmund's	'untender' (l. 105)	dimension of that order is displaced on to Cordelia (199)
12.	The trouble is they do this in a society where	'natural'	behaviour - property . . . (199)
13.	No longer are origin, identity and action a	'nature'	as ideological concept is . . . (200)
14.	for the Gentleman attending Cordelia even pity (or more accurately	'natural'	ideological unity . . . (200)
		'Sorrow')	is conceived as a kind of passive female commodity (IV.iii. 16-23). (201)

TABLE 33 indicates that the words "nature" and "natural" are both quoted twice and the rest of the words once each. In some cases Dollimore uses quotations of this kind without any indication of their location in the text (examples 1, 4, 5, 9, 13). Mostly, however there is either a reference to the text (8, 10, 14) or a longer quotation in the immediate co-text out of which

the individual word is extracted, and which also contains a text reference (2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 12). In these cases the Shakespearean words are closely integrated with the critic's argumentation about the primary text. In a way, they become key concepts around which the critic can construct his interpretation. This is particularly true with the terms "nature", "natural", "pity", "care" and "madness". Clearly, each of these terms represents issues that have been established in humanist critiques of the play. Therefore, their analysis, re-evaluation and criticism becomes an important task to Dollimore. For example, consider the following:

When Edmund in the forged letter represents Edgar complaining of '*the oppression of aged tyranny*' which commands '*not as it hath power, but as it is suffered*' (I. ii. 47-8), he exploits the same personal anxiety in Gloucester which Cordelia unintentionally triggers in Lear. Both fathers represent a challenge to their patriarchal authority by offspring as *unnatural* behaviour, an abdication of familial duty. The trouble is they do this in a society where '*nature*' as ideological concept is fast losing its power to police disruptive elements for example: '*That nature which contemns its origin/Cannot be border'd certain in itself*' (IV. ii. 32-3). No longer are origin, identity and action a '*natural*' ideological unity, and the disintegration of that unity reveals something of fundamental importance: when, as here (*also, eg at I. ii. 1-22*) *nature* is represented as socially disruptive, yet elsewhere as the source of social stability (*eg. at II. iv. 176-80*), we see an ideological construct beginning to incorporate and thereby render visible the very conflicts and contradictions in the social order which it hitherto effaced. In this respect the play activates a contradiction intrinsic to any '*naturalised*' version of the Christian metaphysic; to abandon or blur the distinction between matter and spirit while retaining the basic premises of that metaphysic is to eventually construe evil as at once utterly alien to the human condition (*unnatural*) yet disturbingly and mysteriously inherent within it (*natural*) and to be purged accordingly. (200, my italics)

Judging by the number of quotation marks used in this passage, there are apparently seven (relatively short) citations within it. The citations include two remarks by Lear, two references to a particular point in the text, and two individual words used within citation marks but without indication of their exact source in *KL*. None of the quotations or references are separated from the text.

There is also a lexical pattern in this passage which focuses on the term 'nature'. For example, Dollimore uses the terms "nature", "natural" and "naturalized" (all within quotation marks). The first two terms are most likely quotations (there are longer quotations in the essay in which these terms are also included), whereas the word "naturalized" is not. With this term the critic appears not to use the quotation marks to signal a quotation but to inform the readers that the term is somehow 'different', or part of Dollimore's, or even cultural materialists' own jargon. A similar use of quotes can be identified in the same page where the critic uses the

term "loyalty" within quotation marks. In both of these cases the terms are, however, closely related to an actual Shakespearean word quoted elsewhere in the essay ("nature", "loyal").

It is possible that the use of the quotation marks with such 'near-quotations' can in fact cause a problem for the readers. As they are presented within quotation marks and closely resemble actual Shakespearean terms, it is not easy to determine whether they are exactly what Shakespeare wrote. It may happen that in such cases the borderline between the text and the interpretation of the text can thus become blurred. Another feature in the passage above which further emphasizes the fuzzy border between the text and interpretation is that Dollimore uses the words "nature", "natural" and "unnatural" *without* quotation marks. In this way the critic is able to imply that these Shakespearean terms and concepts have been fully integrated within his own interpretation.

As the critic ties up his interpretation in a way intimately with the details of the primary text, it could be argued that, in this respect at least, the text seems to be fairly important to him. However, as he in some cases does not make it explicit whether he is properly quoting Shakespeare's text or whether he is using or reformulating Shakespeare's terms for his own ends as key concepts in his own interpretation, it could also be argued that the text is perhaps not so important to him after all. It may be that for him the text actually blends into its interpretation. On this issue, Dollimore clearly differs from Knight who prefers to meticulously signal the demarcation line between Shakespeare's text and his own interpretation of it, thus showing something of his reverential attitude towards the primary text.

Dollimore occasionally refers to the primary text without including any actual text. TABLE 34 is a comprehensive list of these cases:

**TABLE 34 Text references without any actual text in Dollimore's essay**

1.	reverting from the charitable reconciliation of	V.iii	to vengeance again . . . (193)
2.	each . . . reward Edmund's loyalty	(cf. III.v. 16-18) (200)	
3.	when, as here	(also, eg at I.ii 1-22)	nature is represented as socially disruptive (200)
4.	yet elsewhere as the source of social stability	(eg. at II.iv. 176-80) (200)	
5.	Edmund . . . also repents, submitting to Edgar's nobility	(II. 165-6) (203)	
6.	acknowledging his own contrary nature	(II. 242-3) (203)	

TABLE 34 indicates that Dollimore refers to the primary text in this way for two main purposes. Firstly, as in passages (1), (5) and (6) he both indicates the location of the passages and informs the readers of the plot. Secondly, as passages (3), (4) and, possibly, (2) suggest, he refers to a particular point or incident in the play which allegedly illustrates his own interpretive points (e.g. that "nature is . . . socially disruptive", and "a source of social stability"). Passage (2) is actually a good example of why the critic makes references of this kind can, however, remain unclear: with this passage is not easy to say whether Dollimore refers to "III.v. 16-18" for the purpose of reporting a particular incident of the play or of illustrating his own point. In this case, it is evident that he is not particularly helpful or informative.

In the same way as the relatively small number, shortness and occasional vagueness of Dollimore's quotations, references of this kind which include no actual text, clearly deprive readers of the verification of Dollimore's interpretive points against real textual evidence. To fully grasp Dollimore's points the readers would either have to be extremely well informed about *KL* or prepared to do some extra work. It could even be argued that Dollimore requires from his readers that they supply the evidence that he himself has not supplied. However, it is perhaps worth noting in this context that, contrary to Knight, Dollimore does indicate which edition of the text he is using. This no doubt makes the readers' task of tracking his references to the primary text a little easier. The fact that he indicates the edition he uses in his interpretation also implies that he is perhaps more aware than Knight of the existence of several editions of the play and of the fact that the 'original' text is not an unproblematic notion.

The next analytical question is how Dollimore characterizes the primary text. Dollimore uses the name of the play a total of seventeen times - in four cases the name he uses is *King Lear*, and in thirteen cases just *Lear*. Hence, mostly when he uses the play's title he uses a shortened and idiosyncratic form, without the royal epithet. The reasons behind this may be simply economical (as in the case of referring to the play as *KL*), but it can be that its use reflects something of his attitude towards the text, too. What is more significant, however, is that Dollimore consistently refers to *KL* as a play. This does not mean, however, that he regards *KL* as a theatrical performance only, but, like Knight, also as a written text. An obvious indication of this is of course the fact that Dollimore keeps quoting a written version of the play and indicates in his bibliography the edition of the text that he is using. That *KL* has for Dollimore both a theatrical aspect and a written aspect is indicated in more detail in TABLE 35.

**TABLE 35** *KL* as a written text and a play performed on the stage in Dollimore's essay

1. Kenneth Muir glosses 'property' as 'closest blood relation' (ed. *King Lear*, p. 11). Given the context of this scene it must also mean 'ownership' - father owning daughter (199)
2. Oswald is, says Kent, a 'beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking . . . superserviceable . . . one-trunk-inheriting slave' (II. ii. 15 ff; as Muir points out, servants were apparently given three suits a year, while gentlemen wore silk as opposed to worsted stockings). (201)
3. In fact, *the play* repudiates the essentialism which the humanist reading of it presupposes. (191-2)
4. Philip Brockbank, in a recent and sensitive humanist reading of *the play*, says: 'Lear dies "with pity" (IV. vii. 53) and that access of pity, which in the play attends the dissolution of the senses and of the self, is a condition for the renewal of human life' ('Upon Such Sacrifices', p. 133). (192)
5. Here, as throughout the play, we see the cherished norms of human kind-ness shown to have no natural sanction at all. (197)
6. At strategic points in *the play* we see how the minor characters have also internalised the dominant ideology. (201)

TABLE 35 gives rise to several observations. Firstly, in passages (1) and (2) Dollimore refers to the footnotes of a particular editor of *KL*, Kenneth Muir, which clearly implies that he has himself used the written text as a basis for his interpretation. A similar idea can be inferred on the basis of passages (3) and (4): there Dollimore uses the term "reading" which can perhaps be taken to suggest that the interpretations in question relies on a written text. Passages (5) and (6), in turn, suggest that for Dollimore "the play" is something in which there is a temporal progression of events and a series of actions which we can "see".

However, both the terms "reading" and "seeing" may be used in two senses. On the one hand, they may refer to the actual process where the written text is read and the performance is viewed. On the other hand, both may refer to the process of interpretation. In this sense, it is very interesting that Dollimore does not use the term 'interpretation' at all; instead, as will later be seen in more detail, he refers to "readings", "views" and "analyses" thus perhaps implying that there is no one and only interpretation of the text, but only various, differently positioned "views" of the text. In TABLE 35 an indication of this position could be passage (1). In this passage Dollimore criticizes and revises Muir's comment on a particular point of the text. In doing this he also shows that for him the text is not an innocent entity which simply 'means' something, but something that can be, in his words, 'read' differently and over which there can be disagreements and debates.

More important in this connection is, however, the way in which Dollimore mediates, like Knight, the notion of the text which involves both a theatrical performance and/or temporal phenomenon, and a written text. Admittedly, however, Dollimore does not draw this distinction so sharply and deliberately as Knight but, nevertheless, it seems to be there, at the background of his interpretation.

For Dollimore, *KL* is essentially an account of a social and political situation. TABLE 36 lists a sample of passages where this is evident.

**TABLE 36** *KL* as an account of a social and political situation in Dollimore's essay

1. What follows is an exploration of the political dimension of *Lear*. (190)
2. In *Lear*, . . . man is decentred . . . in order to make visible social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition. (191)
3. far from transcending in the name of an essential humanity the gulf which separates the privileged from the deprived, the play insists on it. (192)
4. [Pity] is the authentic but residual expression of a scheme of values all but obliterated by a catastrophic upheaval in the power structure of this society. (193)
5. Scenes like this remind us that *King Lear* is, above all, a play about power, property and inheritance. (197)
6. A catastrophic redistribution of power and property - and, eventually, a civil war - disclose the awful truth that these two things are somehow prior to the laws of human kindness rather vice versa . . . (197)
7. Human values are not antecedent to these material realities but are . . . informed by them. (197)
8. [Edmund] does not introduce his society to its obsession with power, property and inheritance; it is already the material and ideological basis of that society. (198)
9. Hence even as society is being torn apart by conflict, the ideological structure which has generated that conflict is being reinforced by it. (200)
10. those in power react to crisis by entrenching themselves the deeper within the ideology and social organization responsible for it. (200)
11. At strategic points in the play we see how the minor characters have also internalised the dominant ideology. (201)
12. in *Lear* . . . values are shown to be terrifyingly dependent on whatever 'large orders' actually exist; in civil war especially - which after all is what *Lear* is about - the two collapse together. (202)

TABLE 36 shows that for Dollimore *KL* has "a political dimension" (1). More specifically, this means that the play "makes visible social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition" (2), and insists on "the gulf which separates the privileged from the deprived" (3). It is thus an account of a divided society, where, however, both "those in power" (10) and "minor characters" have "internalized the dominant ideology" (11).

The play is about "power, property, and inheritance" (5) which means that it depicts "a catastrophic upheaval of power and property" (4,6) and "a civil war" (6, 12). It is also an account of how the dominant values of power, property and inheritance are both the cause of conflict and reinforced by it (9).

Clearly, Dollimore's focus on the "catastrophic upheaval of power and property" and the "civil war" in the society depicted by the play implies that for him *KL* is not at all a construct or an aesthetic object. Further, this implies that he is not interested in the examination of the structures, patterns or language of the text. More practically, this means that Dollimore does not use extended and complex patterns of linguistic features to characterize and describe the qualities of the text and its effect on the readers. In this respect, he obviously differs a great deal from Knight.

Instead, Dollimore concentrates on the analysis of the characters' actions and relationships with each other as members of this divided society, on questions of power, authority, property, and conflict. In this respect, too, it could be argued that his approach by-passes the tradition represented by Knight and the New Critics, which emphasized the text as a spatial entity, and goes back to the even earlier character criticism tradition initiated by Bradley. What of course distinguishes him from Bradley and his likes is his open subscription to a materialist, non-Christian, anti-humanist, and anti-essentialist approach.

Typically, Dollimore presents and quotes the characters' speeches as if they themselves mean that which he argues to be the case. TABLE 37 shows strategies with which Dollimore builds up his interpretive points around the characters' speeches. The quotations themselves are not included in the table.

**Table 37 Focus on characters in Dollimore's essay**

1. In this connection there is one remark of Lear's which begs our attention; . . . [quote] . . . Lear bitterly reproaches himself because hitherto he has been aware of yet ignored the suffering of his deprived subjects. He has ignored it not through callous indifference but simply *because he has not experienced it*. *King Lear* suggests here a simple yet profound truth. . . . in a world where pity is the prerequisite for compassionate action . . . the majority will remain poor, naked and wretched. (191)
2. far from transcending the gulf which separates the privileged from the deprived, the play insists on it. And what clinches this is the exchange between Poor Tom (Edgar) and Gloucester. . . . [Quote] (192)
3. [Gloucester] perceives . . . the limitation of a society that depends on empathy alone for its justice. . . . [quote] (192)
4. Lear, in his affliction, attempts to philosophise with Tom whom he is convinces is [quote]. . . . It is an ironic subversion of neo-stoic essentialism . . . (195)
5. Plays like *Lear* precisely disallow 'transcendences': in this at least they confirm Edmund's contention that [quote]. (196)
6. The Fool tells Lear that [quote]; both here and seconds later he anticipates his master's eventual radical decenteredness . . . (196)
7. After he has seen Lear go mad, Gloucester offers this inversion of stoicism: [quote] (196)
8. [quote] Scenes like this remind us that *King Lear* is, above all, a play about power, property and inheritance. (197)
9. Referring to Goneril, the distraught Lear cries: [quote]. Here as throughout the play, we see the cherished norms of human kind-ness shown to have no natural sanction at all. (197)
10. in an earlier soliloquy Edmund has already repudiated [quote]. Like Montaigne he insists that universal law is merely municipal law. (197)
11. Cordelia's real transgression is not unkindness as such, but speaking in a way which threatens to show too clearly how the laws of human kindness operate in the service of property, contractual, and power relations: [quote].
12. At strategic points in the play we see how the minor characters have also internalized the dominant ideology. Two instances must suffice. . . . [Quote] (201)

TABLE 37 shows how Dollimore's "reading" of the text centers on the examination of the characters. He uses speeches by the characters as evidence for his own interpretive points: passages (1), (2), (4), (8), (9), (12) and (13) illustrate this strategy. In passage (1) he argues that Lear's speech "suggests a simple yet profound truth", i.e. that a society such as Lear's is necessarily unequal and divided. In (2) he similarly uses an exchange in the play as evidence which "clinches" his interpretive point that the play insists "on the gulf between the privileged and the deprived". In passage (4) Dollimore states that Lear's exchange "is an ironic subversion of neo-stoic essentialism". In the same way, passages (8), (9) and (12) also suggest that a character's speech has the power of 'reminding us' and making us

"see" Dollimore's interpretive points. Here, as elsewhere in the essay, Dollimore is extremely categorical: as will be shown in more detail below, he typically relies on the strategy of generalization in his interpretation. Second, Dollimore occasionally uses the characters as mouthpieces for what is basically his own interpretation. Passages (3), (5), (6), (7), (10), (11) illustrate this strategy. Notice, how in these passage it is the character who, because s/he is given agency, interprets what is taking place in the play. In passage (3) it is Gloucester who "perceives . . . the limitation of a society that depends on empathy alone for its justice. In (6) it is the Fool who "anticipates his master's eventual radical decenteredness". In (7) it is Gloucester who "offers this inversion of stoicism". Similarly, in (10) it is Edmund who "insists that universal law is merely municipal law", and in (11) it is Cordelia who speaks "in a way which threatens to show too clearly how the laws of human kindness operate in the service of property, contractual, and power relations. The fact that the characters are made to use jargon associated with the critical school Dollimore represents (e.g. "radical decenteredness", "inversion of stoicism") further underlines how the interpreter in a way transposes his interpretation from himself to the characters.

In spite of the fact that Dollimore's focus apparently seems to be on the characters of the play only, he, like Knight, also abstracts more general 'themes' or meaning elements. TABLE 38 indicates that Dollimore uses a number of expressions to point to and discuss them:

**TABLE 38 'Themes' in Dollimore's essay**

1.			the political dimension of <i>Lear</i> (190)
2.	[pity]	is	the authentic but residual expression of a scheme of values (193)
3.	In <i>Lear</i> , there	is	a repudiation of stoicism (193)
4.			the sceptical treatment [of stoicism in these plays] (193)
5.			the outright rejection of stoicism in these plays (193)
6.	[Lear's speech] is		an ironic subversion of neo-stoic essentialism (195)
7.	Gloster	offers	this inversion of stoicism (196)
8.			this revolutionary scepticism (198)
9.	this	is	the patriarchal order in danger of being shorn of its ideological legitimation (199)
10.	the play	activates	a contradiction intrinsic to any 'naturalised' version of the Christian metaphysic (200)
11.	the play	offers	a decentering of the tragic subject (202)
12.	which . . . becomes		the focus of a more general exploration of human consciousness in relation to social being (202)

TABLE 38 shows how there is, in *KL*, "a political dimension" (1), and "a repudiation of stoicism" (3), an "expression of a scheme of values" (2), a "rejection of stoicism" (5), a "subversion of neo-stoic essentialism" (6), an "inversion of stoicism" (7), a "contradiction" (10), a "decentring of the tragic subject" (11), an "exploration of human consciousness" (12), and a "treatment" of stoicism (4). What is noticeable here is how Dollimore avoids using such terms as 'elements', or 'themes'. The closest he gets to this is his reference to the "political dimension" (1) of *KL*. Nevertheless, it seems clear that, like Knight, Dollimore thus implies that there is something 'in' the text, that it 'contains' certain meaning structures.

In place of such a term as 'theme' Dollimore uses nominalizations. It was mentioned in connection with the analysis of Knight's essay that his nominalizations, which are mostly derived from adjectives, often function to fossilize initial reader responses as structural elements of the play. As will later be shown in detail, instead of nominalizing his key adjectives describing the text, Dollimore typically nominalizes verbs. This is because, firstly, owing to his focus on the "political dimension" of the text, there is no need for Dollimore to characterize or evaluate the text and its elements in any way; secondly, he is more concerned with showing that the text is active, that it 'does' things. For example, in addition to claiming that there is "a repudiation of stoicism" in the play, the critic also states that the play "repudiates the essentialism which the humanist reading of it presupposes" (193).

In sum, as the amount of quotations (8.9 % of the total number words used in the essay) from the primary text indicates, Dollimore's interpretation is based far less on the primary text than is the case with Knight (20.7 % of all the words used). Mostly, his quotations are also shorter than Knight's. In addition, he uses a number of one-word quotations, and a few 'near-quotations' which are presented within quotation marks, but which are more properly reformulations of original Shakespearean words. In these cases it was argued that the borderline between what is Shakespeare's text and what is Dollimore's interpretation can get blurred. Clearly, in many cases the one-word- or near-quotations refer to issues in *KL* that have been established in earlier humanist critiques of the play and of which Dollimore is highly critical of. Therefore, their criticism becomes an important task for Dollimore.

Unlike Knight, Dollimore indicates the edition of the text that he is using. This could perhaps be taken to imply that he is perhaps more aware than Knight of the existence of several editions of the play and of the fact that the 'original' text is not an unproblematic notion. What differentiates him from Knight is also that his aim is to give an account of the "political dimension of the play", which means that his criticism focuses, not on the structures, meaning elements or language of the text, but on the charac-

ters and their relationships as members of a society in the middle of a civil war. This means that, again unlike Knight, Dollimore does not use complex linguistic strategies to describe the text and its effect of the readers. Like Knight, Dollimore, however, proposes that *KL* is both a written text and a play performed on the stage. However, in spite of the fact that Dollimore's focus apparently seems to be on the characters of the play only, he also suggests, by using such expressions as "the political dimension", and such nominalizations as a "repudiation of stoicism", that there are more general 'themes' or meaning elements within the play.

### 6.2.2 The function of the text

In this section I shall attempt to examine whether the critic argues or implies that the criterion for the interpretation is the text and, if so, what linguistic strategies he uses to do so.

It appears that major assumptions in Dollimore's essay are that the primary text contains meaning and that it actively suggests this meaning to the readers. TABLE 39 lists expressions that Dollimore uses to suggest that the text is a repository of meaning, and TABLE 40 examines the ways in which Dollimore suggests that the text is active. In the analysis of these tables attention will be paid to several typical strategies that Dollimore uses.

TABLE 39 Strategies suggesting the text as a repository of meaning in Dollimore's essay

1. What follows is an exploration of the political dimension of *Lear*. (190)
2. Yet repeatedly the sceptical treatment, sometimes the outright rejection, of stoicism in these plays is overlooked; often in fact it is used to validate another kind of humanism. (193)
3. In *Lear*, as we shall see in the next section, there is a repudiation of stoicism similar to that found in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*. (193)
4. Even kinship then - indeed *especially* kinship - is in-formed by the ideology of property relations, the contentious issue of primogeniture being, in this play, only its most obvious manifestation. (199)
5. Edmund embodies the process whereby, because of the contradictory conditions of its inception, a revolutionary (emergent) insight is folded back into a dominant ideology. (201)

TABLE 39 shows that Dollimore clearly assumes that the text is spatial in the sense that it 'has' or 'contains' something. In passage (1) this shows in the way critic presents "the political dimension" of *KL* as presupposed. In (2) it is implied that the text contains a "sceptical treatment" and an "outright rejection of stoicism". Notice here the critic's use of the locative ad-

verbial "in these plays" which explicitly refers to the text as a spatial entity. In (3) a similar spatial effect is produced by the use of the existential construction "there is". This effect is further emphasized by the fact that Dollimore uses the nominalization "a repudiation of stoicism", which clearly denotes a central meaning element of the play, and two prepositional phrases functioning as locative adverbials, "in *Lear*" and "in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*" within the same sentence. In addition, the elliptical "found", besides implying a spatial view of the text, also implies that interpretation can be seen as a process whereby something is "found" in the text. A spatial view of the text is also suggested in passage (4), which has a locative adverbial, "in this play". In this passage Dollimore also uses the visual-perceptual noun "manifestation". In fact, this noun could be taken to smoothly complement the use of the verb "found" in passage (3): the former suggests that the text has the power to make its meaning 'manifest', and the latter proposes that interpretation is essentially a process of recovery. Passage (5) is somewhat different from the rest of the passages in TABLE 39, for in this case it is stated that it is not the text, but a character, presumably as an element of the text, that "embodies" meaning. In this the character, however, functions in exactly the same way as the text.

Typically, Dollimore also relies on the strategy of generalization in the presentation of his interpretation. Examples of this can also be located in the passages above: passages (2), (4) and (5) have symptomatic generalizations ("is overlooked", "is used to validate", "is informed", "embodies", "is folded back"). The existential structure "there is" of passage (3) is also powerfully generalizing. Passage (4) also contains a non-finite major generalization "the . . . issue of primogeniture being".

It could be argued that passage (5) is powerfully generalizing in another sense, too. This is because it does not contain any indication that it deals with only the play. The lack of this specification, as well as the presentation of "the process" as a typical, familiar phenomenon, could be considered to suggest that the statement "Edmund embodies the process" expresses a more universal fact or 'truth' of human, social, and political history. It could even be argued that the clause "a revolutionary (emergent) insight is folded back into a dominant ideology" has an implicit marker of frequency, typicality, or generality.

By using such generalizing strategies Dollimore could be taken to imply that his interpretive points are to be taken as statements of fact rather than arguments for a particular view of the text.

For Dollimore the text is thus a container of meaning. On this issue his approach is thus similar to Knight's. Interestingly, Dollimore also seems to use highly similar strategies for suggesting this. As our initial observations on TABLE 39 demonstrate, like Knight, Dollimore uses ex-

pressions - such as locative adverbials and existential structures that indicate that the text is a spatial entity, a 'container'. Similarly, he also seems to generalize his interpretive statements. To show that these observations are indeed well-founded, consider TABLE 40 which examines the strategies that Dollimore uses to propose the text as an active agent:

**TABLE 40 Strategies suggesting the text as active in Dollimore's essay**

1. *King Lear* suggests here a simple yet profound truth. (191)
2. So, far from transcending in the name of an essential humanity the gulf which separates the privileged from the deprived, the play insists on it. (192)
3. The notion of man as tragic victim somehow alive and complete in death is precisely the kind of essentialist mystification which the play refuses. (202)
4. It offers instead a decentring of the tragic subject which in turn becomes the focus of a more general exploration of human consciousness in relation to social being. (202)
5. *Lear* actually refuses then that autonomy of value which humanist critics so often insist that it ultimately affirms. (202)
6. Plays like *Lear* precisely disallow 'transcendences': in this at least they confirm Edmund's contention that 'men/Are as the time is' (V. iii. 31-2). (196)
7. After he has seen *Lear* go mad, Gloucester offers this inversion of stoicism: [quote]
8. A catastrophic redistribution of power and property - and, eventually, a civil war - disclose the awful truth that these two things are somehow prior to the laws of human kindness rather than vice versa . . . (197)
9. In this respect the play activates a contradiction intrinsic to any 'naturalised' version of the Christian metaphysic . . . (200)
10. In the closing moments of *Lear* those who have survived the catastrophe actually attempt to recuperate their society in just those terms which the play has subjected to sceptical interrogation. (202)
11. Presumably Cordelia does not intend it to be so, but this is the patriarchal order in danger of being shorn of its ideological legitimation - here, specifically, a legitimation taking ceremonial form. (199)
12. The timing of these two deaths must surely be seen as cruelly, precisely subversive: instead of complying with the demands of formal closure . . . the play concludes with two events which sabotage the prospect of both closure and recuperation. (203)

TABLE 40 indicates that Dollimore uses a number of strategies to suggest that the text is an active force constraining and directing interpretation. These strategies are (i) the assignment of agency to the text, (ii) the use of actional verbs of 'doing' and 'showing' to refer to the text's action and (iii) the use of generalizations.

First, all of the passages in TABLE 40 show that Dollimore uses the text, a character (7) or incident of the play (8, 11) as agents actively 'doing'

something. Second, to indicate what the text 'does', Dollimore uses two kinds of verb. On the one hand, he uses verbs that imply that the text offers, shows or emphasizes something. Examples of this are *suggest* (1), *insist* (2), *offer* (4, 7), and *disclose* (8). Basically, what the text thus suggests, offers, insists, etc., is, not unsurprisingly, Dollimore's own interpretive points. For example, the play insists on "the gulf which separates the privileged from the deprived (2) and offers "a decentring of the tragic subject" (4). The clause "the decentring of the tragic subject becomes the focus of an exploration" (4) is also interesting here for the reason that it is suggested how a 'theme' of the play unproblematically "becomes" a focus of an exploration, with no indication of who it is who carries out this "exploration". It is left open whether this agent is the text or perhaps even the author.

In two passages Dollimore even suggests that what the play suggests is "a truth" (1, 8). In these two passages Dollimore is thus extremely categorical, for not only does he suggest that the text is capable of making its meaning manifest almost automatically, but also that this meaning, on these particular points at least, is "a truth" of a universal validity. Similarly, the verbs *activate* (9) and *subject* (to . . . interrogation) (10) that Dollimore uses to present his interpretive points also emphasize that the text is active. In passage (10), in particular, it is noteworthy how the critic implies, by the use of the expression *subject to interrogation* that the text is capable of *interrogating*, like any intelligent human being, a particular problem. On the whole it seems that the fact that Dollimore emphasizes the text as active has the effect that he marginalizes both his own role as the real interpretive agent, and that of the author as the intentional agent responsible for the production of the text.

On the other hand, Dollimore uses verbs that imply that the text denies or repudiates certain interpretations. In his words, the text is able to *refuse* "essentialist mystification" and "autonomy of value" (3, 5) and *disallow* "transcendences" (6). In passage (5), for example, the logic of the argument is particularly revealing of the critic's standards in the interpretation of *KL*. On the one hand, Dollimore argues that the play "refuses" the humanist view. On the other hand, he also states that "humanist critics so often insist" that the text in fact affirms this view. Thus, he could be taken to imply that both he himself and the humanist critics assume that the text has the power to determine what it means. At the same time he suggests, however, that humanist critics have been wrong, whereas he himself is evidently right. In the humanist critics' case, their misguided reading of the text is apparently the outcome of their humanist assumptions and belief in the "autonomy of value". Thus, it could be argued that, from a materialist perspective, it is perfectly valid to argue that the text suggests a materialist interpretation but, from a humanist per-

spective, it is equally wrong to claim that the text suggests a humanist reading. Not unsurprisingly, Dollimore does away with this uncomfortable position by insisting that the text itself is really "political" and subversive. According to Dollimore, as we have repeatedly seen, the play contains subversive political elements. Hence, it activates a subversive political interpretation. In his case, the interpretation is thus not a case of reading text-external values and ideologies into the text, as it is with the humanist critics, but of extracting what the text contains and suggests. Hence, the text has power to invalidate humanist interpretations.

In these passages Dollimore also relies on the strategy of generalization quite consistently. The verbs of 'doing' and 'showing' that he uses are systematically in the form of symptomatic generalizations. The generalizations that Dollimore uses signal that he is committed to, and convinced of, the general truthfulness and validity of his interpretation. As was pointed out in connection with TABLE 39 they also have the effect that his interpretive points seem more statements of facts rather than arguments for a particular view of the play. It could perhaps be argued, in the same way as with Knight's critical style, that the large number of generalizations seems to be in inverse proportion to the degree to which the critic is willing to signal that his view of *KL* is merely one particular interpretation of the play. That is, the more there are generalizations in the essay, the more clearly the critic seems to imply that his interpretation is naturally true and universally valid.

In comparison to the rest of the passages in TABLE 40, passages (11) and (12) are somewhat exceptional. In (11) Dollimore's statement "presumably Cordelia does not intend it to be so" is very interesting. What makes it interesting, in particular, is that the critic uses here a marker of epistemic modality of probability ("presumably"). With this modal adverbial the critic mediates that the character's interpretation of an incident in the play may be different from what the text suggests. In addition, he uses a verb phrase including a specifically hermeneutical verb "intend" by which he implies that it is a presupposed fact *that characters have intentions of their own*. However, Cordelia's potentially divergent intention is contrasted with a categorical statement of the meaning of the incident in question: "this is the patriarchal order in danger of being shorn of its ideological legitimation". This statement has an unmodalized major generalization ("this is"). Again, here is a 'truth' which, although not explicitly stated in this case, the text most probably offers us. Consequently, in this extract we see how a character's interpretation of an incident of the play is different from what the text suggests. In the previous passages we have examined this has not been so: rather, we have seen how the critic has used a character as a mouthpiece for the text's meaning.

Passage (12) is also interesting in that it assigns agency, not to the text or to a character of the text, but to "the timing" of the events of the play. Interestingly, Dollimore uses here the modal auxiliary "must" as a marker for epistemic modality of probability, and an adverbial of probability "surely". As in passage (11), against his more general strategy of generalization, this use of the 'probability' markers gain extra prominence. A possible explanation to why Dollimore uses modality here, instead of his more usual strategy of generalization, may again be that in this case the text itself does not 'offer' or 'suggest' this particular interpretation (where the society of *KL* would not be recuperated and a formal textual closure not achieved). However, in spite of his initial cautiousness on this point (indicated by the modality markers), Dollimore resumes his categorical style at the end of passage (12). This he does by using the extremely strong and generalized verb *sabotage* to refer to what the "timing" 'does'. Apparently, it has at least as much power as the text to determine interpretation.

Passages (11) and (12) are thus examples of how Dollimore disregards what the text 'offers'. It could be argued that for the purpose of fully validating his subversive materialist interpretation, he is forced, on these particular issues, to abandon his insistence on the text (i.e. the written text or dialogue) as an interpretive criterion. However, with respect to passage (12) it could also be argued that Dollimore in a way expands the notion of the text so that it includes not only the dialogue of the play, but also the timing of its incidents. In this way, the text can still be taken to function as a criterion in interpretation.

However, on the whole it appears that Dollimore, in particular, when he is concerned with stating his own interpretive points, uses strategies similar to Knight's. Most significantly, both critics state that the text simultaneously 'contains' meaning and is capable of 'showing' it to the readers. Both assign agency to the text, use verbs of 'doing' and 'showing' to denote the text's action and generalize their interpretive statements. Hence, for both of them the text seems to be an absolute criterion of interpretation. Further, because the text is an absolute criterion, there is no need for them to relativize or hedge about interpretation, but they can present it as universally valid and true. However, on this point, Dollimore also differs from Knight in that, in addition to asserting that the text 'offers' a materialist interpretation, he also repeatedly states that the text equally categorically 'denies' humanist interpretations. Knight, in turn, who is only marginally concerned with showing his interpretation in relation to another interpretations, does not use this strategy at all.

Dollimore also uses agency in an interesting way to suggest that his own "reading" is 'correct' and humanist readings 'incorrect'. A particularly revealing example of this is the paragraph where Dollimore states

his aims in the essay. TABLE 41 lists relevant parts of this paragraph as follows:

**TABLE 41 Agency as a strategy for suggesting Dollimore's "reading" as correct and humanist readings as incorrect in Dollimore's essay**

1. What follows is an exploration of the political dimension of *Lear*. (190)
2. It argues that the humanist view of that play is as inappropriate as the Christian alternative which it has generally displaced - inappropriate not least because it shares the essentialism of the latter. (190)
3. The principal reason why the humanist view seems equally misguided, and not dissimilar, is this: it mystifies suffering and invests man with a quasi-transcendent identity whereas the play does neither of these things. (190)
4. In fact, the play repudiates the essentialism which the humanist reading of it presupposes. (190-1)
5. However, I do not intend to replace the humanist reading with one which rehearses yet again all the critical clichés about the nihilistic and chaotic 'vision' of Jacobean tragedy. (191)
6. In *Lear* . . . man is decentred not through misanthropy but in order to make visible social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition. (191)

TABLE 41 indicates that, after having presented "the political dimension of *Lear*" as presupposed and self-evident (1), Dollimore openly states that "the humanist view", like "the Christian view" of the play", is "inappropriate" (2). In passage (3) he explains why this is so (by using, once more, a major generalization "the principal reason . . . is this"): "the humanist view" "mystifies suffering and invests man with a quasi-transcendent identity whereas the play does neither of these things". A similar strategy is also used in passage (4): there he argues that "the play repudiates the essentialism which the humanist reading of it presupposes". What is implied in these two passages is that "the humanist reading" has in a way acted against the text and refused to pay attention to what the text itself 'does'. It has thus stripped the text of its power. The linguistic indicator here is the contrast between presenting "the humanist view" as an agent, on the one hand, and the text as an agent, on the other. It is as if Dollimore implies that "the humanist view" has unjustifiably taken the agency which really should belong to the text. In this way, Dollimore clearly implies, the "humanist reading" is a misinterpretation of the play. By implication again, it could be assumed that his own interpretation is, in contrast, what the text 'offers'. However, in this paragraph at least, he does not openly assert this, but presents his own interpretation as merely another "reading" of the play (passage 5), thus implying that, like the "humanist view" it merely represents one particular "view" of the play, rather than what the text 'means' or 'does'.

At first glance, this may look like a paradox haunting Dollimore's interpretive criteria, for how can it be possible that Dollimore's materialist reading is simultaneously what the text suggests and one reading among others of the play? It is, nevertheless, perfectly logical, if we interpret Dollimore as suggesting that the materialist reading is in fact the only reading which is in accordance with the "political dimension" of the text. The materialist reading, in other words, is the only interpretive lense which does not distort the text, but shows it such as it really is. Then again, in the next moment (passage 6) Dollimore states categorically that "in *Lear* . . . man is decentred . . . to make visible social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition". By generalizing this statement, by using the passive with agent deletion and by using the structure "to make visible . . .", Dollimore implies that this is what *KL* 'means' categorically. He thus uses agency to suggest (i) that in assuming agency in interpretation, "the humanist view" is wrong, (ii) that, in doing this, it has ignored that the text should have all the agency in the determination of its meaning and (iii) that there is a definite, although unspecified, agency involved in that the text has a certain purpose. At the same time Dollimore does not openly state that his interpretation is actually what the text suggests. Rather, he sneaks this assumption in by presenting the existence of "the political dimension of the play" as presupposed, and by implying that his "reading" is merely an account of this text-immanent "dimension".

In the above passages there was no mention of readers whom the text is supposed to direct so powerfully. That they are not totally forgotten, however, is shown in TABLE 42 (my italics).

TABLE 42 Text as a force directing 'us' in Dollimore's essay

1. Far from endorsing the idea that man can redeem himself in and through an access of pity, *we might be moved to recognise* that, on the contrary, in a world where pity is the prerequisite for compassionate action, where a king has to share the suffering of his subjects in order to 'care', the majority will remain poor, naked and wretched. (191)
2. That this comes from one of the 'kindest' people in the play *prevents us from dismissing* the remark as individual unkindness: judging is less important than seeing how unkindness is built into social consciousness. (192)
3. *Scenes like this one remind us* that *King Lear* is, above all, a play about power, property and inheritance. (197)
4. Here, as throughout the play, *we see* the cherished norms of human kindness shown to have no 'natural' sanction at all. (197)
5. Later *we witness* Lear's correlation between the quantity of retainers Goneril will allow him and the quality of her love. . . (199)
6. At strategic points in the play *we see* how the minor characters have also internalised the dominant ideology. (201)
7. *We can now see* the significance of Edmund's scepticism and its eventual relationship to this dominant ideology of property and power. (201)
8. Witnessing his fate *we are reminded of* how, historically, the misuse of revolutionary insight has tended to be in proportion to its truthfulness, and of how, as this very fact is obscured, the insight becomes entirely identified with (or as) its misappropriation. (201)

TABLE 42 shows that Dollimore, in very much the same way as Knight, relies on the use of inclusive *we* pronoun in his essay. (More will be said of it in connection with the notion and function of the readers in the essay. In this context only the relation between the text and 'us' will be discussed.) In all the examples here the text is somehow taken to affect the way its implicit readers interpret it. The text, its characters, or scenes "prevent us" (2) from drawing conclusions untrue to the text, or they "remind us" (3) of what the play is really about. Similarly, "we might be moved to recognise"; "we are reminded of"; "we see"; and "witness" facts or truths suggested by the text. In implying that this kind of a uni-directional causal relationship holds between the text and its potential readers, Dollimore appears to suggest the same view as Knight. For both of them the text is a powerful source of influence that can force its readers to perceive it in a certain particular way.

To summarize, for Dollimore the text is the encasement of its subversive and political meaning and an active force foregrounding its elements of meaning and directing its readers' interpretation. Firstly, Dollimore uses expressions that suggest that there 'is' 'in the play', or the play 'has a particular meaning element'. In other words, he uses strategies which emphasize the text as a container, and, in this sense, as a spatial entity. Secondly, to argue that the text is an active force, Dollimore assigns

agency to the text and uses active and actional verbs of 'showing' and 'denying' in connection with the text. With these strategies he is thus able to show that the text allegedly actively foregrounds his materialist "reading", while it equally actively refutes humanist interpretations of the text. Thirdly, in arguing for his interpretation Dollimore consistently uses generalizations. In addition to certain other generalizing strategies that he uses (such as the suggestion that the text suggests 'truths'), the generalizations have the effect of making that his interpretive points seem more like categorical statements of universal validity than arguments for a particular view of the play. The consistent emphasis on the text as a container and an active force also has the effect that the critic's, readers' and author's role in interpretation is marginalized. It is only the text that determines meaning. Fourthly, the text is argued to have a direct effect on its readers. Dollimore uses the inclusive *we* pronoun and insists that the text "reminds us" of a certain "truth", or that we "see" or "witness" "truths" in it. Through the use of such perceptual and sensory verbs, Dollimore thus suggests the idea that reading and interpreting *KL* is an unproblematic sensory process of absorption. That is, it is an unproblematic sensory process, provided it is a materialist reading, which is allegedly sensitive enough to capture what the text really says.

On these issues Dollimore resembles Knight a great deal. Most significantly, both critics agree and take for granted that the text both contains and actively foregrounds its meaning, and that, therefore, interpretation is simply a process of discovery or internalization of what the text contains. However, at the same time, Dollimore seems much more aware of the existence of other interpretations of the text than Knight, thus perhaps implying that there exists no pure, innocent text of *King Lear*, not to speak of meanings embedded within the text, but only different interpretations of the text, one of which is evidently his own "materialist reading" (195). This is manifest, for example, in the way in which he argues that, in addition to 'offering' a materialist reading, the text also 'denies' "the humanist view". In a way, by referring to various "views" and "readings" of the play, Dollimore suggests a notion of the text which is plural and ideological (i.e. as a product of different ideologically motivated readings).

However, the text appears plural only when other interpretations are concerned. When Dollimore's own "reading" is concerned, in turn, it appears that Dollimore uses linguistic strategies that suggest that the text contains and offers a materialist "reading" while it denies most emphatically the "humanist view". Hence, his "materialist reading" is actually correct because it is the only "view" which is accordance with the text's immanent meaning.

At certain points Dollimore is also forced to abandon his text-based interpretive criteria. These are the cases when, in order to be able to be consistent in his subversive materialist "reading", he has to read 'against' the text. In these cases, his "reading" could perhaps be taken as not what the text suggests, but as yet another "view" of the play, motivated by the critic's assumptions and ideology. Interestingly enough, these are the only cases in the essay when Dollimore also uses some modality.

So, interestingly enough, even though theoretically and critically Knight and Dollimore seem to represent very different approaches, they have, in reality, a great deal in common. In spite of Dollimore's apparent emphasis on interpretation as plural, cultural and historical, he uses the text only as his interpretive criterion and norm. In this respect, Dollimore's approach is identical to Knight's: both critics emphasize the text as a container of meaning and active force controlling interpretation. In all fairness, there is an important difference between the two critics: Knight seemingly concentrates on the text only, presenting his interpretation as if it were a natural given, while Dollimore does the same, but not without openly asserting the ideological lens he uses.

### 6.2.3 The notion and function of the author

In this section, I shall examine what strategies Dollimore uses to suggest a particular notion and function of the author in the essay. To begin with, I shall examine whether the critic refers to the author by name or by some other epithet and analyze these in their co-text.

There are no references to the author in the essay where an epithet such as *author*, *poet* or *writer* could be used. The author is not referred to with a personal pronoun either. However, there are few instances where the word *Shakespeare* is used in the essay. TABLE 43 lists all of its occurrences (my italics).

TABLE 43 Use of the word *Shakespeare* in Dollimore's essay

1. Thus Clifford Leech . . . tells us that tragic protagonists 'have a quality of mind that somehow atones for the nature of the world in which they and we live. They have, in a greater or lesser degree, the power to endure and the power to apprehend' (*Shakespeare's Tragedies*, p. 15). (189)
2. Wilbur Sanders in an influential study argues for *an ultimately optimistic Shakespeare* . . . (190)
3. Thus, according to Barbara Everett . . . :  
     In the storm scene Lear is at his most powerful and, despite moral considerations, at his noblest; the image of man hopelessly confronting a hostile universe and withstanding it only by his inherent powers of rage, endurance and perpetual questioning, is perhaps the most purely 'tragic' in *Shakespeare*. ('The New *King Lear*', p. 333) (193)
4. Lionel Trilling has remarked that 'the captains and kings and lovers and clowns of *Shakespeare* are alive and complete before they die' (*The Opposing Self*, p. 38). Few remarks could be less true of *King Lear*. (202)
5. Nicholas Brooke . . . concludes by declaring: 'all moral structures, whether of natural order or Christian redemption, are invalidated by the naked fact of experience', yet manages . . . to resurrect from this unaccommodated 'naked experience' a redemptive autonomy of value, one almost mystically inviolable: 'Large orders collapse; but values remain, and are independent of them' (*Shakespeare: King Lear*, pp. 59-60). (202)

TABLE 43 shows that the name *Shakespeare* is used four times and the corresponding genitive form once in the essay. What is remarkable is that none of these are used directly by Dollimore. Every one of them occurs within a citation, as either used by another critic in his/her text, or in the title of the essay/book by another critic. The lack of direct references to, or mentions of, the author in Dollimore's own text could thus be taken as an indication that the critic does not regard the author and his purposes and intentions in writing the text as relevant at all. It could thus be argued that Dollimore does not explicitly suggest that the author has any particular notion and function in his interpretation. Instead, it is the text that is in the spotlight of his interpretation.

There are instances in the essay where we could, however, at least suspect that there is an intentional agent behind the text. These are the cases where the critic uses a passive construction to suggest that some incident of the play can be regarded as having a purpose: TABLE 44 is a comprehensive list of these cases.

**TABLE 44** Passive constructions with agent deletion and the author in Dollimore's essay

1.	man	is decentred	not through misanthropy . . . (191)
2.	we see the cherished norms . . .	shown to have	no natural sanction at all. (197)
3.	this revolutionary scepticism is discredited by the purpose to which it	is put. (198)	
4.	Edmund's scepticism	is made to serve	an <i>existing</i> system of values . . . (198)
5.	the 'untender'... dimension of that order	is displaced	on to Cordelia. (199)
6.	Gloucester's unconscious acceptance of this underlying ideology	is conveyed	at several points . . . (199)
7.	when, . . . nature	is represented	as socially disruptive . . . (200)
8.	surely in <i>Lear</i> . . . 'values'	are shown to be	terrifyingly depen- dent upon whatever 'large orders' actually exist . . . (202)
9.	There	is invoked	. . . a concept of in- nate nobility . . . (202)
10.	Thus Edgar's defeat . . .	is interpreted	as a defeat of an evil nature by a noble one. (202)
11.	Also nobility	is seen to be	like truth . . . (202)
12.	Goneril	is 'reduced'	to her treachery . . . (202-3)
13.	Thus	is responsibility displaced . . . (203)	
14.	but perhaps Edgar	is meant to wince	as he says it . . . (203)

In the analysis of Knight's essay it was noted how the use of the passive is a convenient strategy for the critic for suggesting that there is a plan and purpose involved in the text while leaving the source of this plan and purpose unspecified. However, it was also pointed out that in one particular case Knight also uses the passive with the author's technique as an agent. In this case Knight thus makes the existence of authorial intention explicit. As TABLE 44 shows Dollimore's passive clauses do not include an agent. Apart from this Dollimore seems to use the passive in a similar way to Knight. Firstly, there are verbs, used in the passive voice, that suggest that certain elements are "shown" (2, 8), "conveyed" (6), "represented"

(7), "interpreted" (10), and "seen" (11) in some particular way in the text. All of these verbs have to do with the hermeneutical process itself, and they could be taken to indicate that some particular, but unspecified, agent has "seen", etc. the text in this particular way. Secondly, there are cases in TABLE 44 where either the verb itself or its co-text suggests that there is a certain purpose in *KL*. The most explicit examples of this are passage (3) where the word "purpose" is used in connection with a passive verb, passage (4) where the causative verb *make* is used to suggest that a particular element is "made to serve" a certain purpose; and passage (14) where the explicitly hermeneutical verb *mean* is used, and where it is suggested that a character of the play is "perhaps" "meant" to behave in a certain way.

This last example merits further comments. This clause is perhaps the clearest indication in the essay that there may be an intention behind the text. However, the source of this intention is again left unspecified. It could be interpreted as implying that this intentional agent behind the *meaning* is the text; equally well, it could be the author, or both of them. On a closer inspection it becomes obvious that the intentional agent cannot be the (written) text. The reason for this is that the statement "but perhaps Edgar is meant to wince" proposes an interpretation of a scene that is *not* suggested by the text itself, which actually contradicts what the text (allegedly) foregrounds as the meaning of the incident. In doing this, it resembles the use of "timing" as evidence of the critic's interpretation discussed above. Both actually rely on something other than the text. Both are also speculative and cautious in nature: this is signalled by the inclusion of markers of epistemic modality (in this case the adverbial "perhaps"). As was pointed out above, relying on something other than the text as interpretive evidence is a very uncommon strategy in Dollimore's essay: usually, in the critic's own "reading", it is the text that determines its own meaning unproblematically and categorically. It could be concluded then that, that since the critic does not use the text as evidence for his interpretation and since he, nevertheless, uses an explicitly hermeneutical verb *mean* (softened by a modal marker of possibility) to suggest that the text is to be interpreted in a particular way, there is not much choice left but to assume that the intentional agent who has "meant" "Edgar" "to wince" must surely be the author.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> What this also implies, as was suggested above, is that the 'play' does not only mean the written text to Dollimore, but it includes other, non-textual, more theatrical and dramatic conventions, such as timing and character's expressions as well. In this sphere, however, the question of the text's meaning becomes all the more problematic, for things like the characters' expressions are not written anywhere in the text. In spite of this, Dollimore seems to suggest, albeit cautiously, that the meaning of the text can also be 'read' from the non-textual, theatrical performance.

Thirdly, TABLE 44 also includes a few passages which suggest, although somewhat less explicitly than (3), (4) and (14), that there is a certain purpose in *KL*. These are passages (9), (12) and (13). In each of them it is suggested that elements of the play - a character, or a 'theme' - are objects for some kind of manipulation: they are "displaced", "reduced" or "invoked" by some unspecified agent. This agent could well be the text or the author. In some cases it could even be the characters of the play. Hence, by consistently deigning to use an agent in passive clauses of this kind, Dollimore, in very much the same way as Knight, manages to efface agency, while simultaneously suggesting that there is nevertheless some kind of agent involved who/which does things to, or means something by, the text, its characters and elements.

To recapitulate, it seems that Shakespeare's presence is mostly effaced in this essay. The critic does not explicitly indicate the author's notion and function in the interpretation of *KL*. In fact, he does not even mention the author. Overtly, he attempts not to include the author as someone who has a say in the interpretation of the text. Nevertheless, the author may still be lurking in the background of Dollimore's implicit model of interpretation. For example, his passive constructions imply that he considers that there is, after all, a purpose and design in the text, and that the text is manipulated by some (unspecified) agent. There are also a few examples in the essay where Dollimore refers to the "purpose" underlying the text. This was taken to suggest that the author's intention is, nevertheless, summoned by the critic as an interpretive criterion. In this respect Dollimore is very much like Knight. At the same time, he is also very unlike Knight. The reason for this is that while Knight makes it quite clear, by, for example, using an 'authorial' agent, by praising the author's technique, and by referring to "the poet's purpose", that the author has an important role in interpretation, Dollimore takes pains to avoid the subject of the author altogether: the author or the author's technique is never given agency in the critic's active or passive clauses.

On the whole it appears that the lack of references to the author, and the lack of evaluative adjective phrases used in connection with the author, for instance, could be interpreted to suggest that Dollimore is much less concerned with the author than Knight. What is more important to him is the "political" text. The problem of what Shakespeare must have intended, whether or not he is a subversive author, is thus not addressed at all. It could even be argued that Dollimore's insistence solely on viewing the text as "political" is a way of sidestepping the difficult issue of authorial intention. Admittedly, the establishment of authorial intention with an author such as Shakespeare is impossible, if it is not done through the text. Hence, for Dollimore the relationship between the text and the author appears to be loose, and there most definitely is no interac-

tion between the two. The text is mostly perceived as independent from the author. In contrast, for Knight the text and the author are much more closely related: in his view, the text is essentially the author's text. Even though it was found that the problem of authorial intention is clearly tricky for him, too, the author nevertheless appears as "masterful", and the texts clearly are products of his "masterful[ness]".

#### **6.2.4 The notion and function of the readers**

In the same way as in the analysis of Knight's essay, this section will deal, firstly, with the notion and function of the critic as a reader of *KL*, secondly, with the notion and function of the readers of *KL*, and, thirdly, with the relationship, and potential interaction, between the critic and his (implied) readers.

##### **6.2.4.1 The critic as a reader**

The first analytical question here is whether the critic refers to himself in the essay and what strategies he uses to do so. In the same way as Knight, Dollimore occasionally refers to himself with the first person singular personal or possessive pronoun. TABLE 45 is a comprehensive list of these references (my italics).

TABLE 45 Pronouns *I/me/my* in Dollimore's essay

1. *I do not mean to argue* again the case against the Christian view since, . . . it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts. (190)
2. However, *I do not intend to replace* the humanist reading with one which rehearses yet again all the critical clichés about the nihilistic and chaotic 'vision' of Jacobean tragedy. (191)
3. For convenience *I call* the kind outlined so far ethical humanism and this other one existential humanism. (193)
4. *As I have already shown* (chapter 4) Bacon believed that poesy implies idealist mimesis (196)
5. *I want to argue* that we need not. (198)
6. [Lear's] retreat into the isolated darkness of his own mind is also a descent into the seed-bed of a new life; for *the individual mind is seen here as the place from which a man's most important qualities and relationships draw the whole of their potential'* (*Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition*, pp. 251-2, *my italics*). (190)
7. Thus he equates his earlier self with the 'lust-dieted man . . . *that will not see/Because he does not feel'* (IV. i. 69-71, *my italics*). (192)
8. For Lear dispossession and displacement entail not redemptive suffering but a kind of suffering recognition - implicated perhaps with confession, depending on how culpable we take this king to have been with regard to 'the great *image* of authority' which he now briefly demystifies: 'a dog's obeyed in office' (IV.vi. 157, *my italics*) (196)
9. Similarly, Edmund, in liberating himself from the myth of innate inferiority, does not thereby liberate himself from his society's obsession with power, property and inheritance; if anything that obsession becomes the more urgent: 'Legitimate Edgar, *I must* have your land' (I. ii. 16, *my italics*). (201)

TABLE 45 shows that the critic uses the first person singular personal or possessive pronoun nine times to refer to himself. In five of these he uses the subjective case of the personal pronoun, and in the rest the corresponding possessive pronoun.

In the five cases where Dollimore uses the personal pronoun *I*, he does so in a co-text where he is concerned with his own task and goals. In clause (2) he uses the pronoun in connection with the specification of his own goal ("I do not intend to replace the humanist reading"). In clauses (1) ("I do not mean to argue again the case against the Christian reading") and (5) ("I want to argue that we need not.") he is similarly trying to account for his own goals. The choice of the verb *argue* in these sentences is interesting because it suggests that one of Dollimore's aims is to "argue" for his own interpretation, rather than simply present it. In clause (3) ("I call") Dollimore makes it explicit that the terms and definitions of "ethical" and "existentialist humanism" are his own, and in clause (4) ("As I have already shown") he ties his interpretation of a particular point in the play

to what he has written earlier in the book, thus relating the interpretation of *KL* to his interpretation of another text or author. The five cases (6-10) where the critic uses the possessive pronoun are all identical ("my italics"). This phrase is a piece of metadiscoursal advice to readers, to inform them that a particular point is emphasized by the critic and to direct their attention to it.

The use of the verb *argue* with the pronoun *I* could actually be taken as an indicator of a significant difference between Dollimore and Knight. As the analysis of Knight's pronominal references shows, Knight presents himself as someone who "notices", "emphasizes", and "cuts out" elements, themes, and meanings from the text in the allegedly unproblematic discovery process of reading. In contrast, Dollimore's choice of the verb *argue*, along with the critic's constant references to other "views" and "readings" of the play, indicates that he at least appears to relativize his own reading with respect to other readings. This task also indicates that the critic specifies his own position in very explicit terms, which becomes obvious if we examine passages (1) and (2) more closely:

What follows is an exploration of the political dimension of *Lear*. It argues that the humanist view of that play is as inappropriate as the Christian alternative which it has generally displaced - inappropriate not least because it shares the essentialism of the latter. I do not mean to argue against the case against the Christian view since, even though it is still sometimes advanced, it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts. The principal reason why the humanist view seems equally misguided, and not dissimilar, is this: it mystifies suffering and invests man with a quasi-transcendent identity whereas the play does neither of these things. In fact, the play repudiates the essentialism which the humanist reading of it presupposes. However, I do not intend to replace the humanist reading with one which rehearses yet again all the critical clichés about the nihilistic and chaotic 'vision' of Jacobean tragedy. In *Lear*, as in *Troilus*, man is decentred not through misanthropy but in order to make visible social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition. (190-1)

In this passage Dollimore states clearly what he is, and is not, going to do. In addition, he summarizes his main points and relates his interpretation to Christian and humanist "readings" of the play. In the degree of explicitness and openness with which the critic expresses his aims, this passage is comparable to Knight's corresponding introduction. Both critics assert their aims in a detailed and unequivocal way and use the first person singular personal pronoun in doing so, thus emphasizing the fact that what they are about to present is their own view. What makes them fundamentally different, however, is the fact that while Knight's focus is solely on the text and on the discovery of its intrinsic meaning ("I shall notice here the imaginative core of the play"), Dollimore's focus is, in addition to the text, also on the different interpretive approaches to the play. More spe-

cifically, Dollimore differentiates his approach from others and makes his own "materialist" position explicit. It could perhaps be argued that Knight appears to consider his position and approach as a given, and Dollimore as something that has to be shown, explained and located within the field of different approaches to the play.

In the analysis of Knight's essay it was pointed out that the critic is rather authoritarian in terms of the presentation of his interpretation. It was found that the linguistic indicators of this are his consistent use of generalizations, inclusive *we*, and insistence on the text as the repository of meaning. In this sense, Dollimore appears to be equally authoritarian and committed. As was seen above, he too uses generalizations and the inclusive pronoun *we* and argues that the text both contains its meaning and powerfully directs interpretation. What unites the two critics is, moreover, the fact that neither of them asserts that they themselves are authoritarian in their suggestion of what the text means. On the contrary, both of them displace interpretive authority to the text, claiming that it is not them, but the text that suggests a particular interpretation categorically. Their power and authority is thus camouflaged by their respective text-based interpretive criteria.

#### **6.2.4.2 The implied readers**

Like Knight, Dollimore refers to the implied readers of his essay. He does this primarily by using the first person plural personal and possessive pronoun. To begin the analysis of the notion and function of the readers, TABLE 46 presents a comprehensive list of the first person plural personal pronouns and their immediate co-text.

**TABLE 46 Use of the first person plural personal pronoun, subjective case, in Dollimore's essay**

1. *we might be moved to recognise* that in a world where pity is the prerequisite for compassionate action, . . . the majority will remain poor, naked and wretched. (191)
2. Justice, *we might say*, is too important to be trusted to empathy. (192)
3. *we see* [Lear], minutes before his death, boasting of having killed the 'slave' that was hanging Cordelia. (193)
4. In Lear, as *we shall see* in the next section, there is a repudiation of stoicism similar to that found in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*. (193)
5. Alternatively *we might say* that in a mystifying closure of the historical real the categories of idealist culture are recuperated. (194)
6. More important than Lear's pity is his 'madness' - less divine furor than a process of collapse which reminds us just how precarious is the psychological equilibrium which *we call* sanity . . . (195)
7. For Lear dispossession and displacement entail not redemptive suffering but a kind of suffering recognition - implicated perhaps with confession, depending on how culpable *we take* this king to have been with regard to 'the great *image* of authority' . . . (196)
8. Here, as throughout the play, *we see* the cherished norms of human kind-ness shown to have no 'natural' sanction at all. (197)
9. A catastrophic redistribution of power and property . . . disclose the awful truth that these two things are somehow prior to the laws of human kindness rather than viceversa (likewise, as *we have just seen*, with power in relation to justice) . . . (197)
10. *How are we to take this?* (198)
11. *Are we to assume* that Edmund is simply evil and therefore so is his philosophy? (198)
12. I want to argue that *we need not*. (198)
13. To begin with *we have to bear* in mind a crucial fact: Edmund's scepticism is made to serve an existing system of values . . . (198)
14. Later *we witness* Lear's correlation between the quantity of retainers Goneril will allow him and the quality of her love . . . (199)
15. when, as here . . . nature is represented as socially disruptive, yet elsewhere as the source of social stability . . . *we see* an ideological construct beginning to incorporate . . . (200)
16. At strategic points in the play *we see* how the minor characters have also internalised the dominant ideology. (201)
17. *We can now see* the significance of Edmund's scepticism and its eventual relationship to this dominant ideology of property and power. (201)
18. Witnessing his fate *we are reminded of* how, historically, the misuse of revolutionary insight has tended to be in proportion to its truthfulness . . . (201)
19. Nicholas Brooke, for example, in one of the best close analyses of the play that *we have* . . . (202)
20. but when he [Albany] cries 'The Gods defend her! . . . instead of the process being finally consolidated *we witness* . . . Lear re-entering with Cordelia dead in his arms. (203)

TABLE 46 suggests several observations of the notion and function of the readers. Firstly, the kinds of verbs that Dollimore uses in connection with the pronoun *we* are an indicator of the way in which he conceptualizes the readers' function in the interpretation of the text. The most frequent verb that he uses with the pronoun *we* is *to see* (seven cases). What is remarkable about this verb is that it seems to refer both literally to the activity of viewing the play (clause 3) and metaphorically to the process of interpretation (passages 4, 8, 9, 15, 16 and 17). It seems that the implied readers' interpretation is a process of "seeing" what is in the text, or what takes place in the play. As was also shown in the analysis of the notion and function of the text, interpretation thus seems to be a perceptual process, whereby the text foregrounds and triggers, and the readers receive and internalize. Again, this view is not unlike the one proposed in Knight's essay. In addition, the strategy of using a 'perceptual' verb phrase is not uncommon in Knight's essay. In a way, a view of this kind is a necessary outcome of the critics' insistence on the text-immanency of meaning, for if the meaning is in the text, and the text has the power to indicate its meaning to readers, then there is not much left for the readers but to find out, discover, or "see" what this meaning is. Essentially, the readers are thus passive receivers of the textual stimulus.

Other verb phrases that Dollimore uses with the pronoun are "be moved to say" (1), "witness" (14, 20), "say" (2, 5), "take" (7,10), "assume" (11), "be reminded of" (18), "have" (19), "call" (6), and "bear in mind" (13). The verb phrase "witness" refers to the actual process of watching the play. "Take", "assume", "be reminded of", and "bear in mind", in turn, suggest that the process of interpretation also has a cognitive aspect. It is noteworthy here that, unlike Knight's essay, none of these verb phrases are affective in value. This could imply that for Dollimore interpretation is less a matter of 'feeling' the play than it is for Knight. His readers, unlike Knight's, do not "feel awe", or "watch" the play "with tears". They are portrayed as clearly less emotional, but more rational, beings than Knight's readers.

Secondly, what makes Dollimore's readers rather similar to Knight's is that they, too, seem to be a uniform group, with uniform assumptions, beliefs and values. The fact that Dollimore uses the inclusive *we* in his essay is, of course, the clearest indication of an alleged uniformity. The use of this pronoun also suggests that the interpretation of *KL* means shared interaction, where the readers are, at least apparently, as much involved as the critic. In other words, its use has implications for both the notion of the readers, and their function in Dollimore's essay. The fact that the critic uses generalizations (twelve cases: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20) and deontic modality of obligation (four cases: 10, 11, 12, 13) also contributes to the view of the readers as a uniform group

in interaction with the critic. The generalizations powerfully suggest that what the critic states and argues is valid and true for all of his implied readers, too. Deontic modality of obligation suggests, in turn, that the readers have an obligation or duty to agree with the critic, or to behave in the way required by him.

The critic's use of the deontic modality of obligation may be worth looking at in more detail. All of the four cases of deontic modality occur in the same chapter, one following the other:

(1) How are we to take this? (2) (i) Are we to assume (ii) that Edmund is simply evil and therefore so is his philosophy? (3) (iii) I want to argue (iv) that we need not. (4) (v) To begin with we have to bear in mind a crucial fact: (vi) Edmund's scepticism is made to serve an existing system of values . . . (198, my enumeration)

In this passage, Dollimore uses the verb phrases *be to* (two cases), *have to*, and *need (not) to*, every one of which has a deontic modal value. What makes this passage interesting is, firstly, the explicit way in which, by using the deontic modality of obligation, the critic constrains and directs the readers' interpretation, and, secondly, how he shifts from an apparent indication of his hesitation about the interpretation of a particular scene to the insistence of complete closure. In this passage he again seems to rely on a very similar strategy as Knight: first he apparently poses a question to his readers, thus perhaps proposing that there may be several ways to interpret the particular scene, and then very categorically denies this possibility by presenting an interpretive statement which either contains a generalization, or a marker of deontic modality of obligation. In this passage it is also noteworthy how Dollimore alternates between assigning agency to the readers, to himself, and to the text. In sentence (1), and in clause (i) agency is given to the readers. In clause (ii) agency is assigned to a character of the play. In clause (iii), it is the critic who is the agent ("I want to argue"), whereas in the subordinate relative clause (iv) it is again the readers ("we need not"). Finally, in clause (v) the agency is first given to the readers ("we have to bear in mind"), and then in (vi) to an unspecified agent, which could well be the text ("Edmund's scepticism is made to serve"). Sentence (3) is particularly interesting, since there the critic makes it very clear what the relationship between him and his readers is like. Essentially the critic "argues" again that the materialist perspective provides a lense with which the text can be "seen" as it really is: as foregrounding a "political" reading. Furthermore, in clause (v) the critic uses the noun phrase "a fact", which could be taken to imply either that the text categorically suggests Dollimore's interpretation or that it is a generally and universally acknowledged "fact" that the phenomenon described in *KL* means what the critic suggests it to mean. In any case, the use of the noun

"fact" (in a way similar to Knight's use of the noun "truth") indicates very strongly that the text can be interpreted in one way only. This and the use of deontic modality of obligation in this passage thus contribute to the notion of the text as closed, or, vice versa, they contribute to the notion of Dollimore's implied readers as having no freedom and power at all in the interpretation of *KL*.

That Dollimore's readers are considered a uniform group is indicated by other strategies as well, besides the use of the inclusive pronoun, generalizations, and deontic modality. In TABLE 46 passage (6) is particularly revealing in this sense:

More important than Lear's pity is his 'madness' - less divine furor than a process of collapse which reminds us just how precarious is the psychological equilibrium which *we call* sanity, and just how dependent upon an identity which is social rather than essential (195)

In this passage there is an implication that, in a similar way to the "crucial fact" of example (13), there exists a shared set of assumptions about the phenomenon in question. More specifically, Dollimore implies in this case that, firstly, there is some collection of human beings ("we") and that, secondly, this group is convergent enough to be able to agree on the definition of sanity ("which we call sanity").

So far, Dollimore has sounded very much like Knight. In their marketing of their respective interpretations, both critics insist that readers are passive and subservient receivers of the text's meaning. Both of them also use similar strategies to mediate this. However, it may be that the notion of readers in Dollimore's essay is not in the end as narrow as it is in Knight's essay. As was suggested earlier, this is because Dollimore seems to be very much aware of the existence of other "views" of the play. His extensive discussion and criticism of these other views and citations from, and references to, other critics could in fact be considered as a recognition that readers of literature can also be a heterogeneous group with heterogeneous, even conflicting perspectives and ideologies. (The references to other views and critics will be dealt with in the section on the institutional context in Dollimore's essay.)

In TABLE 46 the cases where the critic uses epistemic modality of possibility or probability could also be taken as indicators of Dollimore's awareness that readers do not necessarily agree on their interpretation of one and the same text. These are passages (1), (2), and (5). In each of these extracts the first person plural personal pronoun is used in connection with a verb phrase which has a marker of epistemic modality.

1. *we might be moved to recognise* that in a world where pity is the prerequisite for compassionate action, where a king has to share the suffering of his subjects in order to 'care', the majority will remain poor, naked and wretched. (191)
2. Justice, *we might say*, is too important to be trusted to empathy. (192)
3. Alternatively *we might say* that in a mystifying closure of the historical real the categories of idealist culture are recuperated. (194)

As was shown in connection with the analysis of the function of the text, modalization of this kind is a rare strategy in Dollimore's essay. It is more typical of the critic that he generalizes his interpretive statements. It is interesting that, once more, Dollimore's use of these strategies resembles Knight's choices a great deal. Like Dollimore, Knight relies on epistemic modality of possibility only a few times in the essay, and he seems to do so primarily to indicate that, as far as his proposal of the 'deeper meaning' of the play is concerned, there is more freedom and choice for the readers. Dollimore's epistemic modality also seems to function in this way: it implies that his interpretive conclusions are not necessarily the only possibility, and that it is possible to suggest others, too.

In addition, passage (7) could also be considered an indication that the critic occasionally feels the need to soften and hedge his interpretive statements:

For Lear dispossession and displacement entail not redemptive suffering but a kind of suffering recognition - implicated perhaps with confession, depending on how culpable *we take* this king to have been with regard to 'the great *image* of authority' which he now briefly demystifies . . . (196)

In this passage, Dollimore's hedging is apparent in his use of the adverbial "perhaps" and the expression "depending on how culpable we take this king to have been", which could be interpreted as implications that this particular interpretive statement could be contested, that there might also be other ways to interpret it.

However, it is clearly more typical of Dollimore that he requires that, to read the text 'correctly', the readers of *KL* must accept that the materialist approach is the only 'lens' which does not distort the text. So, on the one hand, Dollimore acknowledges the plurality of readers, and stresses the fact that literary texts are always read from a particular ideological position. On the other hand, he emphasizes that, with respect to *KL*, readers must form a uniform group, that the "political" text itself requires and makes them to do so.

The critic also uses the first person plural personal pronoun in its objective case a few times in the essay. TABLE 47 is a comprehensive list of them (my italics).

**TABLE 47 Use of the first person plural personal pronoun, objective case, in Dollimore's essay**

1. Thus Clifford Leech . . . *tells us* that tragic protagonists 'have a quality of mind that somehow atones for the nature of the world in which they and we live'. (189)
2. That this comes from one of the 'kindest' people in the play *prevents us* from dismissing the remark as individual unkindness . . . (192)
3. More important than Lear's pity is his 'madness' . . . which *reminds us* just how precarious is the psychological equilibrium which we call sanity . . . (195)
4. Scenes like this one *remind us* that *King Lear* is, above all, a play about power, property and inheritance. (197)
5. Machiavellianism, Gramsci *has reminded us*, is just one case in point . . . (201-2)

In the instances in TABLE 47, the pronoun, functioning as either a direct object or an indirect object, is used in connection with verb phrases which could be taken to indicate that there is a relationship of cause and effect between the text and the readers. The text "reminds us" of (3-5), "tells us" (1), or "prevents us from" (2) something. And, apparently, it is not only the literary text that can 'do' something to "us", or 'give' something to "us", but the same goes for other texts, too: literary critical (1) and philosophical texts (5) can "tell us" or "remind us" of something. As the analysis of the function of the text also suggested, the text or texts in general seem thus to be the active and 'productive' agents in Dollimore's implicit model of interpretation while readers are given the role of the passive receivers of the text's imprint.

A similar notion of the relationship between the text and the readers can be detected in the one case where Dollimore uses the first person plural possessive pronoun:

In this connection there is one remark of Lear's which begs our attention; it is made when he first witnesses 'You houseless poverty' (III. iv. 26) . . . (191)

In this case it is an element of the text, a character's remark, that does something to 'us'. The use of the verb phrase "beg" in connection with the noun phrase "our attention" builds up a very powerful image, underlining the text's activeness, insistence, and power to influence and direct the readers' attention to some of its features, and, it seems, to a particular interpretation of these features.

In sum, the most important strategy used by Dollimore, as well as by Knight, in referring to his implied readers was found to be the use of the inclusive pronoun *we*. Further, the pronoun is typically used in connection with the verb phrases "see" and "witness". The choice of these verbs can be argued to imply that the process of interpretation is perceptual in

nature. The readers, constrained by the powerful text, simply "see" the text-immanent meaning. Consequently, they are given the role of passive receptors. In principle, the same idea is also suggested by Knight: for him interpretation appears to be a process of absorption, and he uses 'perceptual' verb phrases and noun phrases to mediate this.

What differentiates Dollimore from Knight in his conceptualization of the notion and the function of the readers, and of interpretation is, however, that for him readers are distinctly less emotional than they are for Knight. This is manifest in that none of the verb phrases that he uses with the first person plural personal pronoun are affective in value. Instead, they emphasize the cognitive aspect of interpretation.

The almost systematic use of the inclusive *we* with generalizations, and its less frequent use with deontic modality of obligation are other strategies which are similar both in Knight's and Dollimore's essay. The use of these strategies generally implies that the text is taken to be closed. In addition, it could be argued that it also indicates that the critics' implied readers are considered to be equally involved with the interpretation of *KL* as the critics themselves are. In other words, an idea of interpretation as shared interaction is mediated by both critics. Furthermore, the use of these strategies can also be taken to imply that the critics assume, or require from, their readers that they are a uniform group with uniform values, assumptions and beliefs.

However, Dollimore also suggests very explicitly that there are readers of *KL* who do not necessarily agree with his interpretation. This became obvious when his numerous references to, discussions and criticisms of, other critics and "views" of the play were looked at. In Knight's approach references of this kind are practically non-existent. More particularly, Dollimore's awareness of the existence of several, even conflicting, views of the play is also manifest in the few uses of epistemic modality of possibility in the essay. Here again Dollimore resembles Knight, since he also relies, in passing, on epistemic modality to suggest that the text may not, after all, be completely closed, thus offering his readers some interpretive power.

Most significantly, there are such readers as Dollimore himself, readers who accept the materialist approach, and those who do not. As was suggested above, those who accept the materialist approach are, or should be, completely controlled by the text. The text both contains the "political/materialist" meaning and makes the readers "see" it. In theory, the adoption of the materialist positions thus deprives readers from their interpretive freedom and power, and places the power solely on the text. There is thus no interaction between the text and the readers, since the readers are only the receivers of the text-immanent meaning. Similarly, since the text is seen as independent from the author, there is no interac-

tion between the author and the readers. Readers who choose another "view" seem to have more power, but this is the power to distort the text, and to make it appear what it is not. In their case the process of meaning-making thus seems to work from the readers to the text: they read something that is text-external into the text. This process is also unidirectional, but, in comparison to the process implied in Dollimore's materialist reading, now the flow of meaning is from the readers to the text. In this view, too, there is then no interaction between the text and readers, or between the author and readers.

#### **6.2.4.3 The critic - readers relationship**

This section will make a brief account of the relationship between the critic and the readers. More particularly, I shall examine whether there is any interaction between them, and whether and in what ways the critic addresses, guides, persuades or controls the readers. In addition, I shall attempt to analyze whether or not the critic uses 'readable', easy style to guide the readers.

As in the case of Knight's essay, the first analytical question in this section is to examine what the combination of the critic's use of the first person singular and plural personal pronouns indicate about the relationship holding between the critic and his readers. TABLE 48 lists once more these pronouns with their immediate co-text:

TABLE 48 First person singular and plural personal pronouns in Dollimore's essay

1. *I do not mean to argue* again the case against the Christian view since . . . (190)
2. However, *I do not intend to replace* the humanist reading with one which rehearses yet again all the critical clichés about the nihilistic and chaotic 'vision' of Jacobean tragedy. (191)
3. For convenience *I call* the kind outlined so far ethical humanism and this other one existential humanism. (193)
4. *As I have already shown* (chapter 4) Bacon believed that poesy implies idealist mimesis . . . (196)
5. *we might be moved to recognise* that in a world where pity is the prerequisite for compassionate action, . . . the majority will remain poor, naked and wretched. (191)
6. Justice, *we might say*, is too important to be trusted to empathy. (192)
7. *we see* [Lear], minutes before his death, boasting of having killed the 'slave' that was hanging Cordelia. (193)
8. In *Lear*, as *we shall see* in the next section, there is a repudiation of stoicism similar to that found in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*. (193)
9. Alternatively *we might say* that in a mystifying closure of the historical real the categories of idealist culture are recuperated. (194)
10. More important than Lear's pity is his 'madness' - less divine furor than a process of collapse which reminds us just how precarious is the psychological equilibrium which *we call* sanity (195)
11. For Lear dispossession and displacement entail not redemptive suffering but a kind of suffering recognition - implicated perhaps with confession, depending on how culpable *we take* this king to have been with regard to 'the great *image* of authority' (196)
12. Here, as throughout the play, *we see* the cherished norms of human kindness shown to have no 'natural' sanction at all. (197)
13. A catastrophic redistribution of power and property . . . disclose the awful truth that these two things are somehow prior to the laws of human kindness rather than viceversa (likewise, as *we have just seen*, with power in relation to justice) (197)
14. *How are we to take* this? (198)
15. *Are we to assume* that Edmund is simply evil and therefore so is his philosophy? (198)
16. I want to argue that *we need not*. (198)
17. To begin with *we have to bear* in mind a crucial fact: Edmund's scepticism is made to serve an existing system of values . . . (198)
18. Later *we witness* Lear's correlation between the quantity of retainers Goneril will allow him and the quality of her love . . . (199)
19. when, as here . . . nature is represented as socially disruptive, yet elsewhere as the source of social stability . . . *we see* an ideological construct beginning to incorporate . . . (200)
20. At strategic points in the play *we see* how the minor characters have also internalised the dominant ideology. (201)
21. *We can now see* the significance of Edmund's scepticism and its eventual relationship to this dominant ideology of property and power. (201)

(continues)

TABLE 48 (continues)

1. Witnessing his fate *we are reminded of how, historically, the misuse of revolutionary insight has tended to be in proportion to its truthfulness . . .* (201)
2. Nicholas Brooke, for example, in one of the best close analyses of the play that *we have* (202)
3. but when [Albany] cries 'The Gods defend her! . . . instead of the process being finally consolidated *we witness* . . . Lear re-entering with Cordelia dead in his arms. (203)

TABLE 48 shows that Dollimore uses the first person singular personal pronoun when he is concerned with expressing his own intention in the essay: he states that he does "not mean to argue the case against the Christian reading" (1), no more than he intends "to replace the humanist reading by one which rehearses the critical clichés . . ." (2). He also uses the pronoun in a co-text when he is about a coin a new term "I call . . . ethical humanism" (3) and in referring to another point in his book (4). Compared to Knight, the verbs Dollimore uses in connection with the pronoun *I* are clearly more neutral and less loaded. He does not refer to his own activities as 'cutting out' meanings from the text, but as 'arguing' or 'showing' something about the text. Thus, apparently, he seems to efface his own presence and function in the interpretation of the text more than in the case of Knight. Like Knight, Dollimore also uses the inclusive *we* to indicate that he and his readers are together in the interpretation of the text.

However, there is one passage in the essay which shows that, in reality, the relationship between the critic and the readers is not one of togetherness and unanimity, but ambivalent. This is sentence (16) in TABLE 48 (cf. p. 263). In this sentence Dollimore shows that, despite his insistence on using the first person plural personal pronoun to indicate that interpretation is a shared activity, he, nevertheless, has a different role than the other readers of the text. This is because he is the one who presents an extended interpretive argument ("I want to argue") and markets it to others ("we need not"). In doing this he is again very similar to Knight: he, too, is the professional 'better reader' who works hard to persuade his readers to accept his interpretation of the text as the only correct one.

Both Knight and Dollimore use other strategies, besides the inclusive *we*, to camouflage the underlying normativity of their approaches. For example, the rarity of deontic modality of obligation and the almost complete lack of direct commands in the essays could be mentioned. Like Knight, Dollimore seems to use imperatives only when there is practically no face threat involved. In fact, only two commands could be identified in the essay.

1. Consider what Seneca has to say of affliction and philosophy. (195)
2. Consider Lear first, then Gloucester. (198)

The use of epistemic modality of possibility and questions could also be interpreted as a means of reducing the normativity of the critic's approach and of assuring readers that they have a role in the interpretation. TABLE 49 shows that Dollimore presents only seven questions to the readers.

**TABLE 49 Questions to the readers in Dollimore's essay**

1. Lear, at least when he is on the heath, is indeed moved to pity, but what does it mean to say that such pity is 'a condition for the renewal of human life?' (191)
2. [after 1.] Exactly whose life is renewed? (191)
3. But what of Cordelia herself? She more than anyone else has been seen to embody and symbolise pity. (193)
4. [after 3] But is it a pity which significantly alters anything? (193)
5. How are we to take this? (198)
6. [after 5.] Are we to assume that Edmund is simply evil and therefore so is his philosophy? I want to argue that we need not. (198)
7. For John Danby, Cordelia is redemption incarnate, but can she really be seen as 'allegorically the root of individual and social sanity . . . ? (endnote 4)

TABLE 49 demonstrates that Dollimore uses questions, first, to literally question the assumptions of earlier criticism, which have emphasized "pity" or "redemption" as one of the central themes of the play (examples 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7), and, second, to create the illusion that there may be more ways than one to interpret a particular chunk of the text. That this is a mere illusion is proved by passages (5) and (6) where there is an interpretive statement following the question which closes the text again. On the whole, questions such as these thus end up strengthening the impression that the interpretation of *KL* is a shared activity.

Unlike Knight, who at strategic points in his essay presents apologetic hedges to justify his interpretation or to indicate that he takes into account potential reader criticism, Dollimore does not appear sensitive to potential criticism at all. In this sense he seems even more normative and categorical than Knight.

Finally, one could explore whether, and with what linguistic means, Dollimore guides his potential readers through his essay. It will be seen in more detail whether the critic is helpful to readers in his syntax and terminology.

Like Knight, Dollimore is definitely helpful to his readers in his presentation of his aims: he explicitly states his goals early in the essay. In

addition, in an attempt to make the essay more digestible, he structures his essay under three subtitles which indicate his main concerns. After the first introductory section, he discusses the play in relation to the views presented in earlier humanist criticism, under the subheading "Redemption and Endurance: Two Sides of Essentialist Humanism" (191). After that he presents his own interpretation in the section entitled "*King Lear*: A Materialist Reading" (195). Finally, he presents what could be regarded as his main conclusions in the section "The Refusal of Closure" (202).

Similar to Knight, Dollimore appears to use both 'difficult' and 'easy' language. The following passage is a typical example of his 'difficulty':

(i) Here, as so often in Jacobean drama, the fictiveness of the genre or scene intrudes; (ii) by acknowledging its status as fiction it abdicates the authority of idealist mimesis (iii) and indicates the better the reality it signifies; (iv) resembling in this Brecht's alienation effect it stresses artifice not in the service of formalism but of realism. (191-2, my enumeration)

Firstly, this sentence appears difficult because of its length (57 words). (Recall that according to the study carried out by Broadhead et al. (1982), the average length of sentences in literary criticism is 29.5 words per sentence.) Secondly, it is syntactically rather complex, as it contains as many as four co-ordinated clauses. Thirdly, two of these clauses start with a lengthy non-finite clause functioning as an adverbial (ii and iv), which may have the effect that it is difficult to determine the syntactic structure and relations of the main clause. Fourthly, the link between the subject of the clauses (ii)-(iv) - the pronoun *it* - and its antecedent is not a particularly clear one. Fifthly, the sentence also contains terminology (e.g. "idealist mimesis", "Brecht's alienation effect") which requires a certain degree of specialist knowledge from readers.

Similar examples of the critic's 'difficulty' can also be located in the following passage.

(1) (i) If the Christian mystifies suffering by presenting it as intrinsic to God's redemptive and providential design for man, (ii) the humanist does likewise by representing suffering as the mysterious ground for man's self-redemption; (iii) both in effect mystify suffering by having as their common focus an essentialist conception of what it is to be human: (iv) in virtue of his spiritual essence (Christian), essential humanity (ethical humanist), or essential self (existential humanist), man is seen to achieve a paradoxical transcendence: (v) in individual extinction is his apotheosis. (2) Alternatively we might say that in a mystifying closure of the historical real the categories of idealist culture are recuperated. (194, my enumeration)

Sentence (1) is very long: it contains 86 words. It consists of four clauses, which also makes it syntactically rather complex. At the same time, the

syntactic complexity is somewhat neutralized by the use of such contrastive features as "likewise", "both", and the colon which indicates a logical connection between clauses (iii) and (iv). In addition, this passage also contains potentially difficult terminology: for example, the reformulations "essential", "essence", and "essentialist", the prepositional phrase "in a mystifying closure of the historical real", and the noun phrase "idealist culture", (particularly as they are not defined in this connection) seem to require a great deal of expertise from readers for them to be able to interpret the passage. It thus appears that Dollimore again expects his readers to be relatively enlightened.

One more thing which contributes to the impression that Dollimore's text is at places rather difficult, is the large number and wide range of contextual references in the essay. As will be shown in more detail in the next section, the critic continuously relates his own interpretation to texts by other writers and critics. It could be argued that these references again require a considerable amount of work and/or expertise from readers. For example, in the following passage Dollimore makes a multi-layered contextual reference:

It is an ironic subversion of neo-stoic essentialism, one which recalls Bacon's essay 'Of Adversity,' where he quotes Seneca: 'It is true greatness to have in one the frailty of a man, and the security of a god' only to add, dryly: 'This would have done better in poesy, where transcendences are more allowed' (Essays, p. 15). As I have already shown (chapter 4) Bacon believed that poesy implies idealist mimesis - that is, an illusionist evasion of those historical and empirical realities which, says Bacon, 'buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things' (Advancement, p. 83). He seems to have remained unaware that Jacobean drama was just as subversive of poesy (in this sense) as he was, not only with regard to providentialism but now its corollary, essentialism. Plays like *Lear* precisely disallow 'transcendences': in this at least they confirm Edmund's contention that 'men/Are as the time is' (V. iii. 31-2). Montaigne made a similar point with admirable terseness: 'I am no philosopher: Evils oppresse me according as they waigh' (Essays, III. 189). (195-6)

In addition to the fact that this passage contains specialist terminology (e.g. "neo-stoic essentialism", "idealist mimesis", "an illusionist evasion of those historical and empirical realities", "providentialism", and "essentialism"), the critic quotes Bacon quoting Seneca, comments on it, relates it to an earlier point by himself and, finally, relates a character's remark to a similar point by Montaigne. Obviously, to be able to make sense of this maze of contextual references, readers have to be not only well-read, but also very careful in their reading.

In contrast, in very much the same way as Knight, in his account of the scenes and plot of the play, Dollimore often uses a distinctly less complex and demanding style. Notice, for example, how in the next pas-

sage he uses shorter and syntactically simpler sentences, avoids using complex terminology, and makes his points clear by numbering them:

In the closing moments of *Lear* those who have survived the catastrophe actually attempt to recuperate their society in just those terms which the play has subjected to sceptical interrogation. There is invoked, first, a concept of innate nobility in contradistinction to innate evil and, second, its corollary: a metaphysically ordained justice. Thus Edgar's defeat of Edmund is interpreted as a defeat of an evil nature by a noble one. Also nobility is seen to be like truth - it will out: 'Methought thy very gait did prophesy/ A royal nobleness' (V. iii. 175-6). Goneril is 'reduced' to her treachery ('read thine own evil', l. 156), while Edmund not only acknowledges defeat but also repents, submitting to Edgar's nobility (ll.165-6) and acknowledging his own contrary nature (ll. 243-3). Next, Edgar invokes a notion of divine justice which holds out the possibility of rendering their world intelligible once more; speaking to Edmund of Gloucester, he says: [quote] (202-3)

Again, it cannot be categorically argued that the critic is 'difficult' or 'easy'. Moreover, in the same way as with Knight's essay, it could be claimed that 'difficulty' and 'ease' cannot be considered straightforward qualities of the text: in Dollimore's essay the degree of 'difficulty' alternates according to whatever his goal is at different points in the essay. In accounting for the plot, scenes, or characters' actions he seems 'easier', whereas when he is presenting his describing his materialist approach, or relating the play to context, he seems to use a much more complex style.

In sum, it seems that Dollimore's relationship to his implied readers is ambivalent in the same way as Knight's was found to be. As suggested by his use of the inclusive pronoun *we* and generalizations, he seems to conceptualize the interpretation of *KL* as naturally evolving, shared interaction with his readers. As is suggested by his occasional use of epistemic modality of possibility and questions to the readers, he appears to mediate that the readers have some power in interpretation. At the same time, as is indicated by his emphasis on the text as the repository of meaning, the insistence on the causal relationship between the text and the readers and the lack of apologetic hedges and sensitivity towards potential reader criticism, he suggests that readers have no power at all. That is, if they wish to see the text as it allegedly 'really' is, the readers have to accept that they are completely controlled by the active and powerful text. The critic's role in this, it seems, is that he, again like Knight, acts as a mediator, or, more specifically, the person who demonstrates by his argumentation the route to the 'correct' interpretation to readers. In this sense the interpretation cannot be a shared and 'democratic' activity: it is an essentially unidirectional process, the text transmitting its meaning, via the critic, to the readers.

Fundamentally, Dollimore, like Knight, is thus very normative. It could well be argued that for both critics the use of linguistic strategies suggesting shared interaction are really a means of effacing their fundamental normativity. The rarity of other openly directive strategies in their essays, commands and deontic modality of obligation, for example, would point to the same observation.

Finally, it was found that Dollimore, once more like Knight, uses both 'easy' and 'difficult' styles. If being helpful to readers entails that a writer uses 'easy' language, then Dollimore is helpful in the explication of his aims, in the structuring of his essay, and in his recounting of the scenes and characters' actions. If, in contrast, being helpful to readers entails that a writer mediates, with his/her language that a literary text is not a straightforward and 'easy' piece of writing, then Dollimore is helpful in this respect as well. His long and syntactically complex sentences and clauses, and his specialist terminology require considerable interpretive efforts and background knowledge from readers, and thus they mediate that the interpretation of *KL* is not a simple task.

#### **6.2.5. The notion and function of context**

This section will be concerned with what strategies the critic uses in his essay to mediate a particular notion and function of the situational, institutional, and socio-cultural context. As the title and subtitles of the essay and the number of references to some aspects of context already indicate, context seems to be far more important for Dollimore than for Knight. Moreover, it appears that context is a very complex notion for Dollimore.

##### **6.2.5.1 The situational context**

It seems that the situational context for interpreting *KL* is threefold in Dollimore's essay. First, as was noted above, the situational context involves a viewing event. TABLE 50 (cf. p. 239) shows some expressions which emphasize the 'viewing' aspect.

**TABLE 50** Expressions implying the situational context of *KL* as a viewing event in Dollimore's essay

1. throughout the play . . . (197)
2. at strategic points in the play . . . (201),
3. in the closing moments of the play . . . (202)
4. the play concludes with two events . . . (203))
5. we see him, minutes before his death (193)
6. we witness, even before he has finished speaking, Lear re-entering with Cordelia dead in his arms . . . (203)

All of these expressions could be taken to imply that there is in *KL* a temporal progression of events evolving in time which we can "see", or "witness".

Second, the fact that the critic keeps quoting the primary text and refers to an editor's, Kenneth Muir's, footnotes to the play could be taken as evidence of the fact that the situational context of *KL* is also a reading event.

Third, it seems that the viewing/reading of the play involves also an intertextual aspect. That is, as will be shown in detail in the next section, *KL* is also read/watched with/against/in relation to other texts.

It may be that there is an assumption here that the interpretation of *KL* has to involve all of these three aspects in order to qualify as an interpretation at all. In this sense, the situational context, too, has a certain, albeit indirect, role in the interpretation. Compared to the situational context implied by Knight, Dollimore's situational context covers a wider terrain in its inclusion of intertextuality. At the same time Dollimore clearly shares with Knight the idea that the situational context involves both viewing and reading.

#### **6.2.5.2 The institutional context**

There is a great deal of evidence in the essay to show that the institutional context for the interpretation of *KL* is very important to Dollimore. One indication of this is that he devotes almost half of his essay to the discussion of previous literary criticism on *KL*. For him, the institutional context involves, firstly, individual literary authors, and their texts (including also Shakespeare), secondly, individual literary critics, their texts, literary critical, or theoretical concepts, approaches and assumptions, thirdly, individual non-literary writers and concepts and ideas suggested by them. It also seems that there is a continuum from very specific references to individual writers or thinkers, to very general and abstract concepts and theories. Moreover, these different contexts often seem to fit one within the other like a series of Russian dolls. For example, a writer's text can show

the influence of a particular literary tradition, which, in turn, is related to a particular philosophical tradition, etc. The institutional context could also be taken to blend into the socio-cultural context, as specific institutional references are related to, or reintroduced as, more general ideological assumptions shared by writers or literary critics of a particular era or approach. Clearly, the institutional context is a very complex notion.

In the examination of Dollimore's references to the institutional context and of what they imply about the function of this aspect of context in the interpretation of the play, these references will be classified under three different headings. First, the critic's references to Shakespeare's other texts and contemporary drama will be looked at. Second, his references to different literary critical approaches, individual literary critics, and their assumptions will be analyzed. Third, his to other authors, their texts, and ideas and concepts suggested by them will be studied.

TABLE 51 lists the references to other texts by Shakespeare.

**TABLE 51** References to other works by Shakespeare in Dollimore's essay

1. In *Lear*, as in *Troilus*, man is decentred not through misanthropy but in order to make visible social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition. (191)
2. Given the context of this scene it must also mean 'ownership' - father owning daughter - with brutal connotations of the master/slave relationship as in the following passage from *King John*: 'I am too high-born to be propertied/ To be a . . . serving man' (V. ii. 79-81). (199)

The purpose of these two references seems to be that of pointing to a similarity between *KL* and the other plays. However, this is clearly not one of Dollimore's major concerns.

Dollimore also makes references to contemporary drama. TABLE 52 lists all of them.

TABLE 52 References to contemporary tragedy in Dollimore's essay

1. In recent years the humanist view of Jacobean tragedies like *Lear* has been dominant, having more or less displaced the explicitly Christian alternative. (189)
2. However, I do not intend to replace the humanist reading with one which rehearses yet again all the critical clichés about the nihilistic and chaotic 'vision' of Jacobean tragedy. (191)
3. Here, as so often in Jacobean drama, the fictiveness of the genre or scene intrudes (191)
4. In *Lear*, as we shall see in the next section, there is a repudiation of stoicism similar to that found in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*. (193)
5. Significantly, existential humanism forms the basis even of J. W. Lever's *The Tragedy of State*, one of the most astute studies of Jacobean tragedy to date. (194)
6. [Bacon] seems to have remained unaware that Jacobean drama was just as subversive of poesy (in this sense) as he was, not only with regard to providentialism but now its corollary, essentialism. (196)

Unlike Knight, whose topic requires him to devote a great deal of attention to defining and discussing the characteristic of comedy and tragedy, Dollimore barely mentions tragedy at all. This is clearly not one of his major aims. Quite simply, the purpose of references of this kind seems to be to create a more general literary framework around the play, and to note, in passing, similarities of conventions.

It is significant that Dollimore does not mention "literature" at all, while Knight regards "literature" as something that is given. Analogously, Knight also considers Shakespeare's status as one of the "towering" examples of this "literature" as self-evident. In contrast, Dollimore systematically avoids discussing the literary merits, genre, and status as a specimen of 'literature' of *KL*. Instead, he focuses on the analysis of the literary critical history and of the "political" dimension of the play.

If Dollimore takes care not to deal with *KL* as an aesthetic object, he most definitely makes a considerable effort to demonstrate the ways in which generation after generation of literary critics have treated the text and how their approaches have been ideologically motivated. Further, this analysis appears to him a necessary step: it is a preparation for presenting his own "reading". For example, the importance of the analysis of earlier literary criticism is evident as early as at the beginning of his essay. There Dollimore writes that

When he is on the heath King Lear is moved to pity. As unaccommodated man he feels what wretches feel. For the humanist the tragic paradox arises here: debasement gives rise to dignity and at the moment when Lear might be expected to be most brutalised he becomes most human. Through kind-

ness and shared vulnerability human kind redeems itself in a universe where the gods are at best callously just, at worst sadistically vindictive. (189)

What is particularly interesting in this passage is how Dollimore first introduces the idea that there are some readers who could be regarded as "humanist" in orientation. He does not state this explicitly, but presents it as presupposed ("for the humanist the tragic paradox arises here"). That there is a "humanist" view of the play is obviously a given fact.

On the same page the critic gives a short definition of what he calls "the humanist view" and the "Christian view" (which, incidentally is also presented as a given fact) and notes in what respects they differ from each other:

In recent years the humanist view of Jacobean tragedies like *Lear* has been dominant, having more or less displaced the explicitly Christian alternative. Perhaps the most important distinction between the two is this: the Christian view locates man centrally in a providential universe;<sup>1</sup> the humanist view likewise centralises man but now he is in a condition of tragic dislocation: instead of integrating (ultimately) with a teleological design created and sustained by God, man grows to consciousness in a universe which thwarts his deepest needs. If he is to be redeemed at all he must redeem himself. The humanist also contests the Christian claim that the suffering of Lear and Cordelia is part of a providential and redemptive design. If that suffering is to be justified at all it is because of what it reveals about man's intrinsic nature - his courage and integrity. By heroically enduring a fate he is powerless to alter, by insisting, moreover, upon *knowing* it, man grows in stature even as he is being destroyed. (Endnote 1: Thus Irving Ribner (for example) argues that the play 'affirms justice in the world, which it sees as a harmonious system ruled by a benevolent God' (*Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 117)) (189)

After this, Dollimore also points out in what respects "the humanist view" and "the Christian view" are similar:

Here as so often with the humanist view there is a strong residue of the more explicit Christian metaphysic and language which it seeks to eschew; comparable with Sanders' use of 'grace' is Leech's use of 'atone'. Moreover both indicate the humanist preoccupation with the universal counterpart of essentialist subjectivity - either ultimately affirmed (Sanders) or recognised as an ultimate tragic absence (Leech).<sup>2</sup> (Endnote 2: Other critics who embrace, invoke or imply the categories of essentialist humanism include the following: A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, lectures 7 and 8; Israel Knox, *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer*, p. 117; Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, p. 264; Kenneth Muir, ed. *King Lear*; especially p. lv; Grigori Kozintsev, *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy*, pp. 250-1. For the essentialist view with a pseudo-Nietzschean twist, see Michael Long, *The Unnatural Scene*, pp. 191-3.) (190)

This is followed by the specification of the critic's aims in the essay, which clearly indicates that the argumentation against "the humanist view" (primarily) is as important a task as "the exploration of the political dimension" of the play:

What follows is an exploration of the political dimension of *Lear*. It argues that the humanist view of that play is as inappropriate as the Christian alternative which it has generally displaced - inappropriate not least because it shares the essentialism of the latter. I do not mean to argue again the case against the Christian view since, even though it is still sometimes advanced, it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts.<sup>3</sup> The principal reason why the humanist view seems equally misguided, and not dissimilar, is this: it mystifies suffering and invests man with a quasi-transcendent identity whereas the play does neither of these things. In fact, the play repudiates the essentialism which the humanist view of it presupposes. (endnote 3: Barbara Everett, 'The New *King Lear*'; William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*; Cedric Watts, 'Shakespearean themes: The Dying God and the Universal Wolf'.) (190)

These four passages show, firstly, that Dollimore is extremely concerned with the institutional context, secondly, that this concern is realized mainly in that he sets as one of his main aims to "argue against" "the humanist view", and that, thirdly, this often means that his text (including his endnotes) is packed with references to the literary critical aspect of the institutional context.

For example, the essay contains a large number of references to "the humanist view" of the play. TABLE 53 lists the expressions that Dollimore uses.

**TABLE 53 Expressions dealing with "the humanist view" in Dollimore's essay**

1. *King Lear* (c. 1605-6) and Essentialist Humanism (189, title)
2. For the humanist the tragic paradox arises here (189)
3. In recent years the humanist view of Jacobean tragedies like *Lear* has been dominant . . . (189)
4. the humanist view likewise centralises man but now he is in a condition of tragic dislocation . . . (189)
5. The humanist also contests the Christian claim that the suffering of *Lear* and Cordelia is part of a providential and redemptive design. (189)
6. Here as so often with the humanist view there is a strong residue of the more explicit Christian metaphysic and language which it seeks to eschew . . . (190)
7. Moreover both indicate the humanist preoccupation with the universal counterpart of essentialist subjectivity - either ultimately affirmed (Sanders) or recognised as an ultimate tragic absence (Leech). (190)

(continues)

TABLE 53 (continues)

8. The humanist reading of Lear has been authoritatively summarised by G. K. Hunter . . . (190)
9. It argues that the humanist view of that play is as inappropriate as the Christian alternative . . . - inappropriate not least because it shares the essentialism of the latter. (190)
10. The principal reason why the humanist view seems equally misguided, and not dissimilar, is this . . . (190)
11. In fact, the play repudiates the essentialism which the humanist reading of it presupposes. (191)
12. However, I do not intend to replace the humanist reading with one which rehearses yet again all the critical clichés about the nihilistic and chaotic 'vision' of Jacobean tragedy. (191)
13. Redemption and Endurance: Two Sides of Essentialist Humanism (191, subtitle)
14. Philip Brockbank, in a recent and sensitive humanist reading of the play, says . . . (191)
15. So, far from transcending in the name of an essential humanity the gulf which separates the privileged from the deprived, the play insists on it. (192)
16. Yet repeatedly the sceptical treatment . . . of stoicism in these plays is overlooked; often in fact it is used to validate another kind of humanism. (193)
17. For convenience I call the kind outlined so far ethical humanism . . . (193)
18. and this other one existential humanism . . . (193)
19. The two involve different emphases rather than different ideologies. That of the latter is on essential heroism and existential integrity, that of the former on essential humanity, the universal human condition. (193)
20. Significantly, existential humanism forms the basis even of J.W. Lever's *The Tragedy of State*, one of the most astute studies of Jacobean tragedy to date. (194)
21. If the Christian mystifies suffering by presenting it as intrinsic to God's redemptive and providential design for man, the humanist does likewise by representing suffering as the mysterious ground for man's self-redemption; . . . (194)
22. both in effect mystify suffering by having as their common focus an essentialist conception of what it is to be human: in virtue of his spiritual essence (Christian), essential humanity (ethical humanist), . . . (194)
23. or essential self (existential humanist), man is seen to achieve a paradoxical transcendence: in individual extinction is his apotheosis. (194)
24. This suggests why both ethical . . . (194)
25. and existential humanism are in fact quasi-religious: both reject the providential and 'dogmatic' elements of Christianity while retaining its fundamental relation between suffering, affirmation and regeneration. (194)
26. This is another sense in which existential humanism is merely a mutation of Christianity and not at all a radical alternative. (195)
27. On the heath he represents the process whereby man has been stripped of his stoic and (Christian) humanist conceptions of self. (195)
28. *Lear* actually refuses then that autonomy of value which humanist critics so often insist that it ultimately affirms. (202)

TABLE 53 shows that all of the references to "the humanist view", except two (27 and 28), can be located in the first two chapters of the essay, in the introduction, and in the section entitled "Redemption and Endurance: Two sides of essential humanism". The two references outside these sections can be located in the two final sections of the essay, where the critic gives his own interpretation of the play. Furthermore, it seems that there is in Dollimore's references to, and mentions of, "the humanist view" a transition from humanist readings of, and humanists reading *KL* (1-12), to their underlying humanism and humanist assumptions and conceptions (13-26).

More specifically, in passages (3), (4), (6), (9) and (10) the critic refers to "the humanist view" of the play. As was shown above, the existence of this "view" is evidently something that can be assumed. In passages (8), (11), (12) and (14) the critic suggests that there are in literary criticism several representatives of the humanist view: he does this by using the term "humanist reading" which suggests that while the interpretations are produced by individual critics, they are at the same time examples of "the humanist view". This is clearest in passage (8), where the critic considers G.K. Hunter's "reading" as a summary of the humanist position, and in (12), where Dollimore states that he does not want to replace "the humanist reading" with "one which rehearses the critical clichés . . .". The critic also uses the term "the humanist" as a general name for the critics representing "the humanist view". Examples of this can be identified in TABLE 53 in passages (2), (5), (21), (22) and (23).

The analysis of "the humanist view" (as well as "the Christian view") seems to be a necessary step in Dollimore's argumentation about his own interpretation. By scrutinizing the assumptions of earlier criticism carefully, the critic is able to distinguish his own approach from them, and to indicate specifically what his own position is in relation to them. In principle, he seems to argue for his own interpretation primarily by arguing against other approaches, and by insisting that they are actually disallowed by the text itself. For example, after having defined "the humanist view", and compared it with "the Christian view" in passages (1)-(12), the critic goes on to refute it by arguing that it is as inappropriate as "the Christian view" (9, and 10), and by asserting openly that the play itself "repudiates" it (11, 12, and 15).

From passage (13) onwards the critic turns to the analysis of the underlying conceptions of "the humanist view". In passages (16), (17) and (18) he introduces, defines and analyzes what he labels as two different emphases in humanism: "the ethical humanism", and "the existential humanism". In passages (19)-(25) (also in passage 7) the critic specifies some of the central assumptions of the two humanist approaches (e.g. "essential heroism", "existential integrity", and "essential humanity"). In (24), (25)

and (26) the critic makes a major interpretive conclusion: he states that the two humanist approaches are both "quasi-religious", and that in this sense they, especially the existential humanism, are not radical alternatives to "the Christian view", but only mutations of it. After this extensive account and criticism of the "humanist view", its emphases and assumptions, Dollimore finally refutes a particular "(Christian) humanist" conception of *KL* (passage 27), and proceeds with his own "reading". Finally, in (28) Dollimore repeats one of his central claims that the play itself has the power to "refuse . . . that autonomy of value" that "humanist critics . . . insist" it has.

For comparison, TABLE 54 shows how the critic deals with "the Christian view" of the play. The table lists passages where the word *Christian* or *Christianity* are used.

TABLE 54 Expressions dealing with "the Christian view" in Dollimore's essay

1. In recent years the humanist view of Jacobean tragedies like *Lear* has been dominant, having more or less displaced the explicitly Christian alternative. (189)
2. Perhaps the most important distinction between the two is this: the Christian view locates man centrally in a providential universe; the humanist view . . . (189)
3. Thus Clifford Leech, an opponent of the Christian view, tells us that tragic protagonists 'have a quality of mind that somehow atones for the nature of the world in which they and we live. (189)
4. Here as so often with the humanist view there is a strong residue of the more explicit Christian metaphysic and language which it seeks to eschew . . . (190)
5. It argues that the humanist view of that play is as inappropriate as the Christian alternative which it has generally displaced - inappropriate not least because it shares the essentialism of the latter. (190)
6. I do not mean to argue again the case against the Christian view since, even though it is still sometimes advanced, it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts. (190)
7. Thus, according to Barbara Everett (in another explicitly anti-Christian analysis): . . . 193
8. If the Christian mystifies suffering by presenting it as intrinsic to God's redemptive and providential design for man, the humanist does likewise . . . (194)
9. both in effect mystify suffering by having as their common focus an essentialist conception of what it is to be human: in virtue of his spiritual essence (Christian), essential humanity (ethical humanist), or essential self (existential humanist), man is seen to achieve a paradoxical transcendence: in individual extinction is his apotheosis. (194)
10. This suggests why both ethical and existential humanism are in fact quasi-religious: both reject the providential and 'dogmatic' elements of Christianity while retaining its fundamental relation between suffering, affirmation and regeneration. (194)
11. Moreover they, like Christianity, tend to fatalise social dislocation; . . . (194)
12. This is another sense in which existential humanism is merely a mutation of Christianity and not at all a radical alternative; . . . (195)
13. On the heath he represents the process whereby man has been stripped of his stoic and (Christian) humanist conceptions of self. (195)
14. In this respect the play activates a contradiction intrinsic to any 'naturalised' version of the Christian metaphysic; . . . (200)

TABLE 54 demonstrates that Dollimore treats "the Christian view" in very much the same way as "the humanist view". Most significantly, there seems to be a progression from "the view" itself to Christianity as a specific ideology, and to its underlying assumptions. Most of these expressions can again be located in the first two chapters of the essay; only the last two are located in the latter section where the critic presents his own "reading". First, in passages (2), (3) and (6) the critic uses the term "Chris-

tian view", presenting its existence as something that is self-evident. Second, in passages (1) and (5) he uses the words "the Christian alternative", thus implying that this view can be considered an alternative to the obviously more current "humanist view". Third, in passages (3), (6), and (7) he suggests that "the Christian view" has had its opponents: in (3) he describes Clifford Leech "an opponent of the Christian view", in (7) he likewise refers to Barbara Everett's analysis of *KL* as "explicitly anti-Christian", and in (6) he states that the reason why he himself does not "argue the case against the Christian view" is because it has already been done "effectively" by others. Fourth, Dollimore uses the term "(the) Christian" as a general reference to readers of *KL* with a Christian orientation (passages 8 and 9). Fifth, the critic uses the term "Christianity" (passages 10, 11, and 12). In these passages he is dealing with the Christian ideology and its conceptions underlying "the Christian view" (as well as comparing it to the humanist ideology and its conceptions). Finally, the critic also uses such phrases as "the Christian metaphysic" (4 and 14), and "the Christian (humanist) conception of self" (13), which can also be taken as expressions referring to Christian assumptions.

TABLE 54 also shows that Dollimore uses "the Christian view", "Christianity" and Christian assumptions as a point of comparison for his principal argumentation about "the humanist view". As was seen in connection with TABLE 53, the critic points out similarities and differences, and demonstrates in what respects "the humanist view" is built upon "the Christian view". He also seems to regard the assumption that "the Christian view" is "inappropriate" as self-evident: consequently, there is no need for him to scrutinize what Christian critics have said about the play in the way he scrutinizes the views put forward by humanist critics (cf. passages 5 and 6). In addition, unlike "humanism", he does not define or specify what he means by "Christianity". For example, he mentions no Christian critics within the bulk of the essay. The most he does is to include one specific reference to, and a short direct quotation from, a particular Christian critic, Irving Ribner. What is interesting, here, in comparison to Knight's indirect and very general references to literary critics, is Dollimore's degree of explicitness: as indicated by his use of a reporting clause and quotation marks, he uses direct speech, quoting Ribner verbatim.

Perhaps the most important distinction between the two is: the Christian view locates man centrally in a providential universe;<sup>1</sup> [Endnote 1: Thus Irving Ribner (for example) argues that the play 'affirms justice in the world, which it sees as a harmonious system ruled by a benevolent God' (*Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 117) (189)

Dollimore refers 30 times to humanist critics either in his text or in his endnotes, often including also a quotation and the title of the work cited. The number of critics thus referred to is 19. These references are, furthermore, fairly evenly spread throughout the essay. TABLE 55 will list all of these references. In order to be able to analyze more closely the various strategies that Dollimore uses in connection with his references to other critics, TABLE 55 will be followed by four (sub-)tables which list examples of the strategies that Dollimore use in connection with his references.

**TABLE 55** References to humanist critics in Dollimore's essay

1. Thus Clifford Leech, an opponent of the Christian view, tells us that tragic protagonists 'have a quality of mind that somehow atones for the nature of the world in which they and we live. They have, in a greater or lesser degree, the power to endure and the power to apprehend' (*Shakespeare's Tragedies*, p. 15) (189)
2. Wilbur Sanders in an influential study argues for an ultimately optimistic Shakespeare who had no truck with Christian doctrine or conventional Christian conceptions of the absolute . . . Ultimately this fate in nature and human nature involves and entails 'a faith in a universal moral order which cannot finally be defeated' (*The Dramatist and the Received Idea*, pp. 336-7). (190)
3. Here as so often with the humanist view there is a strong residue of the more explicit Christian metaphysic and language which it seeks to eschew; comparable with Sanders' use of 'grace' (190)
4. is Leech's use of 'atone'. (190)
5. Moreover both indicate the humanist preoccupation with the universal counterpart of essentialist subjectivity - either ultimately affirmed (Sanders) (190)
6. or recognised as an ultimate tragic absence (Leech).<sup>2</sup> (190)
7. The humanist reading of *Lear* has been authoritatively summarised by G. K. Hunter (he calls it the 'modern' view of the play):  

[it] is seen as the greatest of tragedies because it not only strips and reduces and assaults human dignity, but because it also shows with the greatest force and detail the process of restoration by which humanity can recover from degradation . . . [Lear's] retreat into the isolated darkness of his own mind is also a descent into the seed-bed of a new life; for *the individual mind is seen here as the place from which a man's most important qualities and relationships draw the whole of their potential*' (*Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition*, pp. 251-2, my italics). (190)
8. I do not mean to argue again the case against the Christian view since, even though it is still sometimes advanced, it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts.<sup>3</sup> (190)

(continues)

TABLE 55 (continues)

9. Philip Brockbank, in a recent and sensitive humanist reading of the play, says: 'Lear dies "with pity" (IV. vii. 53) and that access of pity, which in the play attends the dissolution of the senses and of the self, is a condition for the renewal of human life' ('Upon Such Sacrifices', p. 133). Lear, at least when he is on the heath, is indeed moved to pity, but what does it mean to say that such pity is 'a condition for the renewal of human life?' Exactly whose life is renewed? (191)
10. The two involve different emphases rather than different ideologies. That of the latter is on essential heroism and existential integrity, that of the former on essential humanity, the universal human condition. Thus, according to Barbara Everett (in another explicitly anti-Christian analysis):  
     In the storm scene Lear is at his most powerful and, despite moral considerations, at his noblest; the image of man hopelessly confronting a hostile universe and withstanding it only by his inherent powers of rage, endurance and perpetual questioning, is perhaps the most purely 'tragic' in Shakespeare. ('The New *King Lear*', p. 333) (193)
11. Significantly, existential humanism forms the basis even of J.W. Lever's *The Tragedy of State*, one of the most astute studies of Jacobean tragedy to date. (194)
12. In Lever's analysis Seneca is the ultimate influence on a drama (including *King Lear*) which celebrates man's capacity inwardly to transcend oppression (p. 9). (194)
13. On the one hand Lever is surely right in insisting that these plays 'are not primarily treatments of characters with a so-called "fatal flaw", whose downfall is brought about by the decree of just if inscrutable powers . . . the fundamental flaw is not in them but in the world they inhabit: in the political state, the social order it upholds, and likewise, by projection, in the cosmic state of shifting arbitrary phenomena called "Fortune" ' (p. 10). (194)
14. By the same criteria it is surely wrong to assert (on the same page) that:  
     'What really matters is the quality of [the heroes'] response to intolerable situations. This is a drama of adversity and stance . . . The rational man who remains master of himself is by the same token the ultimate master of his fate'. (194)
15. Lionel Trilling has remarked that 'the captains and kings and lovers and clowns of Shakespeare are alive and complete before they die' (*The Opposing Self*, p. 38). Few remarks could be less true of *King Lear*. The notion of man as tragic victim somehow alive and complete in death is precisely the kind of essentialist mystification which the play refuses. It offers instead a decentering of the tragic subject which in turn becomes the focus of a more general exploration of human consciousness in relation to social being - one which discloses human values to be not antecedent to, but rather in-formed by, material conditions. *Lear* actually refuses then that autonomy of value which humanist critics so often insist that it ultimately affirms. (202)

(continues)

**TABLE 55** (continues)

16. Nicholas Brooke, for example, in one of the best close analyses of the play that we have, concludes by declaring: 'all moral structures, whether of natural order or Christian redemption, are invalidated by the naked fact of experience', yet manages in the concluding sentence of the study to resurrect from this unaccommodated 'naked experience' a redemptive autonomy of value, one almost mystically inviolable: 'Large orders collapse; but values remain, and are independent of them' (Shakespeare: *King Lear*, pp. 59-60). But surely in *Lear*, as in most of human history, 'values' are shown to be terrifyingly dependent upon whatever 'large orders' actually exist; in civil war especially - which after all is what *Lear* is about - the two collapse together. (202)

A general comment that could be made on the basis of TABLE 55 is that Dollimore uses generalizations consistently when he is reporting or commenting on the humanist critics' views. In the same way as the interpretive points he makes of the primary text, the comments that Dollimore makes on humanist criticism thus take the form of categorical assertions of an absolute and universal validity.

Another general comment could be that some of Dollimore's references to humanist critics show very clearly that for him the institutional context of literary criticism is multi-levelled and complex. For example, passage (12) could be mentioned in this respect: it shows how Dollimore relates the assumptions of humanist literary criticism to stoicism. A little later on in the essay (passage 15), he develops this idea further and coins the term "neo-stoic essentialism" (195) to describe the position of humanist criticism.

More particularly, TABLE 55 shows that in passages (1-4), (7), (9), (10) and (13-16) Dollimore uses direct speech (DS) to quote other critics. Direct speech, in this connection, means that Dollimore quotes the critics' words verbatim. These passages are examined more closely with the help of TABLE 56:

**TABLE 56 Use of direct speech (DS) to quote other critics in Dollimore's essay**

1. Clifford Leech . . . tells us that tragic protagonists 'have a quality of mind that somehow atones for the nature of the world in which they and we live. They have, in a greater or lesser degree, the power to endure and the power to apprehend' (*Shakespeare's Tragedies*, p. 15)
2. Here as so often with the humanist view there is a strong residue of the more explicit Christian metaphysic and language which it seeks to eschew; comparable with Sanders' use of 'grace' (190)
3. is Leech's use of 'atone'. (190)

(continues)

TABLE 56 (continues)

4. The humanist reading of *Lear* has been . . . summarised by G. K. Hunter (he calls it the 'modern' view of the play):  
 [it] is seen as the greatest of tragedies because it not only strips and reduces and assaults human dignity, but because it also shows with the greatest force and detail the process of restoration by which humanity can recover from degradation . . . [Lear's] retreat into the isolated darkness of his own mind is also a descent into the seed-bed of a new life; for the individual mind is seen here as the place from which a man's most important qualities and relationships draw the whole of their potential' (*Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition*, pp. 251-2, my italics). (190)
5. Philip Brockbank . . . says: 'Lear dies "with pity" (IV. vii. 53) and that access of pity, which in the play attends the dissolution of the senses and of the self, is a condition for the renewal of human life' ('Upon Such Sacrifices', p. 133). Lear, at least when he is on the heath, is indeed moved to pity, but what does it mean to say that such pity is 'a condition for the renewal of human life?' Exactly whose life is renewed? (191)
6. Thus, according to Barbara Everett (in another explicitly anti-Christian analysis):  
 In the storm scene Lear is at his most powerful and, despite moral considerations, at his noblest; the image of man hopelessly confronting a hostile universe and withstanding it only by his inherent powers of rage, endurance and perpetual questioning, is perhaps the most purely 'tragic' in Shakespeare. ('The New *King Lear*', p. 333) (193)
7. On the one hand Lever is surely right in insisting that these plays 'are not primarily treatments of characters with a so-called "fatal flaw", whose downfall is brought about by the decree of just if inscrutable powers . . . the fundamental flaw is not in them but in the world they inhabit: in the political state, the social order it upholds, and likewise, by projection, in the cosmic state of shifting arbitrary phenomena called "Fortune" ' (p. 10). (194)
8. By the same criteria it is surely wrong to assert (on the same page) that:  
 'What really matters is the quality of [the heroes'] response to intolerable situations. This is a drama of adversity and stance . . . The rational man who remains master of himself is by the same token the ultimate master of his fate'. (194)
9. Lionel Trilling has remarked that 'the captains and kings and lovers and clowns of Shakespeare are alive and complete before they die' (*The Opposing Self*, p. 38). (202)
10. Nicholas Brooke . . . concludes by declaring: 'all moral structures, whether of natural order or Christian redemption, are invalidated by the naked fact of experience', yet manages in the concluding sentence of the study to resurrect from this unaccommodated 'naked experience' a redemptive autonomy of value, one almost mystically inviolable: 'Large orders collapse; but values remain, and are independent of them' (Shakespeare: *King Lear*, pp. 59-60). But surely in *Lear*, as in most of human history, 'values' are shown to be terrifyingly dependent upon whatever 'large orders' actually exist; in civil war especially - which after all is what *Lear* is about - the two collapse together. (202)

TABLE 56 indicates that the length of Dollimore's DS quotations varies from one-word citations (2, 3, 4, 10) to citations which are at least two but no more than seven lines long (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). In order to indicate that these citations are in the form of direct speech Dollimore uses (i) a reporting clause/a non-finite reporting clause and quotation marks (1: "tells us", 5: "says", 9: "has remarked", 7: "insisting", 8: "to assert"), (ii) only quotation marks (2: "grace", 3: "atone", 4: "modern", 5: "a condition for the renewal of human life", 10: "naked experience", "large orders collapse . . .", "values", "large orders"), (iii) a (kind of) reporting clause and a smaller font with spacing (4: "has been summarized by") or (iii) only a smaller font and spacing (6). It seems that the passages which have no reporting clause, or whose reporting clause is not a complete clause (passages (7) and (8)) are clearly more integrated with Dollimore's own argumentation. In all of the passages, except in passages 2-4, which are all one-word quotations, Dollimore also indicates the source from which the quotation is extracted.

TABLE 55 shows that in a few cases Dollimore also uses the narrative report of a speech act (NRSA). In this context NRSA refers to a sentence "which merely reports that a speech act or a number of speech acts has occurred, but where the narrator does not have to commit himself entirely to giving the sense of what was said, let alone the form of words in which they were uttered (Leech and Short 1984:323). In a way, it could be argued that, since no actual words are quoted, the use of the NRSA allows for more interpretive freedom: the interpreter has, so to speak, more room for making interpretive conclusions than s/he would have if s/he used DS quotations. In addition, because NRSA does not show the actual verbs referred to, its use can be seen to obscure who the real agent is that expresses the ideas thus reported. In Dollimore's case it is, in fact, difficult to determine whether the ideas he reports belong to the humanist critics in question or to himself. However, as the number of direct quotations is quite large in the essay, the danger that Dollimore's interpretive observations are not based on what the critics actually say is not so grave. In comparison to Knight, in particular, who makes only two very general references to literary criticism by using the NRSA, Dollimore appears as extremely explicit and careful in the way in which he indicates the specific critics and their views that he is dealing with. In TABLE 55 examples of NRSA are passages (2), (5), (6), (8), (12) and (16). Again, for a closer examination, TABLE 57 lists these cases (my italics):

TABLE 57 Narrative reports of speech acts in Dollimore's essay

1. Wilbur Sanders . . . argues for an ultimately optimistic Shakespeare who had no truck with Christian doctrine or conventional Christian conceptions of the absolute. Ultimately this fate in nature and human nature involves and entails 'a faith in a universal moral order which cannot finally be defeated' (*The Dramatist and the Received Idea*, pp. 336-7). (189-90)
2. Moreover both indicate the humanist preoccupation with the universal counterpart of essentialist subjectivity - either ultimately affirmed . . . (Sanders) (190)
3. or recognised as an ultimate tragic absence (Leech).<sup>2</sup> (190)
4. I do not mean to argue again the case against the Christian view since, . . . it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts.<sup>3</sup> (190)
5. In Lever's analysis Seneca is the ultimate influence on a drama (including *King Lear*) which celebrates man's capacity inwardly to transcend oppression (p. 9). (194)
6. [Nicholas Brooke] . . . manages in the concluding sentence of the study to resurrect from this unaccommodated 'naked experience' a redemptive autonomy of value, one almost mystically inviolable: 'Large orders collapse; but values remain, and are independent of them' (Shakespeare: *King Lear*, pp. 59-60).(202)

TABLE 57 shows that, besides quoting other critics, Dollimore also uses the strategy of NRSA to report and/or interpret their ideas. Even though NRSA clearly is a strategy for reporting other people's words on a distinctly more general level than, say, DS, Dollimore also makes an attempt to anchor them to the actual critical texts he is reporting. For example, in passages (2) and (3) he indicates, after his NRSA, the critic he is dealing with (2: "either ultimately affirmed (Sanders)", 3: "or recognised as an ultimate tragic absence (Leech)"). Similarly, in passage (5) where Dollimore reports on a general level of Lever's work, he includes a specific page reference. Thus, even though using the NRSA to report, or interpret on a general level what a particular critic has written, Dollimore makes an attempt to include some actual evidence from the critic's text to support his interpretive points.

A particularly interesting case here is the alternation between DS and NRSA. For example, in passage (1) Dollimore first reports, or, rather, presents an interpretation of a point made by Sanders by using NRSA ("Wilbur Sanders . . . argues for an ultimately optimistic Shakespeare"). This is followed by an elaboration which also includes a DS quotation. Notice also how closely the direct quotation is integrated with Dollimore's own argumentation; there is, for example, no reporting clause which would underline the fact that what follows is a quotation: ("ultimately this fate in nature and human nature involves and entails 'a faith in a universal moral order. . .' "). A similar case is also represented by passage (6). There Dollimore, first uses NRSA to report/interpret a point made by

Brooke and then includes a direct quotation which repeats Brooke's point verbatim.

TABLE 55 also indicates how Dollimore also consistently evaluates the critics' work he quotes or reports. He does this in two ways. On the one hand, he often shows his appreciation of the skill and value of their work. On the other hand, he refutes the contents of their interpretive points. TABLE 58 lists Dollimore's evaluative expressions (my italics).

**TABLE 58 Strategies showing appreciation of the humanist critics' work in Dollimore's essay**

1. Wilbur Sanders *in an influential study* argues for . . . (189)
2. The humanist reading of *Lear* has been *authoritatively* summarized by G.K. Hunter . . . (190)
3. I do not mean to argue against the Christian view since . . . it has been *effectively* discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts. (190)
4. Philip Brockbank, in a recent and *sensitive* humanist reading of the play, says . . . (191)
5. existential humanism forms the basis even of J.W. Lever's *The Tragedy of State, one of the most astute studies* of Jacobean tragedy to date. (194)
6. On the one hand Lever is *surely right in* insisting that . . . (194)
7. Nicholas Brooke, for example, in *one of the best close analyses of the play* that we have, concludes . . . (202)

By using such adjectives as "influential" (1), "sensitive" (4), "(one of the most) astute" and "(one of the) best" (7) and adverbs as "effectively" (3) Dollimore suggests that the standard or value of the work of these humanist critics is high. In passage (5) he even uses an open assertion that a particular critic "is surely right" on a particular point. This appreciation is, however, somewhat neutralized by the immediately following assertion that this critic is equally "wrong" on another point (cf. TABLE 59).

TABLE 59 shows the expressions that Dollimore uses to repudiate the interpretive points of these very same critics (my italics):

**TABLE 59 Strategies repudiating the humanist critics' interpretive points in Dollimore's essay**

1. [On Philip Brockbank] Lear, at least when he is on the heath, is indeed moved to pity, but *what does it mean to say such pity is 'a condition for the renewal of human life?'* Exactly whose life is renewed? (191)
2. [On Lever] By the same criteria *it is surely wrong to assert* (on the same page) that . . . (194)
3. [On Lionel Trilling] *Few remarks could be less true of King Lear.* The notion of man as tragic victim somehow live and complete is precisely the kind of essentialist mystification which *the play refuses.* (202)
4. [On Nicholas Brooke] But *surely in Lear*, as in most of human history, '*values are shown to be terrifyingly dependent upon whatever 'large orders' actually exist . . .*' (202)

TABLE 59 indicates that, to repudiate points made by humanist critics, Dollimore, firstly, literally questions them (1: "what does it mean . . .?", "exactly whose life is renewed?") Secondly, he asserts that these critics are simply wrong (2: "it is surely wrong", 3: "few remarks could be less true"). Thirdly, Dollimore refers to the active text which "refuses" (3) a humanist interpretation, but in which a materialist interpretation is "shown" (4). In this passage the adverbial "terrifyingly" is also interesting. In a way it adds both an affective element to Dollimore's interpretive point and a critical comment on the fact that "values" depend on their surrounding "large orders".

It is interesting to see that in passages (2) and (4) (also in passage (6) of TABLE 58) Dollimore uses an 'attitudinal' adverbial "surely". This adverbial is often used to invite agreement from the person(s) addressed (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973:246). Interactionally, there is thus a fairly strong persuasive element here, the purpose of which it to make the readers accept Dollimore's interpretive points instead of those suggested by the humanist critics in question.

Dollimore also refers to and quotes a number of humanist literary critics in his endnotes. TABLE 60 lists these as follows:

TABLE 60 References to literary critics in Dollimore's endnotes

1. [Endnote 2: Other critics who embrace, invoke or imply the categories of essentialist humanism include the following: A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, lectures 7 and 8;
2. Israel Knox, *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer*, p. 117;
3. Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, p. 264;
4. Kenneth Muir, ed. *King Lear*; especially p. lv;
5. Grigori Kozintsev, *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy*, pp. 250-1.
6. For the essentialist view with a pseudo-Nietzschean twist, see Michael Long, *The Unnatural Scene*, pp. 191-3.)
7. Jan Kott suggests the way that the absurdist view exists in the shadow of a failed Christianity and a failed humanism - a sense of paralysis in the face of that failure (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, pp. 104, 108, 116-17); end of endnote 2] (190)
8. I do not mean to argue again the case against the Christian view since, even though it is still sometimes advanced, it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts.<sup>3</sup>
9. [Endnote 3: Barbara Everett, 'The New King Lear';
10. William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*;
11. Cedric Watts, 'Shakespearean Themes: The Dying God and the Universal Wolf'. End of endnote 3] (190)
12. To see her [Cordelia's] death as intrinsically redemptive is simply to mystify both her and death.<sup>4</sup> [Endnote 4: For John Danby, Cordelia is redemption incarnate; but can she really be seen as 'allegorically the root of individual and social sanity; tropologically Charity "that suffereth long and is kind"; analogically the redemptive principle itself?' (*Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature*, p. 125, cf. p. 133)] (193)
13. The second example involves the way that for the Gentleman attending Cordelia even pity (or more accurately 'Sorrow') is conceived as a kind of passive female commodity (IV. iii. 16-23).<sup>6</sup> [Endnote 6: By contrast compare Derek Traversi who finds in the imagery of this passage a 'sense of value, of richness and fertility . . . an indication of redemption . . . the poetical transformation of natural emotion into its spiritual distillation' (*An Approach to Shakespeare*, II. 164) (201)

TABLE 60 shows that in his endnotes Dollimore uses similar strategies to refer to humanist critics and their views as within the bulk of the essay. For example, he uses generalizations. In addition, he implies that the context of literary criticism is not straightforward, but complex and multi-layered. In these passages this shows, for instance, in the way in which he states that a number of other works, besides those that he discusses within the bulk of his text "embrace, invoke or imply the categories of essentialist humanism" (1). In this passage Dollimore also uses the NRSA to report that there are a number of other works, too, besides those referred to in the text. After this he lists seven different critical texts (1-7). In (5) and (6) he also uses the NRSA to report on two particular critics' views (5:

"for the essentialist view with a pseudo-Nietzschean twist, see . . ., 6: "Jan Kott suggests the way that the absurdist view exists in the shadow of a failed Christianity and a failed humanism - a sense of paralysis in the face of that failure"). In passages (8-11) Dollimore gives the bibliographical information of works by three critics that he discusses within the text. Finally, in (12) and (13) Dollimore quotes two critics by using DS (12: "for John Danby, Cordelia is redemption incarnate; but can she really be seen as 'allegorically the root of individual and social sanity . . .?"; 13: "by contrast compare Derek Traversi who finds in the imagery of this passage a 'sense of value, of richness and fertility . . . an indication of redemption . . . the poetical transformation of natural emotion into its spiritual distillation"). In passage (12) the critic again questions the view expressed by the quotation; and in (13) he includes the quotation as a point of comparison for his own interpretive point.

In sum, it seems that, first, Dollimore includes a high number of references to, and quotations from, humanist literary critics. Most of these references are within the bulk of the essay; certain of them can be located in his endnotes (in which he also refers to nine critics who are not mentioned in the text). Second, the conclusions Dollimore draws on the humanist critics' views are consistently in the form of generalizations, which make them look like categorical assertions of universal validity. Third, he uses quite a few direct quotations to report what other critics have said about *KL*, thus including a considerable amount of evidence by which the readers of his essay can judge the validity of his interpretive points on the humanist critics. In this, he clearly is very different from Knight, who makes only two very general references to previous literary criticism by using the NRSA. In Knight's essay there is no evidence given to the readers with which they can test Knight's arguments. However, the strategy of NRSA is also used by Dollimore. By using it, he, too, allows himself more interpretive freedom vis à vis the reporting of the humanist critics' views. Fourth, Dollimore also evaluates the humanist critics' work. On the one hand, he often comments favorably on the quality and skill of their analyses. On the other hand, in most cases he also repudiates the content of their analyses and argues that the text "refuses" them, while it categorically displays a materialist view.

On the point that the text has power to display its 'meaning' Dollimore and Knight clearly agree. In Knight's case this comes out in his conception of interpretation as an unproblematic absorption of the text-immanent meaning. In Dollimore's case this shows, in turn, in his assumption that, provided that the readers choose to respect the text's immanent, "materialist" meaning, interpretation is an unproblematic process of absorption. In contrast, if the readers choose not to respect the text and decide to interpret it 'incorrectly', i.e. from an ideological position - such

as the humanist view - which is allegedly not suggested by the text, the end-result is that the text gets distorted.

In addition to referring to other literary critics, Dollimore also makes quite a few references to other authors, texts by other authors and ideas or concepts introduced or developed by them. As in the case of his references to literary criticism, these, too, seem to be multi-layered and related to each other and to literary criticism in complex ways. However, what is noteworthy in these references is that most of them are on a fairly general level, which means that not many direct quotations or bibliographical sources are given. TABLE 61 is a comprehensive list of these. (The italics in TABLE 61 are mine: their purpose is to highlight what it is exactly that Dollimore quotes (by using DS) or refers to (by using the NRSA).

**TABLE 61** References to other writers, their texts and ideas introduced by them in Dollimore's essay

1. Here, as so often in Jacobean drama, the fictiveness of the genre or scene intrudes; by acknowledging its status as fiction it abdicates the authority of idealist mimesis and indicates the better the reality it signifies; resembling in this *Brecht's alienation effect*, it stresses artifice not in the service of formalism but of realism. (191-2)
2. In *Lear*, as we shall see in the next section, there is a repudiation of stoicism similar to that found in *Marston's Antonio's Revenge*. (193)
3. In *Lever's analysis Seneca is the ultimate influence on a drama* (including *King Lear*) which celebrates man's capacity inwardly to transcend oppression. (194)
4. It will be recalled that for *the existentialist existence precedes essence*, or so said *Sartre*, who later tried to develop this philosophy in the context of *Marxism*. (195)
5. On the heath he represents the process whereby man has been stripped of his stoic and (Christian) humanist conceptions of self. Consider what *Seneca* has to say of affliction and philosophy:  
*Whether we are caught in the grasp of an inexorable law of fate, whether it is God who as lord of the universe has ordered all things, or whether the affairs of mankind are tossed and buffeted haphazardly by chance, it is philosophy that has the duty of protecting us.* (Letters, p. 64 (195))
6. *Lear*, in his affliction, attempts to philosophise with Tom whom he is convinced is a 'Noble philosopher', a 'good Athenian' (II. iv. 168 and 176). It adds up to nothing more than the incoherent ramblings of one half-crazed by just that suffering which philosophy, according to the stoic, guards against. (195)
7. [the ironic subversion of neo-stoic essentialism in the play] recalls *Bacon's essay 'Of Adversity,'* (196) where he quotes *Seneca*: 'It is true greatness to have in one the frailty of a man, and the security of a god' only to add, dryly: 'This would have done better in poesy, where transcendences are more allowed' (Essays, p. 15). (195-6)

(continues)

TABLE 61 (continues)

8. As I have already shown (chapter 4) Bacon believed that poesy implies idealist *mimesis* - that is, an illusionist evasion of those historical and empirical realities which, says Bacon, 'buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things' (*Advancement*, p. 83). (196)
9. Plays like *Lear* precisely disallow 'transcendences': in this at least they confirm Edmund's contention that 'men/Are as the time is' (V. iii. 31-2). Montaigne made a similar point with admirable terseness: 'I am no philosopher: Evils oppresse me according as they waigh' (*Essays*, III. (189). (196)
10. Like Montaigne [Edmund] insists that universal law is merely municipal law (above, p. 16). (197)
11. Edmund embodies the process whereby, because of the contradictory conditions of its inception, a revolutionary (emergent) insight is folded back into a dominant ideology. Witnessing his fate we are reminded of how, historically, the misuse of revolutionary insight has tended to be in proportion to its truthfulness, and of how, as this very fact is obscured, the insight becomes entirely identified with (or as) its misappropriation. *Machiavellianism, Gramsci has reminded us, is just one case in point (Selections from Prison Notebooks, p. 136). (201-2)*

TABLE 61 shows that Dollimore not only refers to literary critics, but to a number of other writers, philosophers, their texts and ideas suggested and developed by them. These references range from general notions (passages 1, 3, 4 and 5), to specific ideas presented by specific writers (passages 2, 6-11). Moreover, they form complex intertextual networks, as in the case of Dollimore commenting on Bacon quoting Seneca (passage 7). In some cases, as in passages (1) and (11), Dollimore also uses terminology which seems to require that the readers are either fairly well-informed, or at least willing to do some extra work to work out the relevance of Dollimore's intertextual references.

There seem to be three major reasons why Dollimore makes references of this kind. Firstly, he presents comparisons: for example, he compares literary criticism with an existential humanist orientation to the existentialist philosophy as represented by Sartre (4). Similarly, he compares a remark made by a character of the play with Montaigne's writings (passages 9 and 10). Secondly, in some passages it is obvious that the underlying motivation for discussing ideas such as these is to provide evidence with which to repudiate points made by humanist literary critics. This is particularly true of the passages dealing with Bacon, and the underlying emphasis on stoicism in humanist literary criticism (passages 2, 6-9). Thirdly, Dollimore also seems to rely on writers such as Brecht, Bacon and Montaigne, etc., to gain support for his interpretive points: an example of this is his reference to Gramsci in passage (17). No matter whether he compares his interpretive points to what others have sug-

gested, evaluates, repudiates, or seeks support from others, Dollimore always suggests that literary interpretation is not a solitary business between the readers and the text. For him, it seems to be a fundamentally dialogic business, where what he writes is always seen to be related, not only to earlier interpretations of the text, but to various literary, philosophical, ideological texts, too.

In this, Dollimore is clearly very different from Knight. Even though there is some evidence in Knight's essay that he is at least aware of the fact that literary texts can be read with, through, and against other texts, this evidently is not one of his primary concerns. This shows, for example, in that Knight makes only four references to writers other than Shakespeare, three of which are Tschehov and Dostoievsky, and one to Shakespeare's contemporary, John Webster. However, even though Knight does not relate his interpretation to other texts, or assumptions, notions and concepts outside the text proper, implicitly he seems to do just that. As was shown above, this is particularly remarkable in the way in which he presents "our literature" as a given set, and how he similarly introduces "stoicism" and Christian assumptions as self-evident and presupposed qualities of the text.

The references that Dollimore makes to (non-literary-critical) writers and their texts are both similar to and different from his references to humanist critics. What makes them similar is the fact that they are generally in the form of generalizations; what makes them different is that they are on the whole more general than the references to literary critics. The reason why these references are more general is clearly that Dollimore is primarily concerned with showing the underlying assumptions of humanist criticism (such as the emphasis on stoicism and essential self), rather than with the analysis of these underlying assumptions themselves (e.g. stoicism as a philosophy).

The generality of these references derives mainly from the fact that in most cases Dollimore does not use direct quotations to give evidence or support to his points. In TABLE 61 only four passages, out of eleven, contain a direct quotation. These are passages (5), (7), (8) and (9). In passages (5) and (7) Dollimore includes a lengthy quotation from Seneca. Both of these passages are printed with a smaller font, and their source is scrupulously indicated. In passages (8) and (9), in turn, Dollimore quotes Bacon and Montaigne respectively, indicating in both cases the source from which he has extracted the citations.

However, a more common strategy here is the use of the NRSA to report and point to relevant ideas presented by others: passages (1), (2), (3), (4), (6), (8), (10) and (11) are examples of this. Because these references are presented as NRSA, they are fairly closely integrated with and embedded in Dollimore's own argumentation. Once more, it is also difficult

to say whether the ideas thus reported belong more properly to Dollimore (as products of his interpretation) or to the writers referred to in this way. TABLE 62 lists these cases of the NRSA. The italics are again mine, and they are used to indicate the NRSA used by Dollimore.

**TABLE 62 Use of narrative reports of speech acts in Dollimore's references to other writers, their texts, and ideas suggested by them**

1. Here, as so often in Jacobean drama, the fictiveness of the genre or scene intrudes . . . resembling in this *Brecht's alienation effect*, it stresses artifice not in the service of formalism but of realism. (191-2)
2. In *Lear*, as we shall see in the next section, there is a repudiation of stoicism similar to that found in *Marston's Antonio's Revenge*. (193)
3. In *Lever's analysis Seneca is the ultimate influence on a drama* (including *King Lear*) which celebrates man's capacity inwardly to transcend oppression. (194)
4. It will be recalled that for *the existentialist existence precedes essence*, or so said Sartre, who later tried to develop this philosophy in the context of Marxism. (195)
5. Lear, in his affliction, attempts to philosophise with Tom whom he is convinced is a 'Noble philosopher', a 'good Athenian' (II. iv. 168 and 176). It adds up to nothing more than the incoherent ramblings of one half-crazed by just that suffering which philosophy, according to the stoic, guards against. (195)
6. As I have already shown (chapter 4) Bacon believed that poesy implies idealist mimesis - that is, an illusionist evasion of those historical and empirical realities which, says Bacon, 'buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things' (*Advancement*, p. 83). (196)
7. Like Montaigne [Edmund] insists that universal law is merely municipal law (above, p. 16). (197)
8. Witnessing Edmund's fate we are reminded of how, historically, the misuse of revolutionary insight has tended to be in proportion to its truthfulness, and of how, as this very fact is obscured, the insight becomes entirely identified with (or as) its misappropriation. *Machiavellianism, Gramsci has reminded us, is just one case in point* (*Selections from Prison Notebooks*, p. 136). (201-2)

In all of the passages Dollimore uses a NRSA which reports an idea expressed by some other writer or thinker without quoting the actual words used. In passage (6-8) Dollimore also gives the source of the idea thus reported. In the rest of the passages no source is mentioned.

The above analysis of Dollimore's references to the institutional context showed that this aspect of context is of great importance to him. He makes a large number of references to various aspects of it. To begin with, he refers to Shakespeare's drama, and to contemporary drama. The purpose of these references seem to be to provide a point of comparison for the play, and to create a more general literary and genre framework around its interpretation. However, this clearly is not one of Dollimore's major concerns. What is important for him, in contrast, is relating the play

to previous literary criticism, and to its underlying assumptions. In particular, Dollimore is concerned with the discussion, evaluation and criticism of what he refers to as "the humanist view", and its comparison with the "Christian view" of *KL*. He does this on several different levels: on the level of the Christian/humanist "view", of the individual critics as examples of these "views", and of their underlying philosophical, religious and ideological assumptions. Firstly, as indicated by the presentation of "the humanist view" and "the Christian view" as presupposed, it seems clear that the existence of both views is a given to Dollimore. It could be argued that Dollimore regards these "views", particularly the "humanist view", as representing the 'established' conception of *KL*. In this light, his own approach then appears as a radical attempt at questioning, challenging, and even refuting some of the basic assumptions of the 'established' view. In addition, one of his main aims seems to be to show how the humanist view is really a mutation of, and as "inappropriate" as, the "Christian view".

This analysis involves a careful scrutiny of several humanist critics, of quoting, reporting, commenting, evaluating, criticizing and repudiating their interpretations of the play. The carefulness of the analysis derives mainly from the fact that Dollimore uses direct speech quotations to report the critics' ideas. This strategy, because the actual words of the critics are repeated verbatim, gives the readers a chance to check Dollimore's points against actual evidence. Dollimore also uses, albeit less than direct quotations, narrative reports of speech acts to report the humanist critics' views. With this strategy he is able to integrate other critics' points more closely with his own argumentation, so that it sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish to whom the ideas thus reported really belong to. In the analysis of the humanist critics' views Dollimore also takes care to show his appreciation of the skill, quality or importance of their work and to indicate conscientiously the source of his quotes. On the other hand, he categorically repudiates the contents of their interpretations. In doing this he is extremely categorical: as usual, the linguistic indicator of this is the use of generalizations.

The analysis of "the humanist view" also involves a dissemination of its underlying assumptions. To do this, Dollimore quotes and reports a number of ideas presented by other writers, such as philosophers (e.g. Sartre, Seneca), and essayists (e.g. Bacon, Montaigne). These references generally tend to be more general in nature than Dollimore's references to specific literary critics. Indicator of this that the critic often uses, are narrative reports of speech acts, instead of direct quotations. More specifically, the critic compares the assumptions of humanist critics to those presented in existentialist or stoic philosophy, evaluates or repudiates these, along with the literary critical assumptions. Often, in doing this, he seems to as-

sume that his readers are fairly well-informed about literary theory, criticism, philosophy, and literature.

Consequently, the institutional context appears to be a highly complex notion for Dollimore. Collectively, all his references to the different literary, literary critical and philosophical aspects of the institutional context form a multi-layered network of intertextuality. The institutional context also has an important function in Dollimore's interpretation. This is because literary interpretation is an essentially positioned activity for Dollimore. In his view, there is no such thing as the intrinsic analysis of the text only. Literary texts are always looked at through some ideological - humanist, Christian, materialist - lens. The sheer number of references of this kind, the dedication with which the critic examines literary criticism and its assumptions, and the ways in which he keeps evaluating, criticizing and arguing against earlier critics, could thus be taken as further evidence of the claim that for Dollimore the interpretation of literature also involves an awareness of texts, views and approaches towards the literary texts. In other words, it seems to involve a recognition that a literary text is not a pure and innocent entity, but something that is always colored by the traditions, approaches and conventions within which it is interpreted, and something that is constantly mediated with different emphases and ideologies to us.

There is also another reason why the literary critical aspect of the institutional context is important in terms of the interpretation of the play: this is that it seems that Dollimore argues for his own interpretation by arguing against - evaluating, criticizing, and repudiating - previous criticism. He scrutinizes its assumptions in order to show how his assumptions differ from them, thus making his position very explicit. Significantly, Dollimore also scrutinizes the assumptions of previous criticism to show how inappropriate they are. In this task, his argument that the text itself is "political" provides him with an absolute criterion to refute all other 'non-political' interpretations.

In his emphasis on the important role of the institutional context for the interpretation of literary texts, Dollimore represents almost an opposite view to Knight, for whom this aspect of context clearly is of a marginal interest. At the most, the institutional context offers a point of comparison with Knight. In his case, the institutional context refers to the genre conventions of tragedy and comedy, a selected set of other Shakespearean tragedies, an even more restricted set of other authors, and a few very indirect and general references to literature, philosophy, religion and literary criticism. Essentially, the institutional context seems to be a body of texts which are spatial and temporal in the same way as *KL*. It is important to see, however, that in Knight's approach it has no power to affect literary interpretation.

### 6.2.5.3 The socio-cultural context

Dollimore's numerous references to, and analysis of, the different literary critical views of *KL* demonstrate that he suggests to readers that the socio-cultural, or, rather, the ideologic context for the interpretation of the play is plural. There are various perspectives from which the play has been, and can be, viewed, and all of these perspectives are in one way or another ideologically motivated. Unlike Knight, Dollimore thus seems to suggest that the socio-cultural context is not a homogeneous one in the sense that all of the potential readers of the play would necessarily share their assumptions, values, beliefs, ideologies, and the language code. In different contexts, the text can 'mean' quite different things. The text is thus not a well-defined and uncontaminated entity. Furthermore, in this view, there is an extremely close relationship between the text and the context. It is in fact so close that the text can be seen to blend into its context, and that the context can be taken to shape and refract the text.

It is important to remember, however, that, as far as *KL* is concerned, Dollimore insists that the various ideologically motivated views have been incorrect, because they are not based on the text. Thus, in spite of the fact that Dollimore mediates a view of the socio-cultural and ideological context which emphasizes plurality and heterogeneity, he nevertheless argues that the text is the ultimate norm which controls its interpretation, and the choice of the "appropriate" context. In the analysis of Knight's essay it was observed that Knight's use of such strategies as generalization, the inclusive *we*, the emphasis on reading as a sensory process of internalization, the assignment of agency to the text, and the description of readers' responses as identical suggest that he assumes that the general socio-cultural context for the interpretation of *KL* is the same for him and for all of his potential readers. It was argued that readers appear to him as a homogeneous group which have values, beliefs, assumptions, and, most significantly, language code, in common. As has been shown, Dollimore also uses similar linguistic strategies to suggest that the socio-cultural context for him and those of his readers who are persuaded or otherwise agree that the text is "political" in nature, is, or must be, the same. For example, like Knight, he tends to generalize his interpretive statements, to use the inclusive pronoun to indicate a shared interaction in interpretation, to emphasize the text as an active force in interpretation, and to insist on the passive receptive nature of readers' interpretation of the text. In this way Dollimore mediates to readers that his own "materialist" approach is more 'correct' than others, because it is allegedly in accordance with what he claims the text itself actively foregrounds. In this view, the relationship between the text, the critic, the readers, and the socio-cultural or ideological context of readers thus seems to be a close

one in the sense that the critic mediates to his readers that the text controls not only interpretation, but also the choice of the ideological context. There can then be no interaction between the text, readers, and context, for the flow of meaning is unidirectional from the text, via the critic, to readers. Again, this sounds rather like Knight.

To recapitulate, in Dollimore's implicit interpretive criteria context is a very important component. Firstly, it was shown how the situational context for the interpretation of *KL* is threefold: it is simultaneously a reading event, a viewing event, and a reading/viewing event in relation to other texts. In this view there may be an implication that the interpretation of the play has to embrace all of these three aspects in order to be complete. In comparison to Knight, this view is broader in the sense that it takes intertextuality into account very explicitly.

Secondly, Dollimore makes a large number of references to the institutional context. In Dollimore's approach this aspect of context appears to be very complex: in addition to a few references to Shakespeare's drama, and contemporary tragedy, it includes references to more general literary critical approaches, individual literary critics, and underlying assumptions, values, and ideologies in these. Moreover, these different aspects of the institutional context are interrelated, so that they form together an intricate network of intertextuality. In particular, Dollimore devotes a great deal of attention to the specification, evaluation, and criticism of the two major traditions in *KL* criticism, that is, "the humanist view" and "the Christian view". The primary motivations behind this analysis seem to be the demonstration that both views are equally "inappropriate", that "the humanist view" is actually a mutation of the "Christian view". With the help of this analysis Dollimore also distinguishes his own approach explicitly from the two views. Obviously, the institutional context has a central role in the interpretation of *KL*. This is because, like a refracting lens, it has a great deal of power to affect, control and even determine what a text is about.

The complexity and importance of the institutional context is also something that distinguishes Dollimore from Knight. For Knight, in spite of the fact that he seems to be little aware of the fact that literary texts can be read with and against other texts, the institutional context is simply a body of knowledge, and/or a set of texts, which provides a point of comparison for the analysis of the intrinsic meaning element of *KL*. In principle, similar to *KL*, other texts are also regarded by Knight as fundamentally self-sufficient spatial and temporal constructs.

This also means that for Knight the text is the ultimate and absolute norm and criterion in interpretation. Paradoxically, this is true of Dollimore, too, as far as *KL* is concerned. Despite the fact that he suggests that the text has been, and can be viewed from various perspectives, he

insists at the same time that there is only one perspective, the materialist one, which is correct. It is correct, Dollimore emphatically argues, because it is what the "political" text itself foregrounds. In this way, the text is also for Dollimore the ultimate norm in interpretation.

Thirdly, this dual perspective on the institutional context is apparent at the level of the socio-cultural context, too (with which Dollimore's institutional context clearly overlaps, particularly with respect to ideologies, assumptions and beliefs associated with the two traditions of *KL* criticism). On the one hand, Dollimore could be taken to mediate that the general socio-cultural context for the interpretation of *KL* is varied and multiform, that its readers are not a homogeneous group with shared beliefs, assumptions, and values. On the other hand, as his use of generalizations, inclusive *we*, description of the causal relationship between the text and readers indicate, he assumes, like Knight, a very normative stance and insists that, in order to understand the text correctly (i.e. in the way the text itself foregrounds), readers must adopt the materialist view. In short, Dollimore could be argued to require from readers that, if they are to respect the text, they must share their beliefs, assumptions, and values, i.e. their socio-cultural and ideological context.

An interesting difference between Knight and Dollimore is that, whereas Knight takes the text to be a supremely complex entity, Dollimore regards the context as complex. This is manifest in his essay in the way he keeps specifying, anatomizing, evaluating, and criticizing the context. The text, in contrast, appears to be a much more straightforward notion to him, it is simply "political", it is about "power, property, and inheritance".

### 6.2.6 Summary and discussion

Below a brief summary of Dollimore's interpretive criteria and the linguistic strategies that he uses to mediate them will be given. As in Knight's case, these observations will be related to what Dollimore himself, as well as other scholars, have noted about the hermeneutical position represented by Dollimore's cultural materialism. A general comparison of the two critics mediation strategies and interpretive criteria will be presented at the beginning of chapter 7.

As the percentage of quoted words (8.9 %) indicates, Dollimore does not include a large number of quotations from the primary text. Mostly, his quotations are also fairly short. In addition, he uses a number of one-word quotations, and a few 'near-quotations' which are presented within quotation marks, but which are more properly reformulations of original Shakespearean words. In these cases it seems that the borderline between what is Shakespeare's text and what is Dollimore's interpretation

is not distinct. Clearly, in many cases the one-word- or near-quotations refer to issues in *KL* that have been established in earlier humanist critiques of the play and of which Dollimore is highly critical of. Therefore, their criticism becomes an important task for Dollimore. He also indicates the edition of the text that he is using. This could perhaps be taken to imply that he is aware of the existence of several editions of the play.

There is indication in the essay that the text is something that is both read, and viewed. The fact that the critic includes quotations, and an editor's comments in his essay suggests that *KL* is a written text. The fact that the critic refers to readers' activities as for example "seeing" or "witnessing" acts and scenes of the play, and that he occasionally uses the characters' expressions, or the timing of events as evidence for his interpretation, indicates that *KL* is also a play performed on the stage. In addition, as indicated by the critic's repeated references to different "views" and readings" of the play, *KL* clearly is also a text/play read/viewed against/through/in relation to other texts.

Dollimore primarily focuses on the text for the purpose of analyzing the social and political situation depicted in it. Significantly, this means that he does not deal with the text as an aesthetic object. What this also means is that Dollimore does not use complex linguistic strategies to describe the text and its effect on the readers. He assumes, however, that the text contains meaning, and that it has embedded 'themes', and "a political dimension". An indication of this is the way in which he uses nominalized verb phrases to refer to the central meaning elements and how he argues, by using visual verb phrases, for example, that "the play" "displays", or "shows" themes of this kind to its readers/viewers. Dollimore uses expressions that suggest that there is in the play a particular meaning element'. In other words, he uses strategies which emphasize the text as a container, and, in this sense, as a spatial entity. The text is thus considered the repository of meaning.

For Dollimore the text is also an active force foregrounding its elements of meaning and directing their readers' interpretation. To argue that the text is an active force, Dollimore assigns agency to the text and uses active and actional verbs of 'showing' and 'denying' in connection with the text. With these strategies he is thus able to show that the text allegedly actively foregrounds his materialist "reading". At the same time Dollimore uses verbs which suggest that the text actively denies other, in particular humanist interpretations. In addition, the fact that Dollimore discusses and criticizes "the humanist view" could be taken as an indication that Dollimore does not assume that there is a shared world and that this shared world is a guarantee for a universally equifinal interpretation of *KL*. In contrast, he signals repeatedly that the text can be, and has been, given various interpretations. In a way, by referring to various "views"

and "readings" of the play, he mediates a notion of the text which is plural and ideological (i.e. as a product of different ideologically motivated readings). However, Dollimore also suggests that the various interpretations, besides the materialist one, are incorrect, because they ignore or fail to see the political dimension of the text. In this sense, Dollimore thus assumes that the text is really closed, in spite of the plurality of interpretations that it has been subjected to in its history.

In arguing for his interpretation, Dollimore consistently uses generalizations. In addition to certain other generalizing strategies that he uses (such as the suggestion that the text 'offers' 'truths' and 'facts'), the generalizations have the effect that his interpretive points seem to be more categorical statements of universal validity than arguments for a particular view of the play. The consistent emphasis on the text as a container and an active force also has the effect that the critic's, readers' and author's role in interpretation is marginalized. It is only the text that determines meaning. The text is also argued to have a direct effect on its readers. Dollimore uses the inclusive *we* pronoun and insists that the text "reminds us" of a certain "truth", or that we "see" or "witness" "truths" in it. Through the use of such perceptual and sensory verbs Dollimore thus suggests the idea that reading and interpreting *KL* is an unproblematic sensory process of absorption. That is, it is an unproblematic sensory process, provided it is a materialist reading, which is allegedly sensitive enough to capture what the text really says.

However, at certain points Dollimore also rejects his text-based interpretive criteria. These are the cases when, in order to be able to be consistent in his subversive materialist "reading", he has to read 'against' the text. In these cases, his "reading" could perhaps be taken as not what the text suggests, but as yet another "view" of the play, motivated by the critic's assumptions and ideology. Interestingly enough, these are the only cases in the essay when Dollimore uses some modality.

Alan Sinfield (1985:131), another influential advocate of the cultural materialist position, has stated that

Shakespeare's plays constitute an influential medium through which certain ways of thinking about the world may be promoted and others impeded, they are a site of cultural struggle and change.

In another formulation this idea is expressed as Shakespeare being constantly "appropriated in the making of meaning" (Sinfield 1985:131). By "appropriation" cultural materialist critics mean the process whereby a play is given significance for a particular cause and in certain 'open' contexts (cf. Dollimore 1985:9). As has been seen above, this idea comes out clearly in Dollimore's essay: his extensive critique of the "humanist" and

"Christian" view is, basically, a critique of two ideologically triggered traditions in the appropriation of *KL*.

However, there is clearly a problem here. The problem is the status of the text. For if it is assumed that different interpretations 'appropriate' Shakespeare in different ways in the making of meaning, then it must be assumed that there is something that we can take as "Shakespeare" or "*King Lear*" that can be appropriated. In other words, appropriations must be appropriations of something. In theory, this problem seems not to be addressed at all by cultural materialists: for them, there categorically is no 'essential' Shakespeare, no essential truths embodied in his texts, and, ultimately, no determinate texts at all. For example, this is how Sinfield (1985:130) expresses this tenet:

A comparably potent issue is whether 'the play' is really what it meant to its original audiences or a supposed 'timeless' meaning, for the historical context of 'Shakespeare's plays' has been intensively reconstructed, but the idea that he is 'not for an age but for all time' can be traced to Ben Jonson. . . . There is no determinate entity called Shakespeare's play, and we should consider the implications, which are inescapably political, of rival claims to have the privileged perspective.

However, even though it is likely that Dollimore's theoretical position is quite close to the view suggested by Sinfield, in Dollimore's interpretation of *KL* he appears to be in disagreement with it. This becomes evident from his insistence on the text as both the embodiment of meaning and as an active force controlling interpretation. Thus, in practice Dollimore considers the text determinate in the sense that its embedded meaning is determinate.

In comparison to the amount of space and prominence that Dollimore gives to the text in his own reading, the role he gives to the author in interpretation seems minimal. In fact, it could be argued that the critic does not explicitly suggest any particular notion or function of the author. For example, he makes no direct references to the author. In addition, the fact that he often assigns agency to the text, creates an impression that the text is, firstly, something that has to be regarded as independent from its writer, and, secondly, that it is the text, and not the author, critic or readers that determines meaning. In spite of this, it seems that the author may, at times, be lurking in the background of his interpretation. Dollimore's use of the passive could be taken as an indication of this. This is because, while the passive effectively effaces or obscures who, or what the agent is behind the activity in question, it also helps the critic to imply that there may be an intention, plan, and purpose in the text. In some cases, it seemed, it is not impossible that Dollimore, deliberately or not, implies that the source of this intention, plan, and purpose is the author. So,

while the obscured agency serves Dollimore well in that it is a means of by-passing the difficult issue of authorial intention explicitly, it also functions to imply the author's potential role in interpretation.

Dollimore also refers to the 'purpose' underlying the text. The most explicit case is the critic's use of the explicitly hermeneutical verb *mean* in the context of an interpretation of a character's facial expressions in a particular scene of the play ("perhaps Edgar is meant to wince"). This was taken to suggest that, here at least, the author's intention is quite openly summoned by the critic as an interpretive criterion.

If the author's role is generally effaced in Dollimore's essay, the critic's role is not in the sense that he makes his objectives and point of view clear to his readers. As the analysis of the critic's use of the first person singular personal pronoun and its co-text demonstrated, the critic considers himself somebody who primarily "argues" against, criticizes and challenges earlier views of the play and offers his own political view in their place. In doing this he is very explicit, and specifies his own ideological premisses and critical goals in a very detailed way.

The critique of literary criticism and of its assumptions is considered one of the major tasks of cultural materialist criticism. In Sinfield's view (1985:131), the materialist critic strives to subvert the premisses and positions of established forms of criticism, partly because an analysis of this kind is a means of drawing attention to structures of containment, and of facilitating evasions of them. In other words, "if Shakespeare can be appropriated by the[se] conservative standpoints, there is scope for intervention also for an oppositional politics" (Sinfield 1985: 132). A similar point is also made by Dollimore (1988: xiv): he states that cultural materialist criticism is "inseparable from what others have already made Shakespeare mean; the rewriting is as much a critique of existing interpretations as it is a production of new ones". Moreover, he (1988:xlvi) claims that

it has been a commonplace of literary criticism that every age interprets Shakespeare for itself. The implication of this is that Shakespeare is only, ever, what we make of him. Or it might be, were this commonplace not generally harnessed within another: in each age we discover new ways of perceiving the eternal verities perceived by the genius who was Shakespeare and embodied in his plays. So an interpretation or production 'for our time' is not so much changing the meaning of the play as making an unchanging meaning accessible to a (changed) modern audience. An emphasis in materialist criticism involves not just the rejection of these commonplaces, but an account of the actual political uses to which Shakespeare has been put within and by *institutions* . . .

The literary critic is thus not only the critic of literature, but also of literary criticism itself. Moreover, as the analysis above also indicated, one of the motives for doing it seems a didactic one: it can offer readers of literature

a way in which they can evade and resist the established "appropriations" of literary texts.

However, if cultural materialist interpretations, too, are to be seen, as Sinfield and Dollimore suggest, as appropriations for a certain cause and in certain contexts, then the question arises why the political cause behind Dollimore's "reading" of *KL* is not given consistently as the criterion in the interpretation. It is true that, to a certain extent, the political and interventionist motivation of the interpretation is asserted in the essay, in the explication of Dollimore's premisses and goals, for example. Nevertheless, a far more central argument seems to be the claim that the text itself is subversive, that it offers the "materialist reading" more or less automatically. In other words, it is ultimately the text, instead of the critic, or author, that is responsible for the interpretation. In this sense, Dollimore's reading is not an appropriation at all, but an account of what the text itself means. Clearly, this view represents a rather essentialist notion of both the text and meaning.

The critic's power and authority is thus protected and camouflaged by the text's power. But it is still there, and, in this sense, it could perhaps be argued that the strategies that the critic uses to assert the text's power are, indirectly, also means of asserting his own power.

It could be argued that Dollimore suggests that there are two different kinds of reader. The first group consists of those whom he attempts to persuade to accept his materialist position, and the second set of the readers who have interpreted the play from some other (and allegedly non-text-based) position. In attempting to persuade his readers Dollimore relies on the familiar strategies of generalization, 'perceptual', and 'cognitive' verb phrases, and the use of the inclusive *we*. Firstly, the use of generalizations, as well as the (much rarer) use of the deontic modality of obligation, which suggests that the text unproblematically or necessarily foregrounds the materialist reading, contributes to the notion of readers as having no interpretive freedom at all. Secondly, the use of perceptual verb phrases such as "seeing" and "witnessing" to refer to the readers' actions, categorically denies the possibility of any real readerly power in interpretation, by implying that it is basically a sensory process of internalization which allegedly does not require any major efforts from the readers. Thirdly, as suggested by the critic's use of 'cognitive' verb phrases, the process of interpretation appears mainly as a cognitive one, where there is no room for the readers' emotions. Together, these strategies mediate a notion and a function of the readers which emphasize them as passive receivers of meaning who are inescapably subservient to the text, as mediated by the critic.

Fourthly, the use of the inclusive pronoun *we* may be an attempt to soften this authoritarian view and to assure to the readers that they

may, nevertheless, have some power and that the interpretation of the play is shared interaction. In addition, Dollimore's occasional use of the epistemic modality of possibility, and of questions to the readers, may also function to soften the underlying normativity of Dollimore's approach and to mediate that the readers have, at times, some choice in the ways in which they interpret the text.

Significantly, Dollimore's references to, and criticism of other "readings", "views" and critics, indicates that there have actually been readers who have used this implied freedom and interpreted *KL* from a perspective other than the materialist one. At the same time, as suggested by the critic's strategies for mediating a categorical text-based model of interpretation in his own reading, these readers seem to have been wrong. This is because they have ignored, or refused to "see" what the text contains and foregrounds.

In principle, Dollimore could be taken to imply that for these readers the criterion for interpretation is outside the text: they read into the text something that is foreign to it. For Dollimore, in contrast, this picture is reversed: for him, the ultimate criterion is the text which directs the readers' interpretation. What both of these views share, however, is that the process of interpretation is seen as essentially unidirectional. In the non-materialist views, it is the readers who impose their meaning(s) on the text; in the materialist view, it is the text which does the same to the readers. In either case, there is no interaction between the entities. It could be perhaps argued, on the one hand, that Dollimore tries to assure his readers that the process of interpretation is a democratic one. On the other hand, he insists that it is far from democratic. The text (as mediated by the critic) is the autocrat which determines the way in which it should be interpreted.

A related point is the way in which the critic guides or instructs his readers in their reading of his essay: when dealing with the more abstract meaning elements, or ideological perspectives for examining the play, he often uses long sentences, complex syntax, difficult terminology, nominalizations, and packs his writing with a large number of complex intertextual references, which, put together, could be taken to mediate that the play is also a complex, and 'difficult' work, something that requires extra efforts from the readers. At the same time, when dealing, for example, with the plot of the play, or when arguing for the (allegedly text-immanent) meaning of the text, Dollimore uses distinctly less complex syntax, and simpler, and more concrete terminology, and verb phrases denoting the text "doing", "offering", and "repudiating" something. The use of such linguistic strategies suggests, in turn, that the interpretation of the play is ultimately not a complex affair: it is, quite simply, on in which the text actively foregrounds meaning, and the read-

ers passively receive it. The 'difficulty' and 'ease' of Dollimore's linguistic choices thus works to instruct or guide the readers in their discovery of the two aspects of the interpretation of *KL*, the complex and the straightforward one.

Context has a central place in Dollimore's approach. Its centrality is primarily evident in the abundance of references to, and discussions of, the text by the critic, in the complexity of the notion, and in the important function it appears to have in interpretation. Similar to the text, the situational context can also be seen as a threefold phenomenon. There is an indication in the essay that it is simultaneously a reading event, a viewing event, and a reading/viewing event through/against/in relation to other texts. There is an implication here that the interpretation of the play has to embrace all three aspects in order to be complete.

The large number of references to the institutional context indicate that it may be the most important aspect of context for Dollimore. In an attempt to provide a more general literary and generic framework around *KL*, he occasionally refers to other plays by Shakespeare and to contemporary drama. However, what is more important are his numerous references to previous literary criticism. A starting point for his analysis of earlier criticism is that he takes the existence of both the "humanist" and "Christian" view for granted. In the actual analysis of these views he concentrates not only on the description of their main tenets, but also on a detailed criticism and, ultimately, a refutation of them. In doing this he moves from the abstract level of the "views", to showing how they are exemplified in various critics' works, and to examining underlying assumptions in both individual critics' work, and in the "humanist" and "Christian" view. A driving force in the criticism seems to be that Dollimore attempts to demonstrate how "the humanist view" is really a mutation of, and equally inappropriate as, "the Christian view". An analysis of this kind seems to offer a means with which he is able to distinguish his own approach from the earlier ones.

The ways in which the literary critical aspect of the institutional context affects Dollimore's interpretation come out most clearly in his analysis and criticism of individual critics' work. This analysis involves a careful scrutiny of several humanist critics, of quoting, reporting, commenting, evaluating, criticizing, and repudiating their interpretations of the play. The carefulness of the analysis derives mainly from the fact that Dollimore uses direct speech quotations to report the critics' ideas. This strategy, because the actual words of the critics are repeated verbatim, gives the readers a chance to check Dollimore's points against actual evidence. However, Dollimore also uses narrative reports of speech acts to report the humanist critics' views. With this strategy he is able to integrate other critics' points more closely with his own argumentation, so that it

sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish to whom the ideas thus reported really belong. In the analysis of the humanist critics' views Dollimore also takes care to show his appreciation of the skill, quality or importance of their work and to indicate conscientiously the source of his quotes. On the other hand, he categorically repudiates the contents of their interpretations. In doing this he is extremely categorical: as usual, the linguistic indicator of this is the use of generalizations.

In his analysis of the underlying assumptions of literary criticism Dollimore frequently relies on the writings of non-literary writers, and on ideas suggested or developed by them. These references, like the references to literary criticism, range from the very specific to the very general. Together with the references to literary criticism, they also form a complex network of intertextuality, which powerfully suggests the circulation, and mediation of assumptions, values and beliefs in literature, in reading literature, and in culture, in general. Moreover, Dollimore seems to use this particular aspect of the institutional context for three purposes: firstly, he compares the assumptions of literary criticism to ideas suggested outside literary criticism, in philosophy, for example. Secondly, he evaluates ideas and assumptions that have been originally introduced outside literary criticism, but that it has adopted and converted to its own purposes. Most significantly, this is the case with Dollimore's references to Seneca, stoicism, and Bacon. Thirdly, the critic refers to such writers as Gramsci and Brecht in an attempt to find support for his own interpretive points. What is noteworthy, too, is that references of this kind tend to be more general than Dollimore's references to literary criticism. A clear indication of this is that, when reporting ideas originally introduced by others, Dollimore uses more often the strategy of narrative report of speech acts than direct speech quotations.

Finally, on the basis of Dollimore's extensive examination of the institutional context and of his categorical and normative own "reading", it could be concluded that, similar to the text and the readers, the socio-cultural context of the interpretation of *KL* also appears to be dual. First, as is implied by Dollimore's analysis and criticism of earlier literary criticism, it seems that the socio-cultural context of the interpretation of the play has been plural in the sense that various approaches from different ideological perspectives, have been suggested. As the readers' assumptions, beliefs, and values have diverged in such a way, it could be argued that the socio-cultural context has thus not been homogeneous. In the words of cultural materialists, this means that the text has been appropriated differently for different causes and in different contexts. Second, as Dollimore's insistence on the text as the repository and controlling force in interpretation suggests, there is a strong emphasis in his own reading on the fact that he expects or even requires from his readers that

they interpret the text 'correctly', according to the text-based/materialist way. In a way an expectation of this kind is equivalent to requiring that the readers adopt the socio-cultural context recommended by Dollimore. In this view of the context, the text is then the ultimate force which binds the readers together and thus makes them members of a homogeneous socio-cultural context.

In sum, in spite of the fact that, in theory, Dollimore acknowledges the ideological forces motivating and triggering interpretation, and the plurality and indeterminacy of the text, his implicit model of interpretation seems to be solidly text-based, at least as far as Dollimore's own reading of *KL* is concerned. The adoption of such a model enables the critic to argue, on the one hand, that his own "materialist reading" of the play is correct, because it is what the text foregrounds, and, on the other hand, that the "humanist view" and the "Christian view" are incorrect, because they are actually refuted by the text. The text, seen as independent from its writer, is thus the ultimate criterion in the making of meaning. The flow of meaning is essentially unidirectional, from the text to the readers, with no feedback from, and interaction with, the readers. The text is active, and the readers passive. The text actively transmits its meaning to the readers, and the readers passively receive it. There is also a strong emphasis on convergence of values, beliefs, and assumptions in this view: the text is the norm which requires from the readers that they adopt the materialist view as the only interpretive lens which does not distort the text. The critic's text-based criteria also enable him to appear as an unproblematic mediator of the text's meaning, for whom the text is both the validator of basically what is his own interpretation, and an invalidator of other non-materialist interpretations.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter I shall give the general profile of the two critics' mediation strategies and interpretive criteria, and point out major similarities and differences between them. The summary will be followed by an evaluation of the study and a discussion of the implications of its findings in terms of future research and the application of them to the teaching of English language and literature in an academic context.

### **7.1 Summary and comparison of Knight's and Dollimore's interpretive criteria and mediation strategies**

The main findings of the analysis of the two essays will be summarized below in a number of tables. Each table deals with one entity of the process/event of interpretation. In addition, they show what the relationships between the entities are like. To begin with, TABLE 63 presents the main findings of the notion and the function of the text and of the strategies used to mediate them in the two essays.

gest this, they use the passive: this strategy effectively mediates that, while there is a plan and purpose in the design of the text, the source of this plan and purpose is not clear. At times it appears to be the text, at other times it could equally well be the author. The use of the passive in these cases is thus also an efficient strategy for avoiding the difficult issue of authorial intention.

What differentiates the two critics is that, more than Dollimore, Knight also mediates with more explicit means, that the author has a function in interpretation: most significantly, by assigning agency to the author a few times, he suggests that he can ultimately be seen as responsible for embedding (a certain) meaning within the text. In addition, even though Knight avoids referring to, evaluating or discussing the author explicitly, the author evidently appears to him as masterful and ingenious. This is apparent in, for example, his use of metonymy to refer to the author. Through the use of such an indirect strategy, Knight is able to characterize Shakespeare highly favorably and to indicate his respectful attitude towards him. Dollimore, in turn, tries to avoid the topic of the author as much as he can: an indication of this is the way in which he makes no references to the author in his essay and consistently analyzes the text as independent from the author. The author is thus clearly marginalized; in other words, he does not appear to be a central or relevant component of Dollimore's interpretive criteria.

TABLE 65 presents a summary of the notion and the function of the critic as a reader of *KL* and of the linguistic strategies used in their mediation.

**TABLE 65 Main findings of the analysis of Knight's and Dollimore's essays: the notion and the function of the critic**

	Knight	Dollimore
1. Notion of the critic	Critic marginalized.	Critic marginalized.
2. Strategies	Displacement of interpretive power and authority to the text (emphasis on the active text, agency).	Displacement of interpretive power and authority to the text (emphasis on the active text, agency).
3. Function of the critic	(i) 'Discoverer' of meaning, demonstrator of what the text 'means' and 'does'.  (ii) Mediator of meaning.	(i) 'Arguer' for what the text 'means' and 'does'. (ii) Evaluator of earlier criticism. (iii) Mediator of meaning.
4. Strategies	Verb phrases denoting the critic's task as "noticing", "cutting out", "emphasizing" meaning.	Verb phrases denoting the task as "arguing" both for his "reading" and against other "readings".
5. Text - critic relationship	(i) Text foregrounds meaning, the critic discovers it. (ii) Text important, given	(i) Text foregrounds meaning the critic argues for what the text 'means' and 'does'. (ii) Text less important, not a given.
6. Strategies	(i) cf. TABLE 63 (ii) a large number of citations from the text (20.7 % of the total n. of words); longish citations; the edition of <i>KL</i> not indicated.	(i) cf. TABLE 63 (ii) a small number of citations (8.9. % of the total n. of words); shorter, one-word and near-citations; the edition of <i>KL</i> indicated
6. Author - critic relationship	Critic respectful toward the author	Author marginalized

With respect to the author's notion and function the critics are similar in the way in which they displace their own power and authority as interpreters to the text and argue that the text unproblematically foregrounds meaning, thus marginalizing their own role in interpretation. A linguistic indicator of this is the presentation of the text as an active force controlling interpretation by, for example, assigning agency to it (cf. TABLE 63). In both approaches the text is apparently all that counts: it is presented as if it unequivocally controls interpretation.

In Knight's approach this text-based position means that he himself has the role of the 'discoverer' of meaning, who, thanks to his status as a professional 'better reader', is able to "notice" and "cut out" meaning from the text. At the same time, he is also a mediator, who demonstrates to others what the text contains. In Dollimore's approach the reliance on the text as the supreme authority in interpretation means that he has the role of the 'arguer', who, according to the authority invested in him by the text, argues both for his own reading and against other (allegedly non-text-based) readings. Similar to Knight, he could also be seen as a mediator in that he presents his interpretation as the correct one and other - the "humanist" and "Christian" views in particular - as incorrect misinterpretations of the text.

In spite of the fact that both critics take the text to be the embodiment of meaning and controlling force in interpretation, there seems to be a significant difference in their attitude toward the text. In Knight's approach, the primary text seems important: one indication of this is the fact that one fifth (20.7 %) of his essay consists of direct quotations. At the same time, he does not indicate what edition of the play he is using. This suggests that he takes for granted that there is only one primary text - and not different editions of it. In Dollimore's approach, in contrast, the text is less prominent than in Knight's (quotations from the primary text represent only 8.9 % of the essay). Further, unlike Knight, Dollimore uses a number of short, one-word and near-quotations. Quotations of this kind sometimes have the effect that the borderline between the text and Dollimore's interpretation of it is not clear. He also indicates which edition of the play he uses: this shows that for him the text is not an unproblematic notion: obviously, different editions represent differing views of the play.

Finally, Knight considers the text primarily the author's text, whereas Dollimore regards the text as independent from its writer (cf. TABLE 64).

Table 66 summarizes the analysis of the critics' notion and function of the readers.

**TABLE 66 Main findings of the analysis of Knight's and Dollimore's essays:  
the notion and function of the readers**

	<b>Knight</b>	<b>Dollimore</b>
<b>1. Notion of the readers</b>	(i) Passive, uniform, subservient to the text. (ii) Responses affective and cognitive.	(i) Passive, uniform, subservient to the text. (ii) Responses cognitive. (iii) Active, plural, dominating the text.
<b>2. Strategies</b>	(i) Assignment of agency to the text, the passive, perceptual verb phrases, generalizations deontic modality of obligation, inclusive <i>we</i> . (ii) Affective and cognitive phrases.	(i) Assignment of agency to the text, the passive, perceptual verb phrase, generalizations. deontic modality of obligation, inclusive <i>we</i> . (ii) Cognitive phrases. (iii) Emphasis on the existence of non-text-based views and readers.
<b>3. Function of the readers</b>	Receivers of text meaning.	(i) Receivers of text meaning. (ii) Distorters of text meaning.
<b>4. Strategies</b>	Assignment of agency to the text, presentation of readers as objects for the text's manipulation.	(i) Assignment of agency to the text, presentation of readers as objects for the text's manipulation. (ii) Emphasis on allegedly non-text-based views as misinterpretations.
<b>5. Text - readers relationship</b>	Relationship of cause and effect, no interaction.	(i) Relationship of cause and effect, no interaction. (ii) Readers as reading extrinsic meaning into the text, no interaction.
<b>6. Author - readers relationship</b>	Relationship of cause and effect, no interaction.	Author marginalized.
<b>7. Critic - readers relationship</b>	(i) Implication of shared interaction as indicated by the use of the inclusive <i>we</i> , rarity of direct commands and deontic modality of obligation.	(i) Implication of shared interaction as indicated by the use of inclusive <i>we</i> , rarity of direct commands and deontic modality of obligation.

(continues)

TABLE 66 (continues)

<p>(ii) Some implication of criticism as a dialogue with readers as indicated by questions, epistemic modality of possibility, acknowledgement of potential reader criticism, hedges, inclusive <i>we</i>.</p> <p>(iii) Underlying normativity: the critic as mediator of the text-immanent meaning.</p> <p>(iv) Specification of own goals, but own position presupposed</p> <p>(v) Use of 'easy' and 'difficult' style as a means of guiding readers in their perception of the text as a spatial and temporal entity.</p>	<p>(ii) Implication of criticism as a dialogue with readers as indicated by questions, epistemic modality of possibility, inclusive <i>we</i>; and with other critics as indicated by the discussion of earlier criticism.</p> <p>(iii) Underlying normativity: the critic as a mediator of the text-immanent meaning.</p> <p>(iv) Specification of own goals and position.</p> <p>(v) Use of 'easy' and 'difficult' style as a means of guiding readers in the perception of the interpretation as not a straightforward task.</p>
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TABLE 66 shows that there is a great deal in common in Knight's and Dollimore's approaches as far as the notion and the function of readers is concerned. Firstly, there is a strong implication in both of them that readers are to be seen as passive receivers of the text's meaning, who have, in turn, uniform assumptions, values, and beliefs. The critics also use very similar strategies to suggest this. Secondly, both of them also picture the relationship between the text and readers as a unidirectional relation of cause (i.e. the text) and effect (i.e. readers' responses), where there is no feedback from, or interaction with, readers. Thirdly, the relationship implied between the critic and readers is essentially the same in both approaches. In spite of the underlying normativity of their approaches, both critics make an effort to create an impression of literary interpretation as shared interaction or dialogue with readers. Once more, they also rely on very similar linguistic strategies to mediate this idea: most significantly, they use the inclusive pronoun *we* and avoid using direct imperatives and the deontic modality of obligation in their references to readers. They also occasionally present questions to readers and use the epistemic modality of possibility to suggest that on certain points there may be room for more readerly interpretations. Moreover, Knight signals his awareness of potential reader criticism a few times. Both critics also alternate between 'easy' and 'difficult' styles and thus mediate that the interpretation of *KL* is not a simple and straightforward task. However, it seems on the whole that this suggestion of interpretation as shared interaction remains a rather superficial politeness strategy in both approaches, which perhaps

functions to camouflage their underlying categorical normativity by assuring readers that they, themselves, also have a role in interpretation.

The critics differ from each other in three significant respects here. As is indicated by the critics' choices of phrases denoting the quality of readers' responses, it seems that for Knight the readers' responses are both affective and cognitive, whereas for Dollimore they are primarily cognitive. In other words, for the former, interpretation is a matter of readers both 'feeling' and 'understanding' the play, while for the latter it is primarily a matter of 'understanding' it. In addition, as *KL* is essentially the author's text in Knight's approach, Knight could be interpreted to mediate that there is not only a relationship of cause and effect between the text and readers, but also between the author and readers. In this view, it is the author who is ultimately responsible for producing certain kinds of responses in readers. In Dollimore's approach this is not so: since the author is marginalized, there is no implication of any kind of relationship or interaction between the author and readers.

Finally, perhaps the most significant difference between the critics is, nevertheless, that Dollimore also suggests that there are readers who are not passive, uniform, and subservient to the text. He refers to readers who have interpreted the play from a literary critical and ideological perspective other than that represented by his own approach, i.e. cultural materialism. As is suggested by his extensive discussion, analysis and evaluation of representatives and assumptions of these approaches, Dollimore implies that these readers are active and plural, and that they dominate the text. They are active in that they are not controlled by the allegedly text-immanent 'political' meaning, plural in that they represent various ideologically motivated and divergent views of the play, and they dominate the text in that they read text-external meanings into it. In Dollimore's view, these approaches are then misinterpretations which are bound to distort the text. What is also interesting to note is that in neither of his two conceptualizations of the notion and the function of the reader (active/passive; uniform/plural; subservient/dominating) is there any implication of interaction: the process of interpretation is unidirectional in both.

Next, TABLE 67 presents a summary of the analysis of the notion and the function of the context in the two essays.

**TABLE 67** Main findings of the analysis of Knight's and Dollimore's essays:  
the notion and function of the context

	<b>Knight</b>	<b>Dollimore</b>
<b>1. Notion of the situational context</b>	Reading and viewing event.	Reading, viewing and reading/viewing event through/with/against other texts.
<b>2. Strategies</b>	References to <i>KL</i> as a written text and a theatrical performance; as spatial and temporal.	References to <i>KL</i> as a written text and a theatrical performance, and written/theatrical text in relation to other texts.
<b>3. Function of the situational context</b>	No direct function, but an implication that interpretation has to involve both the spatial and temporal dimension	No direct function, but an implication that interpretation has to involve the text and the play, and the text/play in relation to other texts
<b>4. Strategies</b>	As in (2)	As in (2)
<b>5. Notion of the institutional context</b>	(i) Mainly tragedy and comedy. (ii) Other texts by Shakespeare. (iii) Some references to other authors. (iv) A few indirect references to philosophy, literature and literary criticism.	(i) Mainly literary criticism. (the humanist view, the Christian view; individual literary critics; background assumptions). (ii) Non-literary writers, ideas, concepts suggested by them. (iii) Shakespeare's drama. (iv) Contemporary drama.
<b>6. Strategies</b>	(i) Discussion of genre. (ii-iii) Comparison of <i>KL</i> with other texts. (iv) Indirect reference, FIS, NRSA.	(i) Discussion, evaluation, criticism of earlier views and their assumptions, DS, NRSA. (ii) Comparison, evaluation and search for support, NRSA, DS (iii-iv) Comparison.
<b>7. Function of the institutional context</b>	(i) Specification of genre. (ii- iii) Indication of similar different themes, some awareness of the influence of intertextuality in interpretation. (iv) Relation of <i>KL</i> to philosophy, religion, literary criticism, literature as a given.	(i) Demonstration of literary criticism as positioned activity, problematization of the text. (ii) Dissemination of underlying assumptions. (iii-iv) Creation of a more general literary and generic framework.
<b>8. Strategies</b>	As in (6).	As in (6).

(continues)

TABLE 67 (continues)

9. Notion of the socio-cultural context	Implication of a shared socio-cultural context.	(i) Implication of a shared socio-cultural context. (ii) Implication of a plural socio-cultural context.
10. Strategies	Generalizations, inclusive <i>we</i> , assignment of agency to, the text, emphasis on reading as a sensory process of absorption.	(i) Generalizations, inclusive <i>we</i> , assignment of agency to the text emphasis on reading as a sensory of process of absorption. (ii) References to, discussions and evaluations of literary criticism on <i>KL</i> .
11. Function of socio-cultural context	Insurance of shared meaning.	(i) Insurance of shared meaning. (ii) Source of plural meanings.
12. Strategies	As in (10).	As in (10).
13. Text-context relationship	Shared context ensures shared text meaning.	(i) Shared context ensures shared text meaning. (ii) Different contexts as source of different meanings.
14. Author-context relationship	Shared context ensures shared author's meaning (as encoded in the text).	Author marginalized.
15. Reader-context relationship	Readers (must) share context.	(i) Readers (must) share context. (ii) Readers do not share context.

TABLE 66 shows that what Knight and Dollimore share is, firstly, that both of them consider the situational context of the interpretation of *KL* as both a reading and viewing event. In Dollimore's approach it is, in addition, a reading/viewing event in relation to other texts. Secondly, neither of the two critics assigns any direct function in the process of interpretation to the situational context. Thirdly, both refer to a number of other texts (other plays by Shakespeare, other literary writers and texts) and compare or contrast *KL* with them. Fourthly, a major assumption that the critics share is that they both seem to expect that the socio-cultural context of the interpretation of *KL* should be the same for all readers. Again, the strategies of generalization, the inclusive *we*, and the emphasis on interpretation as a sensory process of absorption could be regarded as strategies with which this expectation, if not requirement, is mediated in both essays. The reliance on a text-based criterion of interpretation makes it possible for both critics to suggest that there is actually no choice left for

readers, that the text controls their interpretation, thus controlling, indirectly, their assumptions, beliefs, and values, too. To understand the text correctly the readers are to adopt the vision encapsulated in the text. Or, vice versa, a shared and closed socio-cultural context ensures that the text (the author's text, in Knight's case) can be closed. In a way it could be argued that this is an effective strategy for smuggling in assumptions about not only the literary text in question, but also about literature, life, human existence, and the world in general.

There is not much else that the two critics share, particularly at the level of situational and institutional context. Most significantly, the two critics diverge radically in their views of what context is and what it does in literary interpretation. This is shown, for example, in the different emphasis and role that institutional context has in their interpretation of *KL*, the degree of explicitness of their respective (ideological) positions, the relevance granted to earlier literary criticism in the interpretation of this play, and the implication of the potential plurality of socio-cultural context. Another fundamental difference between the two critics seems to be that context is marginal and unproblematic for Knight, whereas it is central and complex for Dollimore.

The marginal and unproblematic character of Knight's context is particularly clearly manifest at the level of institutional context: Knight presents other texts as something with which *KL*, its themes and its elements can be compared, with no discussion or analysis of the potentially different traditions or genres, conventions, approaches, etc. that they represent. His references to this aspect of context are also very general: for example, he uses presupposition as a strategy for introducing major interpretive points, as in the case where he presents his definitions of tragedy and comedy as presupposed. In addition, he uses the strategies of free indirect speech (FIS) and narrative report of a speech act (NRSA) to report and refer to other texts, which means that he does not explicitly quote the exact wordings that he is referring to.

Context, in particular, the institutional context, is both central and complex in Dollimore's approach. Firstly, the fact that Dollimore devotes almost half of his essay to the discussion, analysis, and evaluation of earlier literary criticism on *KL* is clearly one indicator of this. Further, Dollimore is generally very explicit in the way in which he reports what previous literary critics have said about *KL*. For example, he uses a large number of direct speech (DS) quotations in his references to literary criticism. Secondly, the institutional context appears to be a multi-levelled construct: it ranges from very specific references to individual writers, through more general literary critical approaches or "views", to underlying philosophical, religious, ethical, and ideological assumptions in literary criticism. Thirdly, unlike Knight, Dollimore also analyzes very

explicitly the premises and tenets of the texts, authors and literary critical traditions that to which he refers. Fourthly, it seems that the institutional context has a decisive role in interpretation for Dollimore. This is because for him the dissemination of the assumptions of literary criticism is as much a part of the interpretation of *KL* as is the presentation of the interpretation itself. Fifthly, such an analysis is a means of showing how literary criticism is always positioned and how its assumptions always necessarily color or contaminate the text. In this sense, the analysis of the institutional context of *KL* in Dollimore's essay could in fact be regarded as a problematization of the text. Accordingly, there can be no pure and innocent text. Finally, what also differentiates Knight's and Dollimore's approaches is that the former appears to consider its starting point, premises, and (ideological) tenets as natural and given, and the latter makes them very explicit. In this they clearly represent opposite views.

The most important difference between the two approaches, however, may be Dollimore's implication that, since the text is always contaminated by the interpretations it is subjected to, the socio-cultural context of the interpretation of *KL* could also be taken to be plural. In other words, the different and conflicting "views" of the play are an indication of the different, and even conflicting socio-cultural contexts of their interpreters. However, as was seen above, in Dollimore's own "materialist" reading, this constructivist position is radically subverted by his insistence on the text as an embodiment of meaning and a controlling force in interpretation. What this implies is then, that, in practice, Dollimore abandons the constructivist position in his own interpretation of *KL* and argues, like Knight, that the text is the embodiment of meaning and the ultimate criterion of interpretation. In this way the innocent and uncontaminated text as the repository of meaning filters back into Dollimore's interpretive model.

In sum, in both approaches the critic's implicit model of interpretation appears to be monistic, normative and text-based. The text is the ultimate authority and norm in interpretation. In addition, in Dollimore's approach the existence of (at least) another, more reader- and context-based, model is also implied. According to this (misguided) model, the text has no authority and power to control or constrain interpretation. Instead, it is the readers and their assumptions, values, and beliefs that represent the determining force in interpretation.

It might be worth asking how generalizable the critics' own text-based models are or whether they are actually the outcomes of a particular negotiation of interpretive criteria simply for the purpose of analyzing Shakespeare's drama or *KL*. For instance, it would undoubtedly be difficult to apply Knight's spatial/temporal approach to the analysis of realistic prose or that of poetry. The reason for this is that in the interpretation

of realistic prose Knight would probably have to sacrifice something of his claim that a literary text contains complex and intricate levels of meaning and to focus more on the temporal aspect of the text, i.e. the plot, and characters' actions and relations to each other. In the interpretation of poetry, in contrast, it is possible that he would have to abandon his focus on the temporal dimension: obviously, it is not so easy to perceive poetry as evolving in time in the same way as with drama. Similarly, it is not so easy to see how Dollimore's text-based approach would deal with a literary text which he considers conservative or apolitical. In such a case it would be interesting to find out how the critic would renegotiate his interpretive criteria, whether he would still emphasize the text as an embodiment of meaning and a force controlling interpretation or whether he would adopt or a more consistently contextualist position and read the text through his materialist interpretive lens. Hence, speculations of this kind could thus suggest that interpretive criteria are not to be taken as a universally applicable and aprioristic collection of rules in actual critical and interpretive practice. In different contexts, in different reading events, with different texts, the criteria to be applied can be negotiated differently.

The analysis of the two essays also suggests how difficult it is to avoid relying on the text as an authority in interpretation. This finding raises, in fact, the interesting further issue of whether, and to what extent, literary criticism as an institution shares its critical assumptions and practices.

Another related question is whether, and in what respects, literary criticism derives its assumptions from language itself. That is, it may be that the reliance on the text as a container of meaning and active force directing interpretation may be related to a commonsensical (Western) view that pictures written texts as having 'contents' (note for example such expressions as the English: 'contents', the Finnish 'sisältö', the French 'le contenu', the Swedish 'innehåll', and the German 'Inhalt').

In linguistics, this view has been labelled as 'the container view' or 'the conduit metaphor' (see e.g. Moore and Carling 1982, Reddy 1979). The container view assumes that successful communication is a process where a mental structure located in the mind of the speaker/writer is converted into some spoken/written utterance. The speaker/hearer is seen as 'placing' meaning into the utterance, so that it can be said to 'contain' this meaning. Because the hearer/reader shares the same linguistic system with the speaker/writer, s/he is able to also 'understand' the meaning. In terms of the text this means that is a 'conduit' device that transports the meaning into the mind of the reader/hearer.

Bearing this in mind, it could perhaps be argued, following Lakoff's and Johnson's ideas (1980), that the text-based view of interpretation,

in spite of the numerous recent claims to the opposite, could, in practice be one of the metaphors that literary criticism lives by, metaphors which no doubt affect the ways in which it perceives its role.

The difficulty of avoiding the text as an authority of meaning is particularly evident in Dollimore's approach. Theoretically, Dollimore seems to assume that there is no unproblematic entity of the text, but only appropriations, "readings" and "views" of the text. In practice, however, the text is the ultimate authority in his own interpretation. What this means is that according to his theoretical position, the text is empty, and without any intrinsic meaning and value; according to his practical position the text is full and it has intrinsic meaning and value. This paradoxical position is, however, not characteristic of Dollimore only: as the above analysis of a number of models of reading and interpretation demonstrated, the problem seems to haunt a great many hermeneutic approaches.

A model of interpretation which emphasizes the power of the text has obvious advantages in literary criticism. On the one hand, if the text emphasis is taken to mean that criticism pays attention to the text in the sense that it makes its interpretive operations manifest by showing their connection to the text, by providing evidence from the text, for instance, then the reliance on such a model surely is a positive thing. In this sense Knight's text-based approach which includes a great deal of quotations from the primary text succeeds better than that of Dollimore, who includes considerably fewer quotations in his essay. With Knight, readers thus have a better chance to test his interpretive points than with Dollimore.

On the other hand, if the emphasis on the text entails - as it does for both Knight and Dollimore - that, no matter what the critics' critical and ideological approach is, the text is the only criterion of interpretation, then this has the (somewhat questionable) advantage that the text can be used by the critic as an absolute criterion by means of which his/her interpretation can gain authority. Both Knight and Dollimore in fact use their text-based criteria in this way, as a convenient *deus ex machina* for validating their respective idiosyncratic or ideologically motivated interpretations as the 'correct' ones and of invalidating interpretations that are not constructed 'in accordance' with the text.

However, the reliance on the text as the sole criterion of interpretation has also potential disadvantages. One of the most serious of these is that it makes the text something of an autocrat, as the discovery of its text-immanent meaning is the ultimate goal in interpretation. Such a view is clearly too restrictive, too totalitarian.

In addition, in Dollimore's approach, which emphasizes not only the text but also the role of context in interpretation, the reliance on the

text as the sole norm is clearly a handicap. The reason for this is that it becomes difficult, if not altogether impossible, to argue convincingly that interpretation is simultaneously a positioned activity and yet insist that the text, nevertheless, contains its meaning. The two positions, in fact, could be seen to contradict each other. The problem is that it is not easy to convince the readers that the interpretation suggested by the critic is somehow fundamentally different from all the rest of, differently positioned, interpretations of the text.

Instead of this kind of discovery model, a constructionist negotiation model such as the present one would no doubt serve Dollimore better, because it assumes that, while the text admittedly has a great deal of power to constrain interpretation, interpretation cannot properly be considered a process of discovery of the text-immanent meaning, but a process whereby the meaning of the text is constructed or negotiated. In this construction the readers, interpreting the text within a certain context and under the umbrella of particular assumptions and beliefs, have certain power, too. Clearly, the reliance on such a model would be more in accordance with Dollimore's critical premisses which focus on "potential" rather than "essence" (cf. Dollimore 1989:271).

## **7.2 Overview of the study**

In this section I shall give a general overview of the aims, orientation, theoretical framework, data, analytical framework, and methods of the present study.

### **7.2.1 Aims**

The aim of the study was to explore the linguistic strategies available to literary criticism for the purpose of mediating interpretive criteria to readers. More specifically, this involved the analysis and tentative comparison of the linguistic strategies with which two literary critics, G. Wilson Knight and Jonathan Dollimore, suggest their interpretive criteria to readers.

The fulfillment of this research task involved a number of operations. First, the orientation of the study toward the analysis of written language had to be determined. Second, the hermeneutical position of the study had to be specified, and third, an analytical framework had to be constructed, which could be applied to the examination of the two essays. As a consequence of this, it could be argued that the findings of the present study are fourfold: in addition to the findings of the analysis itself,

they also include the specification of the orientation, theory, and analytical procedure of the study.

### 7.2.2 Orientation

The orientation of the study toward the analysis of written language was specified as interdisciplinary: its influences and connections, most of which are themselves becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, range from stylistics to sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and literary studies. Such an orientation no doubt has both its advantages and disadvantages.

A major disadvantage of an interdisciplinary orientation of this kind now seems to be the fact that it is not anchored in any particular tradition. This means that its findings may not relate directly to what earlier research has suggested about the phenomenon in question. As it is not explicitly involved with any dialogue within a particular discipline, it can also remain rather isolated. In the present study this was occasionally felt to be a problem. On the other hand, this could not be avoided: since the present study could be regarded as a pioneering exploration in a topic not previously addressed, it has not had not much previous research to rely on.

Another problem of the present interdisciplinary orientation may be that it required a great deal of theoretical support and explication. This may be a problem in that the conceptualization of the premises and tenets of the approach requires a great deal of work from both the analyst and potential readers. However, this is not all for the worse: an account of the principles and fundamental assumptions also means that there is, hopefully, little that remains as given. In an interdisciplinary venture whose theoretical background is by definition varied this seems a particularly indispensable operation.

A major advantage of an orientation of this type may be that, if a study truly succeeds in operating in interdisciplinary terrain, it may be able to open up new perspectives to the phenomena it examines, and thus manage to portray them in a light in which they have not previously been viewed. Further, for the purpose of examining literary interpretation, an interdisciplinary orientation appears to be profitable, because, similarly as with language use in general, literary interpretation is a complex phenomenon. To be able to grasp at least some of its complexities, an interdisciplinary orientation was felt to be necessary and potentially fruitful.

### 7.2.3 Theoretical framework

The general theoretical framework of the present study was constructed on the basis of an extensive review of a number of hermeneutic models of reading, and models, and approaches to, literary interpretation. The most important finding of this review was that none of the models was directly applicable to the examination of the mediation strategies and interpretive criteria in literary criticism. The main reason for this was that most of the models of reading and interpretation emphasize the importance of only one, or two, entities involved in the interpretive process. In the more or less positivistically oriented psychological reading research this often means that the role of the text, the reader, or their interaction is emphasized. In these views, reading and/or interpretation is thus regarded as a monistic or dyadic affair where either the text or the reader struggle for power. Furthermore, many reading research models appear to rely more or less explicitly on the text as the repository of meaning. For them, meaning often appears as the determinate quality of the determinate text. It was also observed how reading research tends to treat reading as a de-contextualized, cognitive process taking place in readers' heads only. The situational, institutional, and socio-cultural context in which actual readings take place is thus not regarded as a force affecting reading at all. In this they differ radically from social-interactive and sociolinguistically oriented reading research in which context is seen as a powerful constraint on reading.

Even the more phenomenologically oriented recent literary models of interpretation have tended to conceptualize interpretation in monistic or dyadic terms: for example, there are models which insist on the decisive role of the author, reader, or community, or of text-reader interaction in interpretation. At the same time, perhaps as a reaction to an overemphasis on the text in New Criticism, these models have often marginalized the text as a force constraining interpretation. For models of this kind textual meaning no longer appears as a determinate quality of the determinate text, but as dynamic and variable, social, cultural and historical. This also implies that models of this kind have conceptualized interpretation in more contextual terms: interpretation is considered a positioned activity which is affected by its context in various ways. Here, too, the emphasis on the dynamic relationship between context and interpretation is perhaps most evident in certain social and interactive approaches: for these approaches literary interpretation is not only positioned but also dialogic. What this means, more specifically, is that the text is perceived as a forum within which writer and reader goals, premises and interpretive conventions are negotiated. Significantly, this negotiation does not necessarily mean that readers are obliged to find

what the writer's 'original' goals and interpretive conventions are, but that they also have got the choice of interpreting the text in a more idiosyncratic way.

The marginalization of the text in many literary models of interpretation has occasionally implied that its power in interpretation is also overlooked. And yet it clearly has a certain power to affect and constrain interpretation in its own way because it is written in a particular language, style and in particular linguistic forms. An acknowledgment of the textual power, the power of language, could in fact solve part of the problem haunting the practice of interpretation where, in spite of the theoretical claims to the opposite, the text as an authority of meaning creeps back to the interpretive picture.

For these reasons, among others, a holistic negotiation model was introduced tentatively. This model builds eclectically on various ideas suggested in a number of models of reading and interpretation. According to this model the interpretation of literary texts is considered a complex process of negotiation between the author, the text, readers and context. Firstly, in this view, the text is regarded as the stimulus which triggers the process of interpretation, a constraint which controls and channels the ways in which it can be interpreted by its language and style and a mediator which can mediate (at least some of) its writer's goals and premisses to readers. Secondly, the author is taken to be a negotiator in a dialogue with readers. S/he shapes and monitors the text according to what s/he assumes of his/her audience's expectations, assumptions and beliefs. Thirdly, readers are regarded as partly idiosyncratic and potentially creative constructors of meaning and partly textually and contextually constrained. In addition, similar to the author, they are regarded as meaning negotiators. In principle, they have the choice of interpreting the text according to the assumed authorial goals and premisses, or of constructing a more idiosyncratic or non-authorial interpretation. Fourthly, context - the situational, institutional, and socio-cultural context - is also regarded as having the power to direct and constrain interpretation. Finally, it is also assumed that in different settings and situations these components of the interpretive process can be negotiated differently.

What the adoption of this position implies is that there is taken to be no pure act of 'correct' interpretation, but only different interpretive negotiations. However, this does not mean that texts can validly be made to mean whatever their readers wish. On the contrary, if the texts are to be appreciated, interpretation has to pay close attention to them, their language and style. Interpretation is thus considered to be a dynamic and situated process in which interpretive power can be assigned in different degrees to the text, author, readers and context, but in which there is also something that remains stable: the text, written in a certain language.

To be fully acceptable as a hermeneutical model this view would obviously need to be tested with empirical means. Even its tentative acceptance means, however, that an analysis of interpretive criteria would have to include, in addition to an examination of the mediation strategies used by the critics, also an analysis of what role the literary author's intention, the critic's premisses and goals and the context has in the critics' respective interpretations. However, for reasons of research economy a holistic analysis of this kind was not carried out. Instead, the analysis focussed on the linguistic strategies that the critics use in their essays.

Admittedly, even the analysis of the various linguistic strategies involved in the mediation of interpretive criteria seems, besides ambitious, also problematic. For one thing, it is clearly not easy to operationalize such a multi-componential position and to make it cohesive. Likewise, it is problematic what the relationship between the linguistic features of the texts and the critics' interpretive criteria is like. Clearly, there is no one-to-one relationship between linguistic form (in this case 'strategies') and meaning (in this case 'interpretive criteria'). My specification of the relationship is not the discovery of what it 'really' or 'objectively' is like, but only an interpretation involving a particular constellation of interpretive criteria.

#### **7.2.4 Analytical framework**

The review of different models of reading and interpretation also showed that there are, in theory, various kinds of interpretive criteria available to interpreters of written texts. The criteria include, at least, the text, author, readers, context, or some combination of these.

To make sure that the two essays could be examined in a relatively systematic and replicable way, a stringent set of analytical questions were designed. The analytical questions focused on (1) the strategies that the critics use to suggest a particular notion of the primary text, of the literary author, of themselves as interpreters, of their implied readers and of the situational, institutional and socio-cultural context, and (2) the strategies that they use to suggest that one, or a combination, of the entities has a particular function in interpretation. In the analysis of the notions of the entities the critics' references to them and their immediate co-text was analyzed in a detailed way. In the examination of the functions of the entities, in turn, the methods of critical linguistics were applied. Most significantly, it was studied, whether, and in what ways the critics assign agency to the entities. To facilitate analysis, and to provide the findings in an unequivocal manner, the patterns of linguistic strategies were mostly presented in a tabular form.

This meant that the analysis had a great deal of scope and that not much attention could be paid to a more detailed analysis of the linguistic strategies that the critics used. But, then again, the exploratory orientation of the study implied specifically that the primary focus in the analysis was on the identification of the critics' mediation strategies and their relation to interpretive criteria. The more systematic analysis of the linguistic strategies themselves was considered one of the tasks for future research.

Looking back, it may be that some of the formulations and the questions in the framework could perhaps have been revised or even abandoned. One such case is perhaps the distinction between the notion and function of a component. In some instances - as in the analysis of Knight's notion and function of the text - it seemed a relevant distinction: this was because one of the most important of Knight's aims is the establishment of *KL* as a complex and multi-levelled entity, in addition to arguing that it has an important function in interpretation. In other cases, as in the analysis of Dollimore's view of the text, the distinction between its notion and function did not seem so well-motivated. The reason for this is that, for this critic, the text appears to be a much more straightforward entity than for Knight. Strictly speaking, as the primary goal of the analysis was to examine the linguistic means with which the critics suggest their interpretive criteria, it may be that the analysis could have been delimited only to an examination of the function of the different components in interpretation. This could clearly have narrowed down the scope of the analysis and allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the linguistic strategies. A counter-argument to such a solution, however, could be that before the function of a particular component in interpretation can be properly determined, it must be first established what its main characteristics are. For example, in the analysis of the readers' role in interpretation, the establishment of the notion of the readers as passive and subservient to the text could clearly be seen as a prerequisite for also establishing their function in interpretation as receivers of meaning.

The use of a clearly defined set of analytical questions ensured that both of the essays were analyzed following the same pattern. However, some variation and flexibility was also allowed: this showed, for example, in the analysis of the notion and the function of the text in Knight's essay and in the analysis of the notion and the function of context in Dollimore's essay. In these cases the amount of attention given to their analysis reflected the importance of these components in the critics' respective interpretive models.

One of the advantages of using an explicitly specified analytical grid is also that it can be considered a means with which the analysis can be replicated and (con)tested. There is one restriction, though, and this is that no matter how carefully structured an analysis of this kind is, it is no

guarantee for the discovery of the 'objective' truth about the data. In the end such an analysis is no more than an interpretation of the data.

### 7.2.5 Methods

The methods of the present analysis were qualitative. This means that the different strategies used by the critics were not quantified and submitted to a statistical analysis. Instead, the data was analyzed 'manually', but following the systematic procedure suggested by the analytical framework. The main reason for this was that, rather than giving a wholesale analysis of the strategies used in the essays, the analysis attempted to give an in-depth characterization of the two texts and aimed at proposing tentatively major similarities and differences between them.

This method also involved the examination of the spread and the number of the strategies used in the essays. Nevertheless, in the comparison of the two critics' mediation strategies and interpretive criteria, no frequencies of the individual strategies used by the critics were included. An exception to this was the comparison of the amount of quotations from the primary text in the essays. It was assumed the quantification and comparison of these figures was important in that they indicate how closely the two critics relate their interpretations to the primary text.

Another reason for not carrying out a quantitative analysis was that it was assumed that a high frequency of a particular linguistic feature may not necessarily be an indicator of its prominence. It may be that a low frequency of a strategy may also suggest its prominence. An extensive and detailed qualitative analysis that keeps intimately close to the texts was thus felt to provide a more sensitive means of deciphering the complex ways in which the critics suggest a particular set of interpretive criteria than a quantitative analysis. However, for the purpose of analyzing a larger number of critical texts and of comparing their mediation strategies with each other in a more rigorous way, a quantitative approach would no doubt be both necessary and useful - with the restriction, however, that such an analysis is based on formulations and hypotheses suggested and tested by a qualitative study such as the present one.

### 7.2.6 Data

The two essays, G. Wilson Knight's "*King Lear* and the comedy of the grotesque" (first published in 1930) and Jonathan Dollimore's "*King Lear* and essentialist humanism" (first published in 1984), were chosen as data for the present analysis. Their choice was primarily motivated by the fact that they clearly represent different eras, traditions, and theoretical, critical

and ideological orientations in Shakespeare criticism. It thus appeared to be an interesting analytical challenge to attempt to find out whether their different approaches were in some way reflected in their interpretive criteria and in the linguistic strategies that are used to suggest them. In addition, the two texts appeared to be technically comparable to each other: their implied audience, type, and length as texts are similar.

At the beginning of the analysis it seemed that the essays did not represent a large amount of data. However, as the analysis progressed, it very soon became obvious that there were perhaps too many data, and that the analysis, particularly at the chosen level of specificity, would produce an enormous number of results. Because the present writer did not want to compromise the fulfilling of the two major aims of the study, the in-depth exploration and the comparison of the two critics' linguistic mediation strategies and interpretive criteria, both texts were nevertheless analyzed.

### 7.3 Future research and pedagogic implications

After the present preliminary attempt at exploring the mediation of interpretive criteria in literary criticism, there are at least four directions that research of this kind can take.

The first direction could be the use of the present study as a pilot stage for a large-scale and quantitative analysis of a number of literary critical essays. The major objective in this venture could be the discovery, analysis, and comparison of more general conventions in literary criticism for mediating interpretive criteria. It seems reasonable to assume that the present analytical framework could be further developed and a system designed with which a larger corpus of texts could be coded for this purpose. In this analysis a relatively simple computerized concordance program - such as the Oxford Concordance Program or the more sophisticated CHILDES program - could be used. Such an analysis would no doubt yield findings that are more generalizable, but this could be at the cost of sacrificing the intimate contact with the critical texts that, for example, the present study has achieved. In other words, such an analysis might not reveal much about the peculiarities and characteristics typical of the texts in question. In this approach there could thus be a danger of not seeing the trees for the forest.

The second direction that research of this kind could take is the opposite: to go deeper into individual texts and focus more specifically on the linguistic analysis of one linguistic strategy or some strategies used in them. On the basis of the findings of the present study, an interesting

research topic in this line could be, for example, a detailed study of the critic-reader relationship and interaction. Relevant linguistic strategies to be examined in this context could be politeness, generalizations, modality, presupposition, and agency. A potential danger in this approach is that the analysis may end up being too atomistic and, in particular, it may not tell us much about the text as a whole and of the relationships between their various linguistic, discursal, and pragmatic features. In this approach there is then the possibility of not seeing the forest for the trees.

The third possible direction for future research is to continue along the lines suggested by the present study. This means that the present analytical procedures could be replicated with a number of other literary critical texts, and qualitative and in-depth analyses of them could be carried out. In addition, this kind of analysis could be accommodated to include some quantification of linguistic strategies in order to make their comparison more rigorous. After a series of case analyses, a number of different profiles of interpretive criteria and mediation strategies could then be specified, analyzed and compared with each other. Such an approach could perhaps be considered as a means of providing findings which could be generalizable (to some extent) and yet close to, and illustrative of, the individual texts themselves. In other words, ideally, neither the trees nor the forest would be missed. The problem with this solution is, however, that it seems to be the task of a lifetime.

The fourth direction for future research could be to apply the present findings to the teaching of English language and literature in an academic context. The analytical procedures could well be modified for the purpose of examining the discourses of teaching reading skills and literature to undergraduate students in the context of English as the first language (L1) and English as the second/foreign language (ESL/EFL). The underlying motivation here is that, similar to literary criticism, the discourses of teaching literature and reading can also be taken to have their implicit interpretive criteria that they mediate to students in a covert way. Thus, they socialize students in a powerful way to accept assumptions about literature, written texts, reading, interpretation, etc., as natural and self-evident. An analysis of these discourses could thus be a means through which their underlying mechanisms and assumptions could be uncovered, analyzed and submitted to critical evaluation.

Such a research direction can also be considered relevant *within* the context of teaching literature and reading skills as a means of making students aware of the underlying assumptions of these fields and discourses. If it is assumed, as the present study suggests, that the mediation of implicit interpretive criteria can function as a means with which readers of literary criticism can be depowered, then it could also be claimed that the provision, and application of, an analytical toolkit of this kind can

be seen as a step towards empowering them. Clearly, this appears to be true in the context of teaching, too.

For example, an analysis of the discourses of teaching of reading skills, particularly in academic English as the second/foreign language context, could be a way to problematize its criteria of text comprehension and its objectives. As was demonstrated in the review of a number of reading research models, there seems to be a pervasive belief in reading theory and pedagogy, that reading equals the uncovering of what the text conceals, of discovering its 'authorial meaning' or its underlying 'propositions'. Reading is thus considered something that takes place in a decontextual vacuum between the text and the reader and no attention or not much, is paid to readers' potentially plural goals in reading, as well as the role of setting and context. Furthermore, there often seems to be an assumption in the teaching of reading skills that 'reading comprehension' is fundamentally different from (literary) interpretation. However, as recent research has shown (see e.g. Fairclough 1989), other texts, besides literary, may have various levels of meaning, and they can be, and often are, interpreted rather than merely read.

In the same vein, in the context of teaching literature an analysis of the strategies with which interpretive criteria are mediated could be a way of raising students' awareness of the fact that literature teaching is not something that objectively and unproblematically helps them to see what the text 'contains'. Instead, it could make them realize that, like literary criticism, the teaching of literature is always positioned and 'contaminated' in that it is based, more or less consciously, not only on certain ideological assumptions concerning the content of the literary texts it deals with but also on a set of interpretive criteria. An analysis of the linguistic strategies of the pedagogic discourses with which literature is mediated could thus provide students with a set of questions with which they themselves could identify, analyze and criticize their underlying interpretive criteria. Ultimately, it could thus be one way of helping them to become, instead of objects manipulated by the pedagogic discourses surrounding them, subjects actively and critically in control of their dealings and relations with literature.

## YHTEENVETO

### Tavoitteet

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli tarkastella niitä kielellisiä keinoja, joita kirjallisuuskritiikki käyttää välittämään tiettyjä tulkinnan kriteerejä lukijoille. Tulkinnan kriteereillä tarkoitetaan tässä yhteydessä niitä perusteita tai evidenssiä, jonka pohjalta lukija muodostaa tulkintansa tekstistä.

Perinteisesti akateemista kirjallisuuskritiikkiä ei ole tutkittu kovinkaan paljon. Viime aikoina on voinut kuitenkin nähdä, että tämä kuva on vähitellen muuttumassa ja että kirjallisuuskritiikki on tulossa yhdeksi kiinnostavaksi tutkimuskohteeksi. Joitakin esimerkkejä on jo olemassa: kirjallisuuskritiikin lingvistisiä, stilistisiä ja diskurssikonventioita ovat tarkastelleet kriittisesti muun muassa Trevor Eaton 1978, Ronald Carter ja Walther Nash 1990, Paul Simpson 1990 ja Susan Peck MacDonald 1990. Näiden tutkijoiden tavoitteina on ollut kirjallisuuskritiikin laadun ja eetoksen parantaminen (Carter ja Nash ja Peck MacDonald) ja sen osoittaminen miten modaalisuus voi vaikuttaa ja muokata lukijoiden käsityksiä ja suhdetta kirjallisuuteen (Eaton ja Simpson). Kaikissa näissä tutkimuksissa on mukana myös vahva pedagoginen pyrkimys: kirjallisuuskritiikin tarkastelua pidetään tärkeänä, koska sen katsotaan ohjaavan voimakkaasti lukijoiden käyttäytymistä. Sen konventioiden tarkastelu voi tarjota lukijoille konkreettisia välineitä, joilla arvioida kritiikin välittämiä käsityksiä.

Tulkinnan kriteereiden välittämistä kirjallisuuskritiikissä ei ole kuitenkaan tutkittu systemaattisesti lainkaan tähän mennessä. Tämä siitä huolimatta, että myös ne omalta osaltaan - varsinkin kun ne näyttävät

useimmiten olevan enemmän implisiittisiä kuin eksplisiittisiä - ohjaavat lukijoiden käyttäytymistä. Esimerkiksi, jos kriitikko väittää tai implikoi, että kirjallisen tekstin merkitys on löydettävissä vain tekstistä, tällä on se vaikutus, että lukijoiden omilla (idiosynkraattisilla) tulkinnoilla ei katso- ta olevan mitään arvoa. Tai, päinvastoin, jos kriitikko vakuuttaa lukijoil- leen, että tekstin tulkinnassa on kyseessä ainoastaan lukijan henkilökohtainen, luova merkityksien luominen, tämä marginalisoi tek- stin tekemällä siitä pelkästään havaintoärsykkeen. Kummassakin tapauk- sessa kriitikon tulkinnan kriteerit tekevät tulkinnasta tapahtuman/prosessin, jossa 'tulkintavalta' annetaan jollekin tietylle te- kijälle (joko tekstille tai lukijalle) ja otetaan pois joltakin muulta tekijältä. Tässä mielessä tulkinnan kriteereitä voisi hyvin pitää ideologisina käsi- tyksinä: ne ohjaavat ja rajoittavat niitä valinnan mahdollisuuksia, joita lu- kijoilla on tekstintulkinnassa ja siten myös vaikuttavat siihen, miten lukijat hahmottavat oman roolinsa tekstin tulkitsijoina.

Tämän tutkimuksen keskeiset oletukset ovat siis seuraavanlaisia.

(1) Kirjallisuuskritiikki tukeutuu aina tulkinnan kriteereihin. (2) Kirjalli- suuskriitikot käyttävät tiettyjä kielellisiä keinoja välittääkseen nämä kri- teerit lukijoille. (3) Näiden kriteereiden välittäminen lukijoille on useimmiten implisiittistä siinä mielessä, että kriitikot eivät yleensä avoi- mestä määrittele omia kriteereitään vaan käyttävät epäsuorempia keinoja. (4) Koska näiden epäsuorienkin kielellisten keinojen käyttö ovat kuitenkin yhteydessä kriitikoiden tulkinnan kriteereihin, niitä voidaan pitää prag- maattisesti motivoituina ja tiettyyn päämäärään pyrkivinä. Tästä syystä näiden keinojen käyttöä kutsutaan tutkimuksessa nimellä 'strategiat'.

## Tutkimuksen lähestymistapa

Tutkimuksen lähestymistapa on poikkitieteellinen ja se perustuu viimeai- kaisille painotuksille kirjallisessa lingvistiikassa ja stilistiikassa; sosio- lingvistiikassa, kriittisessä diskurssianalyysissä ja pragmatiikassa; ja post-srukturalistisessa ja post-modernissa kirjallisuudentutkimuksessa ja lukemisen vastaanoton tutkimuksessa.

Viimeaikaisen kirjallisen kielitieteellä, stilistiikalla ja tällä tutkimu- sella on yhteistä se, että ne pyrkivät valikoivaan ja kriittiseen poikkitie- teellisyyteen, määrittelevät oman positionsa (toisin sanoen, kriittiset, analyttiset ja usein myös ideologiset premissinsä) ja painottavat niin sys- temaattisen ja yksityiskohtaisen analyysin merkitystä kuin myös tekstin ulkoisen sosiaaliseen, kulttuurisen ja historiallisen kontekstin merkitystä ja vaikutusta kielenkäyttöön, tekstien tulkintaan ja analyysiin.

Sosiolingvistiikan kanssa tämä tutkimus puolestaan jakaa käsityksen siitä, että tekstien tulkinta voidaan nähdä yhtäältä (osaltaan) tuloksena monimutkaisesta sosio-kulttuurisesta prosessista ja toisaalta tapahtumana, jossa ovat mukana kirjoittaja, teksti, lukijat ja konteksti.

Diskurssin tutkimuksesta tämä tutkimus on saanut myös vaikutteita. Tärkeimpinä näistä on analyysin kohdentuminen, ei ainoastaan lauseensisäiseen kieleen, vaan lauserajat ylittävään kieleen, diskurssiin. Myös n.s. kriittinen lingvistiikka ja diskurssitutkimus, jonka edustajina voitaisiin pitää sellaisia tutkijoita kuin Norman Fairclough (1989), Teun van Dijk (1987) ja Jean-Jacques Weber (1992) on tarjonnut tälle tutkimukselle näkökulman, jonka mukaan diskurssi voi välittää kielenkäyttäjille arvoja, asenteita, uskomuksia ja käsityksiä, mukaan lukien myös tulkinnan kriteereitä.

Pragmatiikasta periytyy puolestaan ajatus, että kaikki kielen käytössä, kaikilla kielen tasoilla on pragmaattisesti motivoitua (Verschueren 1987), ja että tekstien tulkinta ei ole ainoastaan tekstin tai kontekstin ohjaama tapahtuma vaan myös kognitiivinen tapahtuma, jossa lukijat tulkitsevat tekstejä tukeutuen kognitiiviseen konteksteihinsa (Sperber ja Wilson 1986).

Kuten post-strukturalismi (esimerkiksi Derrida 1972) ja post-modernismi (Jameson 1984), myös tämä tutkimus korostaa tekstien tulkinnan monimutkaisuutta, potentiaalista pluraalisuuta ja kontekstisidonnaisuutta. Ja kuten lukemisen vastaanoton tutkimus, se olettaa, että tulkinnassa on kyse lukijan ja tekstin interaktiosta, ei yksinomaan tekstistä.

## Tutkimuksen teorettinen viitekehys: tulkinta neuvotteluna

Tutkimuksessa arvioitiin joukko lukemisen tutkimuksen esittämiä lukemisen malleja ja kirjallisuudentutkimuksen tulkinnan malleja. Tämän arvioinnin pohjalta määriteltiin sekä tutkimuksen teorettinen viitekehys että relevantit analyysikategoriat.

Teoreettisen viitekehysten määrittelyn kannalta tärkein huomio oli, että niin lukemisen tutkimuksessa kuin kirjallisuuden tutkimuksessa ei ole olemassa yksimielisyyttä siitä, mikä, tai mitkä ovat 'oikeat' tulkinnan kriteerit. Päin vastoin, molemmat ovat ehdottaneet monia, jopa toisilleen vastakkaisia, tulkinnan kriteerejä. Näihin ehdotuksiin ovat kuuluneet tekstin kirjoittajan, itse tekstin, lukijoiden, tekstin ulkoisen kontekstin, tai näiden erilaisten yhdistelmien korostaminen. Tästä huomiosta oli selvästi seurauksena se, että kritiikin käyttämien kielellisten strategioiden

den analyysissä tuli ottaa huomioon se, että kirjallisuuskriitikot voivat tulkinnoissaan tukeutua hyvinkin moninaisesti ja erilaisiin kriteereihin.

Huolimatta kriteereiden moninaisuudesta, sekä lukemisen tutkimuksessa että kirjallisuuden tutkimuksessa on viime aikoina ollut nähtävissä pyrkimystä pois monistisista malleista. Niiden sijaan on ehdotettu malleja, jotka näkevät lukemisen ja/tai tulkitsemisen prosessina, jossa useampi tekijä voi periaatteessa vaikuttaa tulkintaan. Näiden mallien pohjalta rakennettiin eklektisesti myös tämän tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys. Kärjistettynä tämän viitekehysten mukaan tekstin merkitys voidaan konstruoida erilailla eri aikakausina, eri kulttuureissa, eri yhteisöissä, eri institutionaalisissa konteksteissa, eri tilanteissa, eri lukijoiden tulkinnoissa ja jopa saman lukijan eri lukukerroilla.

Tämä ei kuitenkaan tarkoita sitä, että teksti itsessään on vain *tabula rasa*, joka voidaan oikeutetusti pakottaa merkitsemään mitä tahansa. Tekstillä on itse asiassa hyvin paljon valtaa ohjata tulkintaa. Ensinnäkin, tekstillä on tulkinnassa luonnollisesti tärkeä osa: ilman sitä ei olisi mitään mitä tulkita. Toiseksi, tekstillä on valta sekä virittää tulkintaa. Se virittää tulkintaprosessin koska sen voidaan katsoa viestivän jotakin, josta voi tulla 'viesti' lukijoille. Toisin sanoen, niinkuin sosio-interaktiivisesti suuntautuneet lukemisen mallit esittävät (ks. esimerkiksi Nystrand 1989; MacKenzie 1990), teksti välittää jotakin sen kirjoittajan oletetuista tai sosiaalisesti ratiofioiduista intentioista, tavoitteista ja premisseistä. Tässä mielessä myös kirjoittajalla on oma roolinsa - vaikkakin epäsuora ja tekstivälitteinen - tulkinnassa.

Kolmanneksi, teksti ohjaa ja rajoittaa lukijoiden tulkinnallisia vaihtoehtoja. Tämä siksi, että teksti on kirjoitettu tietyllä kielellä ja tyylillä, tietyt kielellisiä muotoja käyttäen. Muutos tekstin kielessä voi tarkoittaa muutosta sen merkityksessä. Tekstin valta ohjata tulkintaa on siis myös kielen valtaa. Tämä tarkoittaa myös sitä, että mikäli tulkinnan tavoitteena on tekstin kunnioittaminen, valiidius, tulkinnan tulee tukeutua tiiviisti tekstin kieleen.

Tekstin valtaa voidaan kuitenkin myös vastustaa. Eri syistä lukijat voivat ottaa tulkintavaltaa itselleen ja jättää tekstin vallan huomiotta, tai jopa vastustaa sitä. Esimerkiksi, lukijat voivat pyrkiä tulkitsemaan tekstiä jostakin ideologisesta näkökulmasta tai omasta henkilökohtaisesta näkökulmastaan. Toisaalta teksti voi olla 'vaikea', vanha, avantgardistinen, jne., jonka tulkitsemiseen ei lukijoilla ole valmiina tulkinnan strategioita (vrt. MacKenzie 1990:127). Näissä tapauksissa tulkintaa voisikin paremmin luonnehtia tekstin 'kirjoittamiseksi' kuin lukemiseksi (Hassan 1988:184).

Lukijat eivät kuitenkaan ole tekstin solipsistisia prosessoijia, eikä tulkinta tapahdu tekstin ja lukijan muodostamassa tyhjiössä. Myös tilanekontekstilla, institutionaalisella ja sosio-kulttuurisella kontekstilla on

oma osansa siinä. Tulkintatilanne, lukija, lukijan päämäärät ja premissit, institutionaaliset odotukset, konventiot ja normit ja yleisemmät sosiaaliset ja kulttuuriset käsitykset, arvot, uskomukset, normit jne. voivat vaikuttaa, ohjata ja jopa jossain tapauksissa määrätä tulkintaa.

Kaiken kaikkiaan tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että tämän tutkimuksen teoreettinen lähtökohta painottaa tulkintaa merkityksen neuvotteluna tai rakentamisena. Sen mukaan ei vain tekstillä, ja tekstin välittämällä kirjoittajan intentioilla, vaan myös lukijalla ja kontekstilla on periaatteessa myös valtaa tulkinnaissa. Eri lukijoiden tulkinnoissa ja eri konteksteissa tekstin merkitys voidaan näin ollen konstruoida tai neuvotella eri tavoin. Tärkeää kuitenkin on muistaa, että - mikäli tulkinnaa päämääränä pidetään sitä että se on validi ja perusteltu - tulkinnaa tulee tukeutua mahdollisimman paljon tekstiin ja sen kieleen.

Jotta tämä käsitys tekstien tulkinnaa luonteesta olisi täysin hyväksyttävissä tulkinnaa malliksi, sitä tulisi tietenkin testata empiirisin keinoin. Sen empiirinen validioiminen jää kuitenkin tämän tutkimuksen ulkopuolelle.

Yksi seuraus tutkimuksessa omaksutusta holistisesta ja multi-komponentiaalisesta näkemyksestä on myös se, että tulkinnaa kriteereihin kohdistuva tutkimus, ollakseen teoreettiselle lähtökohdalleen uskollinen, tulisi kohdistua, ei ainoastaan tekstiin, vaan myös kirjoittajan (oletetun tai sosiaalisesti ratifioidun) intention, kriitikon premissien ja päämäärien, kriitikon tilannekontekstin ja institutionaalisen ja sosio-kulttuurisen kontekstin systemaattiseen analyysiin. Pääasiassa tutkimusekonomisista syistä myös näiden aspektien systemaattinen tutkimus jää kuitenkin tämän tutkimuksen ulkopuolelle. Sensijaan tutkimus keskittyy tarkastelemaan kriitikoiden teksteissään käyttämiä kielellisiä strategioita ja sitä miten ne indikovat, että jokin tietty tulkinnaa kriteeri, tai useamman kriteereiden konstellaatio, on relevantti tekstin tulkinnaissa.

## Tutkimusaineisto

Aineistoksi tutkimukseen valittiin kaksi Shakespearen *Kuningas Learia* käsittelevää esseetä, G. Wilson Knightin '*King Lear and the comedy of the grotesque*' (1930) ja Jonathan Dollmoren '*King Lear and essentialist humanism*' (1984).

Kirjallisuuskriittisesti, teoreettisesti ja ideologisesti nämä esseet edustavat eri aikakausia, perinteitä ja lähestymistapoja. Knightin esseet on peräisin aikakaudelta jolloin Shakespeare-kritiikki oli pääasiassa suuntautunut henkilöiden ja juonen tarkasteluun (ks. esimerkiksi Bradley 1904 tämän perinteen edustajana). Yksi Knightin tärkeistä päämääristä oli aset-

taa tämän perinteen käsityksiä kyseenalaiseksi väittämällä, että henkilöhahmojen ja juonen lisäksi kirjallisuuskritiikin tulisi tarkastella kirjallisia tekstejä myös monimutkaisina spatiaalisina konstruktina. Dollimoren esse puolestaan edustaa uutta radikaalia kulttuuri-materialistista suuntausta kirjallisuuskritiikissä. Se kyseenalaistaa monia, niin Knightin edustaman 'poeettisen' perinteen, kuin myös aiemman historistisen perinteen (esimerkiksi Tillyard 1943) käsityksiä ja käytänteitä.

Kritiikissään Knight keskittyy vain tekstiin ja argumentoi, että hänen analyysinsä päämääränä on paljastaa tekstin sisäiset merkitystasot. Dollimore puolestaan ei keskity vain tekstin tulkitsemiseen vaan myös arvioi niitä tapoja, joilla aikaisempi kritiikki on käsitellyt tekstiä. Teoriassa (s.o. omien julkituotujen premissiensä valossa) Dollimore näyttäisi olevan sillä kannalla, että kirjalliset tekstit eivät ole oman merkityksensä säiliöitä vaan jotakin, joiden merkityksestä voidaan kiistellä ja olla montaa mieltä. Tämä näkemys epäilemättä heijastelee yleisempää painotusta kulttuuri-materialismissa, jonka mukaan määrättyä ja spesifiä Shakespearen tekstiä ei ole olemassakaan; sen sijasta on vain eri ideologisista lähtökohdista tehtyjä tulkintoja.

Tämänhetkisessä Shakespeare-kritiikissä nämä kaksi radikaalin erilaista lähestymistapaa ovat kiivaiden kiistojen aihe. Yksi esimerkki tästä oli ns. 'Bardbiz'-kiista, jota käytiin *London Review of Books*'in sivuilla vuosina 1990-1. Tämän kiistan aikana Shakespeare tutkijat, kriitikot ja lukijat riitelivät siitä voidaanko katsoa, että Shakespearen teksteillä on olennainen arvo ja merkitys, mitkä tulkinnan rajat ovat, kellä on oikeus määritellä nämä rajat ja voidaanko kulttuuri-materialistisia tulkintoja pitää oikeutettuina.

Koska nämä kaksi esseetä edustavat siis miltei toisilleen vastakkaisia kirjallisuuskriittisiä ja teoreettisia lähestymistapoja, kiinnostavaksi tutkimuskysymykseksi nousi se, näkyisikö niiden erilaisuus myös tulkinnan kriteereiden ja kielellisten strategioiden tasolla.

## Analyysikehikko ja menetelmät

Jotta esseiden analyysi olisi systemaattinen ja jotta se olisi mahdollista toisinta ja siten testata, laadittiin yksityiskohtaisista kysymyksistä koostuva strukturoitu analyysikehikko. Kysymysten tarkoituksena oli tunnistaa, analysoida ja alustavasti vertailla niitä kielellisiä strategioita, joita kriitikot käyttävät esseissään ja siten eksplikoida ne tulkinnan kriteerit, joihin kriitikkojen tulkinta nojautuu. Analyysikysymykset keskittyivät (1) niihin strategioihin, joita kriitikot käyttävät välittämiseen tietyn käsityksen kirjallisesta tekstistä, kirjoittajasta, kriitikoista itsestään tekstin lukijoina, lu-

kijoista ja tilanne-, institutionaalista ja sosio-kulttuurisesta kontekstista, sekä (2) niihin strategioihin, joilla he välittävät että jollakin tai joillakin näistä tekijöistä on ratkaiseva tehtävä tekstin tulkinnassa.

Tekstin, kirjoittajan, kriitikon, lukijoiden ja kontekstin käsityksen analyysissä tarkasteltiin kriitikon viittauksia niihin ja analysoitiin niitä niiden välittömässä kielellisessä ympäristössä. Näiden komponenttien tulkinnallisen tehtävien analyysissä käytettiin kriittisen kielitieteen menetelmiä (ks. Fairclough 1989). Erityisesti tarkasteltiin sitä antavatko kriitikot jollekin tai joillekin näistä komponenteista tekijäroolin lauseessa ("agency"). Analyysin selkeyttämiseksi ja systematisoimiseksi näillä menetelmillä tunnistetut strategiat taulukoitiin

Analyysi oli kvalitatiivista luonteeltaan. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että kriitikoiden käyttämiä strategioita ei koodattu, kvantifioitu ja analysoitu tilastollisin menetelmin. Yhtenä syynä tähän oli, että, esseissä käytettyjen strategioiden luetteloinnin ja määrällisen analyysin sijasta, analyysi pyrki antamaan syvällisen ja yksityiskohtaisen kuvauksen esseistä itsestään ja niille tyypillistä strategioista ja vertailemaan alustavasti niitä keskenään. Toisena tärkeänä syynä oli tutkijan käsitys, että tietyn kielellisen strategian korkea frekvenssi ei välttämättä tarkoita, että se on kyseessäolevassa tekstissä merkittävä. Yhtä hyvin voi olla, että jonkin strategian matala frekvenssi voi olla merkittävä ja osoittaa jotakin olennaista kriitikon lähestymistavasta. Näin nähtynä perusteellinen, systemaattinen ja yksityiskohtainen kvalitatiivinen analyysi tarjosi sensitiivisemmän menetelmän esseiden analyysiin kuin kvantitatiivinen analyysi. Suuremman määrän esseiden analyysissä ja tarkemmassa vertailussa kvantitatiivien analyysi on sen sijaan välttämätön - sillä rajoituksella, että sen hypoteesit ja analyysikategoriat ja -yksiköt on ensin testattu käsissäolevan kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen kaltaisella tutkimuksella.

## Tulokset

Jossain määrin vastoin odotuksia ja siitä huolimatta, että Knight ja Dollimore edustavat radikaalisti erilaisia teoreettisia ja kirjallisuuskriittisiä lähestymistapoja, yksi tutkimuksen kiinnostavimmista tuloksista oli se, että heillä on hyvin paljon yhteistä. Esimerkiksi, molemmat kriitikot välittävät, käyttäen hyvin samankaltaisia kielellisiä strategioita, että kirjallinen teksti on sekä merkityksen sijaintipaikka että aktiivinen voima, joka ohjaa lukijoiden tulkintaa. Tärkeimpiä kielellisiä strategioita, joita kriitikot käyttävät välittämään näitä käsityksiä ovat monikon ensimmäisen persoonan käyttö, yleistykset (s.o. ei-modaalisoitunut verbilausekkeet) ja verbit, jotka kuvaavat tulkintaa aistimusprosessina. Lisäksi molemmat

kriitikot luovuttavat kirjalliselle tekstile aktiivisen tekijän roolin antamalla sille subjektifunktion lauseissaan. Näiden strategioiden tuloksena on se, että tulkinta näyttäytyy prosessina, jossa lukijat, mukaanlukien tietenkin kriitikko, tulkitsevat tekstin homogeenisena samanmielisenä joukkona ja jossa kriitikon tulkinnat näyttäytyvät kategorisina, yleisesti tosina tosiasioiden toteutumisina. Siten itse tulkinta on prosessi, jossa yhtäältä lukijat yksinkertaisesti 'näkevät' tekstin merkityksen ja jossa teksti toisaalta aktiivisesti 'tarjoaa' merkityksensä lukijoille. Lukija kuvataan passiivisena merkityksen vastaanottajana ja teksti aktiivisena merkityksen antajana. Molemmille kriitikoille teksti on siis ehdoton tulkinnan kriteeri ja merkitys siirtyy yksisuuntaisesti tekstistä lukijoille.

Kriitikot myös eroavat toisistaan. Yksi tärkeä eroavaisuus Knightin ja Dollimoren välillä on se, että edelliselle teksti on ensisijaisesti nerokkaan kirjoittajan nerokas teksti. Tämä käy selväksi siitä, että Knight, käyttäen useita erilaisia metonymisiä ilmauksia, antaa tekijäroolin, tekstin lisäksi, myös Shakespearen mestariselle 'taidolle' tai 'tekniikalle'. Dollimore puolestaan pyrkii marginalisoimaan kirjoittajan roolin tulkinnassa ja tarkastelemaan tekstiä irrallisena sen tekijästä. Niinkuin Knight, Dollimorekin kuitenkin implikoi (käyttämällä passiivia ilman agenttirakennetta), että tekstissä on mukana tekijän intentio, suunnitelma ja tarkoitus.

Vielä suurempi ero kriitikoiden välillä on kuitenkin se, että, toisin kuin Knight, Dollimore käyttää lähes puolet esseestään aikaisemman kirjallisuuskritiikin arvioimiseen ja sen esittämien tulkintojen kumoamiseen. Niiden sijalle hän esittää oman 'materialistisen' tulkintansa ainoana, jonka teksti itsessään 'tarjoaa'. Knight taas keskittyy kuvailemaan tekstiä spatioalisena ja hierarkkisena konstruktina, jonka sisällä on sekä 'sydän' että eritasoisia 'alueita'.

Dollimore näyttäisi hahmottavan kirjallisuuskritiikin eräänlaisena dialogina muiden, mahdollisesti eri ideologisen lähtökohdan omaavien, kriitikoiden ja lukijoiden kanssa. Tässä mielessä hän problematisoi kirjallisen tekstin ja sen merkityksen. Teoriassa hän näyttäisi olevan sillä kannalla, että tekstin merkitys ei uinu viattomana tekstin sisällä odottamassa, että lukija löytäisi sen, vaan että se on pohjimmiltaan vain tulos yhdestä 'näkemyksestä' tai 'luennasta'. Tästä huolimatta Dollimorekin kritiikin käytännössään tukeutuu viime kädessä aktiiviseen merkityksen kätkevään tekstiin, joka kategorisesti 'tarjoaa' materialistisen tulkinnan ainoana oikeana.

Tällainen sitoutuminen sekä kontekstin että tekstin roolia korostavaan malliin ei loppujen lopuksi ole kovin vakuuttava. Ei ole kovin helppoa luotettavasti väittää, että tekstin tulkinnassa on kyse eritavoin positioiduista näkemyksistä ja saman aikaisesti argumentoida, että teksti 'sisältää' ja 'tarjoaa' tietyn tulkinnan. Ongelmana on nimenomaan se, miten vakuuttaa lukijat siitä, että kriitikon 'oikeana' tarjoama oma tulkinta

on jollakin tapaa perustavanlaatuisesti erilainen kuin muut, muista lähtökohdista käsin tarjotut tulkinnat. Yksi tapa vakuuttaa lukija olisi tietenkin nojautua tulkittavaan tekstin niin paljon kuin mahdollista ja sisällyttää tulkinnan pohjaksi paljon lainauksia tekstistä todistusaineistoksi oman tulkinnan puolesta. Dollimore ei kuitenkaan tätä tee - hänen esseestään vain 8.9 % koostuu alkutekstin lainauksista. Vastaava luku on Knightilla huomattavasti suurempi, 20.7 %. Toinen, ja edelliseen liittyvä, tapa olisi avoimesti ja johdonmukaisesti tukeutua tulkinnan malliin, joka yhtäältä korostaa tekstin merkitystä tulkintaa ohjavana tekijänä, mutta joka toisaalta yhtälailla avoimesti tekee omat kriittiset, teoreettiset ja ideologiset premissinsä selväksi lukijoille.

Molempien kriitikoiden lähestymistapojen perimmäinen normatiivisuus on siis vankkumaton. Molemmat myös yrittävät kätkeä normatiivisuutensa käyttämällä tekstiä tulkinnan ehdottomana kriteerinä, joka itsestäänselvästi merkitsee jotakin ja välittää tämän merkityksen enemmän tai vähemmän automaattisesti kaikkien lukijoiden mieliin. Tällä tavoin molemmille kriitikoille tekstipohjainen malli on hyödyllinen *deus ex machina*, jonka avulla oma tulkinnat voidaan vastaansanomattomasti osoittaa oikeiksi.

Nämä tulokset nostavat esiin kiinnostavia jatkokysymyksiä. Yksi sellainen on kysymys siitä, kuinka tyypillistä Knightin ja Dollimoren lähestymistapojen kaltainen tukeutuminen tekstiin tulkinnan kriteerinä on kirjallisuuskritiikin käytännössä. Toinen, ja edelliseen liittyvä, kysymys on se, missä määrin tekstin hahmottaminen merkityksen säiliönä on peräisin itse kielestä. Tottahan on, että monissa länsimaisissa kielissä tekstissä nähdään olevan 'sisältö' (ruotsissa: 'innehåll'; englannissa 'contents', saksassa 'Inhalt'; ranskassa 'contenu'). Teksti-säiliönä -näkemys voi siten olla yksi kieleen sinnikkäästi pesiytyneitä metaforia, joka osaltaan ohjaa sitä miten kirjallisuuskritiikki instituutiona hahmottaa oman roolinsa tulkintojen välittäjänä.

### G. Wilson Knight: *King Lear* and the comedy of the grotesque (1930)

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It may appear strange to search for any sort of comedy as a primary theme in a play whose abiding gloom is so heavy, whose reading of human destiny and human actions so starkly tragic. Yet it is an error of aesthetic judgement to regard humour as essentially trivial. Though its impact usually appears vastly different from that of tragedy, yet there is a humour that treads the brink of tears, and tragedy which needs but an infinitesimal shift of perspective to disclose the varied riches of comedy. Humour is an evanescent thing, even more difficult of analysis and intellectual location than tragedy. To the coarse mind lacking sympathy an incident may seem comic which to the richer understanding is pitiful and tragic. So, too, one series of facts can be treated by the artist as either comic or tragic, lending itself equivalently to both. Sometimes a great artist may achieve significant effects by a criss-cross of tears and laughter. Tchegov does this, especially in his plays. A shifting flash of comedy across the pain of the purely tragic both increases the tension and suggests, vaguely, a resolution and a purification. The comic and the

tragic rest both on the idea of incompatibilities, and are also, themselves, mutually exclusive: therefore to mingle them is to add to the meaning of each; for the result is then but a new sublime incongruity.

*King Lear* is roughly analogous to Tchegov where *Macbeth* is analogous to Dostoievsky. The wonder of Shakespearian tragedy is ever a mystery - a vague, yet powerful, tangible, presence; an interlocking of the mind with a profound meaning, a disclosure to the inward eye of vistas undreamed, and but fitfully understood. *King Lear* is great in the abundance and richness of human delineation, in the level focus of creation that builds a massive oneness, in fact, a universe, of single quality from a multiplicity of differentiated units; and in a positive and purposeful working out

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of a purgatorial philosophy. But it is still greater in the perfect fusion of psychological realism with the daring flights of a fantastic imagination. The heart of a Shakespearian

an tragedy is centred in the imaginative, in the unknown; and in *King Lear*, where we touch the unknown, we touch the fantastic. The peculiar dualism at the root of this play which wrenches and splits the mind by a sight of incongruities displays in turn realities absurd, hideous, pitiful. This incongruity is Lear's madness; it is also the demonic laughter that echoes in the *Lear* universe. In pure tragedy the dualism of experience is continually being dissolved in the masterful beauty of passion, merged in the sunset of emotion. But in comedy it is not so softly resolved - incompatibilities stand out till the sudden relief of laughter or its equivalent of humour: therefore incongruity is the especial mark of comedy. Now in *King Lear* there is a dualism continually crying in vain to be resolved either by tragedy or comedy. Thence arises its peculiar tension of pain: and the course of the action often comes as near to the resolution of comedy as to that of tragedy. So I shall notice here the imaginative core of the play, and, excluding much of the logic of the plot from immediate attention, analyse the fantastic comedy of *King Lear*.

From the start, the situation has a comic aspect. It has been observed that Lear has, so to speak, staged an interlude, with himself as chief actor, in which he grasps expressions of love to his heart, and resigns his sceptre to a chorus of acclamations. It is childish, foolish - but very human. So too, is the

result. Sincerity forbids play-acting, and Cordelia cannot subdue her instinct to any judgement advising tact rather than truth. The incident is profoundly comic and profoundly pathetic. It is, indeed, curious that so stormfurious a play as *King Lear* should have so trivial a domestic basis: it is the first of our many incongruities to be noticed. The absurdity of the old King's anger is clearly indicated by Kent:

Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon the foul disease.  
(I. i. 166)

The result is absurd. Lear's loving daughter Cordelia is struck from his heart's register, and he is shortly, old and

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grey-haired and a king, cutting a cruelly ridiculous figure before the cold sanity of his unloving elder daughters. Lear is selfish, self-centred. The images he creates of his three daughters' love are quite false, sentimentalized: he understands the nature of none of his children, and demanding an unreal and impossible love from all three, is disillusioned by each in turn. But, though sentimental, this love is not weak. It is powerful and firm-planted in his mind as a mountain rock embedded in earth. The tearing out of it is hideous, cataclysmic. A tremendous soul is, as it were, incongruously geared to a puerile intellect. Lear's senses prove his idealized love-figments false,

his intellect snaps, and, as the loosened drive flings limp, the disconnected engine of madness spins free, and the ungeared revolutions of it are terrible, fantastic. This, then, is the basis of the play: greatness linked to puerility. Lear's instincts are themselves grand, heroic - noble even. His judgement is nothing. He understands neither himself nor his daughters:

*Regan.* 'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known/himself.

*Goneril.* The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash. . . /  
(I. i. 296)

Lear starts his own tragedy by a foolish misjudgement. Lear's fault is a fault of the mind, a mind unwarrantably, because selfishly, foolish. And he knows it:

O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in,  
And thy dear judgement out!  
(I. iv. 294)

His purgatory is to be a purgatory of the mind, of madness. Lear has trained himself to think he cannot be wrong: he finds he is wrong. He has fed his heart on sentimental knowledge of his children's love: he finds their love is not sentimental. There is now a gaping dualism in his mind, thus drawn asunder by incongruities, and he endures madness. Thus the theme of the play is bodied continually into a fantastic incongruity, which is implicit in the beginning - in the very act of Lear's renunciation, retaining the 'title and addition' of King, yet giving over a

king's authority to his children. As he becomes torturingly aware of the truth, incongruity

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masters his mind, and fantastic madness ensues; and this peculiar fact of the Lear-theme is reflected in the Lear universe:

*Gloucester.* These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us:/ though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature/ finds itself scourged by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off,/ brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces,/ treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine/ comes under the prediction; there 's son against father: the King falls/ from bias of nature; there 's father against child. We have seen the best/ of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous dis-/orders, follow us disquietly to our graves.  
(I.ii. 115)

Gloucester's words hint a universal incongruity here: the fantastic incongruity of parent and child opposed. And it will be most helpful later to notice the Gloucester-theme in relation to that of Lear.

From the first signs of Goneril's cruelty, the Fool is used as a chorus, pointing us to the absurdity of the situation. He is indeed an admirable chorus, increasing our pain by his emphasis on a humour which yet will not serve to merge the incompatible in a unity of laughter. He is not all wrong when he treats the situation as matter for a joke. Much here that is always re-

garded as essentially pathetic is not far from comedy. For instance, consider Lear's words:

I will have such revenges on you both/  
That all the world shall - I will do such  
things -/ What they are, yet I know not;  
but they shall be/ The terrors of the earth.  
(II. iv. 282)

What could be more painfully incongruous, spoken, as it is, by an old man, a king, to his daughter? It is not far from the ridiculous. The very thought seems a sacrilegious cruelty, I know: but ridicule is generally cruel. The speeches of Lear often come near comedy. Again, notice the abrupt contrast in his words:

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my  
daughter;/  
Or rather a disease that 's in my flesh,/   
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a  
boil,/   
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,/   
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide  
thee.../   
(II. iv. 224)

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This is not comedy, nor humour. But it is exactly the stuff of which humour is made. Lear is mentally a child; in passion a titan. The absurdity of his every act at the beginning of his tragedy is contrasted with the dynamic fury which intermittently bursts out, flickers - then flames and finally gives us those grand apostrophes lifted from man's stage of earth to heaven's rain and fire and thunder:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage!  
blow!/  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout/  
Till you have drench'd our steeples,/   
drown'd the cocks!  
(III. ii. I)

Two speeches of this passionate and unrestrained volume of Promethean curses are followed by:

No, I will be the pattern of all patience;/   
I will say nothing.  
(III. ii. 37)

Again we are in touch with potential comedy: a slight shift of perspective, and the incident is rich with humour. A sense of self-directed humour would, indeed, have saved Lear. It is a quality he absolutely lacks.

Herein lies the profound insight of the Fool: he sees the potentialities of comedy in Lear's behaviour. This old man, recently a king, and, if his speeches are fair samples, more than a little of a tyrant, now goes from daughter to daughter, furious because Goneril dares criticize his pet knights, kneeling down before Regan, performing, as she says, 'unsightly tricks' (II. iv. 159) - the situation is excruciatingly painful, and its painfulness is exactly of that quality which embarrasses in some forms of comedy. In the theatre, one is terrified lest some one laugh: yet, if Lear could laugh if the Lears of the world could laugh at themselves - there would be no such tragedy. In the early scenes old age and dignity

suffer, and seem to deserve, the punishments of childhood:

Now, by my life,  
Old fools are babes again; and must be  
used/ With checks as flatteries./  
(I. iii. 19)

The situation is summed up by the Fool:

*Lear.* When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?/  
*Fool.* I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy/ mother: for when thou gavest them the rod, and put'st down thine/ own breeches . . .  
(I. iv. 186)

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The height of indecency in suggestion, the height of incongruity. Lear is spiritually put to the ludicrous shame endured bodily by Kent in the stocks: and the absurd rant of Kent, and the unreasonable childish temper of Lear, both merit in some measure what they receive. Painful as it may sound, that is, provisionally, a truth we should realize. The Fool realizes it. He is, too, necessary. Here, where the plot turns on the diverging tugs of two assurances in the mind, it is natural that the action be accompanied by some symbol of humour, that mode which is built of unresolved incompatibilities. Lear's torment is a torment of this dualistic kind, since he scarcely believes his senses when his daughters resist him. He repeats the history of Troilus, who cannot understand the faithlessness of Cressid. In *Othello* and *Timon of*

*Athens* the transition is swift from extreme love to revenge or hate. The movement of Lear's mind is less direct: like Troilus, he is suspended between two separate assurances. Therefore Pandarus, in the latter acts of *Troilus and Cressida*, plays a part similar to the Fool in *King Lear*: both attempt to heal the gaping wound of the mind's incongruous knowledge by the unifying, healing release of laughter. They make no attempt to divert, but rather to direct the hero's mind to the present incongruity. The Fool sees, or tries to see, the humorous potentialities in the most heart-wrenching of incidents:

*Lear.* O me, my heart, my rising heart !  
but, down !/  
*Fool.* Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put 'em i'/ the paste alive; she knapped 'em o' the coxcombs with a stick, and cried/ 'Down, wantons, down !' 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to/ his horse, buttered his hay.  
(II. iv. 122)

Except for the last delightful touch - the antithesis of the other - that is a cruel, ugly sense of humour. It is the sinister humour at the heart of this play: we are continually aware of the humour of cruelty and the cruelty of humour. But the Fool's use of it is not aimless. If Lear could laugh he might yet save his reason.

But there is no relief. Outside, in the wild country, the storm grows more terrible:

*Kent.* ... Since I was man/  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid  
thunder,/ Such groans of roaring wind  
and rain, I never/ Remember to have

heard . . .  
(III. ii. 45)

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Lear's mind keeps returning to the unreality, the impossibility of what has happened:

Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all -/ O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;/ No more of that.  
(III. iv. 20)

He is still self-centred; cannot understand that he has been anything but a perfect father; cannot understand his daughters' behaviour. It is

as this mouth should tear this hand/ For lifting food to't . . .  
(III. iv. 15)

It is incongruous, impossible. There is no longer any 'rule in unity itself'.<sup>1</sup> Just as Lear's mind begins to fail, the Fool finds Edgar disguised as 'poor Tom'. Edgar now succeeds the Fool as the counterpart to the breaking sanity of Lear; and where the humour of the Fool made no contact with Lear's mind, the fantastic appearance and incoherent words of Edgar are immediately assimilated, as glasses correctly focused to the sight of oncoming madness. Edgar turns the balance of Lear's wavering mentality. His fantastic appearance and lunatic irrelevancies, with the storm outside, and the Fool still for occasional chorus, create a scene of wraithlike unreason, a vision of a world gone mad:

... Bless thy five wits ! Tom's a-cold - O, do de, do de, do de./ Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking ! Do poor Tom some/ charity, whom the foul fiend vexes: there could I have him now and there - and/ there again, and there. (III. iv. 57)

To Lear his words are easily explained. His daughters 'have brought him to this pass'. He cries:

*Lear.* Is it the fashion that discarded fathers/ Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?/ Judicious punishment! 'twas this flesh begot/ Those pelican daughters./

*Edgar.* Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill:/ Halloo, halloo, loo, loo !/

*Fool.* This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen./  
(III. iv. 71)

What shall we say of this exquisite movement? Is it comedy? Lear's profound unreason is capped by the blatant irrelevance

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of Edgar's couplet suggested by the word 'pelican'; then the two are swiftly all but unified, for us if not for Lear, in the healing balm of the Fool's conclusion. It is the process of humour, where two incompatibles are resolved in laughter. The Fool does this again. Lear again speaks a profound truth as the wild night and Edgar's fantastic impersonation grip his mind and dethrone his conventional sanity:

*Lear.* Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest/ the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the

<sup>1</sup> *Troilus and Cressida*, v. ii. 138

cat no perfume./ Ha ! Here's three on's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself:/ unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal/ as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! come unbutton here. (*Tearing off his/ clothes.*)

*Fool.* Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim in.  
(III. iv. 105)

This is the furthest flight, not of tragedy, but of philosophic comedy. The autocratic and fiery-fierce old king, symbol of dignity, is confronted with the meanest of men: a naked lunatic beggar. In a flash of vision he attempts to become his opposite, to be naked, 'unsophisticated'. And then the opposing forces which struck the lightning-flash of vision tail off, resolved into a perfect unity by the Fool's laughter, reverberating, trickling, potent to heal in sanity the hideous unreason of this tempest-shaken night: 'tis a naughty night to swim in'. Again this is the process of humour: its flash of vision first bridges the positive and negative poles of the mind, unifying them, and then expresses itself in laughter.

This scene grows still more grotesque, fantastical, sinister. Gloucester enters, his torch flickering in the beating wind:

*Fool* .... Look, here comes a walking fire.

(*Enter Gloucester, with a torch.*)/

*Edgar.* This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he begins at curfew and/ walks till the first cock . . .

(III. iv. 116)

Lear welcomes Edgar as his 'philosopher', since he embodies that

philosophy of incongruity and the fantastically-absurd which is Lear's vision in madness. 'Noble philosopher', he says (III. iv. 176), and 'I will still keep with my philosopher' (III. iv. 180). The unresolved dualism that tormented Troilus and was given metaphysical expression by him (*Troilus and Cressida*, v.ii. 134-57) is here more perfectly bodied into the

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poetic symbol of poor Tom: and since Lear cannot hear the resolving laugh of foolery, his mind is focused only to the 'philosopher' mumbling of the foul fiend. Edgar thus serves to lure Lear on: we forget that he is dissimulating. Lear is the centre of our attention, and as the world shakes with tempest and unreason, we endure something of the shaking and the tempest of his mind. The absurd and fantastic reign supreme. Lear does not compass for more than a few speeches the 'noble anger' (II.iv. 279) for which he prayed, the anger of Timon. From the start he wavered between affection and disillusionment, love and hate. The heavens in truth 'fool' (II.iv. 278) him. He is the 'natural fool of fortune' (IV.vi. 196). Now his anger begins to be a lunatic thing, and when it rises to any sort of magnificent fury or power it is toppled over by the ridiculous capping of Edgar's irrelevancies:

*Lear.* To have a thousand with red burning spits/ Come hissing in upon 'em/

*Edgar.* The foul fiend bites my back.  
(III.vi. 17)

The mock trial is instituted. Lear's curses were for a short space terrible, majestic, less controlled and purposeful than Timon's but passionate and grand in their tempestuous fury. Now, in madness, he flashes on us the ridiculous basis of his tragedy in words which emphasize the indignity and incongruity of it, and make his madness something nearer the ridiculous than the terrible, something which moves our pity, but does not strike awe:

Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honour-/able assembly, she kicked the poor king her father./

(III.vi. 49)

This stroke of the absurd - so vastly different from the awe we experience in face of Timon's hate - is yet fundamental here. The care of the play is an absurdity, an indignity, an incongruity. In no tragedy of Shakespeare does incident and dialogue so recklessly and miraculously walk the tight-rope of our pity over the depths of bathos and absurdity.

This particular region of the terrible bordering on the fantastic and absurd is exactly the playground of madness. Thus the setting of Lear's madness includes a sub-plot where these same elements are presented with stark nakedness, and no veiling subtleties. The Gloucester-theme is a certain indi-

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cation of our vision and helps us to understand, and feel, the enduring agony of Lear. As usual, the first scene of this play strikes the dominant note. Gloucester jests at the bastardy of his son Edmund, remarking that, though he is ashamed to acknowledge him, 'there was good sport at his making' (I.i. 23). That is, we start with humour in bad taste. The whole tragedy witnesses a sense of humour in 'the gods' which is in similar bad taste. Now all the Lear effects are exaggerated in the Gloucester theme. Edmund's plot is a more Iago-like, devilish, intentional thing than Goneril's and Regan's icy callousness. Edgar's supposed letter is crude and absurd:

... I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny . . .  
./  
(I.ii. 53)

But then Edmund, wittiest and most attractive of villains, composed it. One can almost picture his grin as he penned those lines, commending them mentally to the limited intellect of his father. Yes the Gloucester theme has a beginning even more fantastic than that of Lear's tragedy. And not only are the Lear effects here exaggerated in the directions of villainy and humour: they are even more clearly exaggerated in that of horror. The

gouging out of Gloucester's eyes is a thing unnecessary, crude, disgusting: it is meant to be. It helps to provide an accompanying exaggeration of one element - that of cruelty - in the horror that makes Lear's madness. And not only horror: there is even again something satanically comic bedded deep in it. The sight of physical torment, to the uneducated, brings laughter. Shakespeare's England delighted in watching both physical torment and the comic ravings of actual lunacy. The dance of madmen in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* is of the same ghoulish humour as Regan's plucking Gloucester by the beard: the groundlings will laugh at both. Moreover, the sacrilege of the human body in torture must be, to a human mind, incongruous, absurd. This hideous mockery is consummated in Regan's final witticism after Gloucester's eyes are out:

Go, thrust him out at gates, and let him smell/ His way to Dover.  
(III.vii. 93)

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The macabre humoresque of this is nauseating: but it is there, and integral to the play. These ghoulish horrors, so popular in Elizabethan drama, and the very stuff of the Lear of Shakespeare's youth, *Titus Andronicus*, find an exquisitely appropriate place in the tragedy of Shakespeare's maturity which takes as its especial province this territory of the grotesque and the fantastic which is Lear's madness. We are

clearly pointed to this grim fun, this hideous sense of humour, at the back of tragedy:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;/ They kill us for their sport.  
(IV.i. 36)

This illustrates the exact quality I wish to emphasize: the humour a boy - even a kind boy - may see in the wriggles of an impaled insect. So, too, Gloucester is bound, and tortured, physically; and so the mind of Lear is impaled, crucified on the cross-beams of love and disillusion. There follows the grim pilgrimage of Edgar and Gloucester towards Dover Cliff: an incident typical enough of *King Lear* -

'Tis the times' plague when madmen lead/ the blind.  
(IV. i. 46)

They stumble on, madman and blind man, Edgar mumbling:

. . . five fiends have been in poor Tom at once; of lust, as Obidicut;/ Hobbididance, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of/ murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who since possesses/ chambermaids and waiting- women  
...  
(IV.i. 59)

They are near Dover. Edgar persuades his father that they are climbing steep ground, though they are on a level field, that the sea can be heard beneath:

Gloucester. Methinks the ground is even./  
Edgar. Horrible steep.  
Hark, do you hear the sea?/  
Gloucester. No, truly.

*Edgar.* Why, then your other senses grow  
imperfect/ By your eyes' anguish.  
(IV.vi. 3)

Gloucester notices the changed sanity of Edgar's speech, and remarks thereon. Edgar hurries his father to the supposed brink, and vividly describes the dizzy precipice over

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which Gloucester thinks they stand:

How fearful  
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!/  
The crows and choughs that wing the  
midway air/ Show scarce so gross as  
beetles: half way down/ Hangs one that  
gathers samphire, dreadful trade! . . .  
(IV. vi. 12)

Gloucester thanks him, and rewards him; bids him move off; then kneels, and speaks a prayer of noble resignation, breathing that stoicism which permeates the suffering philosophy of this play:

O you mighty gods!  
This world I do renounce, and, in your  
sights,/ Shake patiently my great affliction  
off:/ If I could bear it longer, and not  
fall/ To quarrel with your great oppose-  
less wills,/ My snuff and loathed part of  
nature should/ Burn itself out.  
(IV.vi. 35)

Gloucester has planned a spectacular end for himself. We are given these noble descriptive and philosophical speeches to tune our minds to a noble, tragic sacrifice. And what happens? The old man falls from his kneeling posture a few inches, flat, face foremost. Instead of the dizzy circling to crash

and spill his life on the rocks below - just this. The grotesque merged into the ridiculous reaches a consummation in this bathos of tragedy: it is the furthest, most exaggerated, reach of the poet's towering fantastically. We have a sublimely daring stroke of technique, unjustifiable, like Edgar's emphasized and vigorous madness throughout, on the plane of plot-logic, and even to a superficial view somewhat out of place imaginatively in so dire and stark a limning of human destiny as is *King Lear*; yet this scene is in reality a consummate stroke of art. The Gloucester-theme throughout reflects and emphasizes and exaggerates all the percurrent qualities of the Lear-theme. Here the incongruous and fantastic element of the Lear-theme is boldly reflected into the tragically-absurd. The stroke is audacious, unashamed, and magical of effect. Edgar keeps up the deceit; persuades his father that he has really fallen; points to the empty sky, as to a cliff:

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. . . the shrill-gorged lark/  
Cannot be heard so far . . .  
(IV.vi. 59)

and finally paints a fantastic picture of a ridiculously grotesque devil that stood with Gloucester on the edge:

As I stood here below, methought his  
eyes/ Were two full moons; he had a  
thousand noses,/ Horns whelk'd and  
waved like the enridged sea;/ It was

some fiend . . .  
(IV.vi. 70)

Some fiend, indeed.

There is masterful artistry in all this. The Gloucester-theme has throughout run separate from that of Lear, yet parallel, and continually giving us direct villainy where the other shows cold callousness; horrors of physical torment where the other has a subtle mental torment; culminating in this towering stroke of the grotesque and absurd to balance the fantastic incidents and speeches that immediately follow. At this point we suddenly have our first sight of Lear in the full ecstasy of his later madness. Now, when our imaginations are most powerfully quickened to the grotesque and incongruous, the whole surge of the Gloucester-theme, which has just reached its climax, floods as a tributary the main stream of our sympathy with Lear. Our vision has thus been uniquely focused to understand that vision of the grotesque, the incongruous, the fantastically-horrible, which is the agony of Lear's mind:

*Enter Lear, fantastically dressed with wild flowers./*  
(IV.vi. 81)

So runs Capell's direction. Lear, late 'every inch a king', the supreme pathetic figure of literature, now utters the wild and whirling language of furthest madness. Sometimes his words hold profound meaning. Of-

ten they are tuned to the orthodox Shakespearian hate and loathing, especially sexloathing, of the hate-theme. Or again, they are purely ludicrous, or would be, were it not a Lear who speaks them:

. . . Look, look, a mouse ! Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will/ do't . . .  
(IV. vi. 90)

It is, indeed, well that we are, as it were, prepared by now for the grotesque. Laughter is forbidden us. Consummate

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art has so forged plot and incident that we may watch with tears rather than laughter the cruelly comic actions of Lear:

*Lear.* I will die bravely, like a bridegroom.<sup>1</sup>  
What! / I will be jovial: come, come; I am a king, / My masters, know you that?

*Gentleman.* You are a royal one, and we obey you. /

*Lear.* Then there's life in't. Nay, if you get it, you shall get it with running. Sa, sa, sa, sa. /

(IV.vi. 203)

Lear is a child again in his madness. We are in touch with the exquisitely pathetic, safeguarded only by Shakespeare's masterful technique from the bathos of comedy. But indeed this recurrent stress on the incongruous and the fantastic is not a subsidiary element in *King Lear*: it is the very heart of the play. We watch humanity grotesquely tormented, cruelly and with mockery

<sup>1</sup> This is to be related to *Anthony and Cleopatra*, iv. xii. 100, and *Measure for Measure*, iii. i. 82; also *Hamlet*, iv. iv. 62.

impaled: nearly all the persons suffer some form of crude indignity in the course of the play. I have noticed the major themes of Lear and Gloucester: there are others. Kent is banished, undergoes the disguise of a servant, is put to shame in the stocks; Cornwall is killed by his own servant resisting the dastardly mutilation of Gloucester; Oswald, the prim courtier, is done to death by Edgar in the role of an illiterate country yokel -

... keep out, che vor ye, or ise try whether  
your costard or my ballow /  
be the harder ...  
(IV.vi. 247)

Edgar himself endures the utmost degradation of his disguise as 'poor Tom', begrimed and naked, and condemned to speak nothing but idiocy. Edmund alone steers something of an unswerving tragic course, brought to a fitting, deserved, but spectacular end, slain by his wronged brother, nobly repentant at the last:

*Edmund.* What you have charged me with,  
that have I done;/ And more, much more;  
the time will bring it out:/ 'Tis past, and  
so am I. But what art thou/ That hast this  
fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,/ I do for-  
give thee.

*Edgar.* Let's exchange charity./  
I am no less in blood than thou art, Ed-  
mund;/ If more, the more thou hast  
wrong'd me./ My name is Edgar ...  
(V.iii. 164)

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The note of forgiving chivalry reminds us of the deaths of Hamlet

and Laertes. Edmund's fate is nobly tragic: 'the wheel has come full circle; I am here' (V.iii. 176). And Edmund is the most villainous of all. Again, we have incongruity; and again, the Gloucester-theme reflects the Lear-theme. Edmund is given a noble, an essentially tragic, end, and Goneril and Regan, too, meet their ends with something of tragic fineness in pursuit of their evil desires. Regan dies by her sister's poison; Goneril with a knife. They die, at least, in the cause of love - love of Edmund. Compared with these deaths, the end of Cordelia is horrible, cruel, unnecessarily cruel - the final grotesque horror in the play. Her villainous sisters are already dead. Edmund is nearly dead, repentant. It is a matter of seconds - and rescue comes too late. She is hanged by a common soldier. The death which Dostoevsky's Stavrogin singled out as of all the least heroic and picturesque, or rather, shall we say, the most hideous and degrading: this is the fate that grips the white innocence and resplendent love-strength of Cordelia. To be hanged, after the death of her enemies, in the midst of friends. It is the last hideous joke of destiny: this - and the fact that Lear is still alive, has recovered his sanity for this. The death of Cordelia is the last and most horrible of all the horrible incongruities I have noticed:

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have  
life,/ And thou no breath at all?  
(V.iii. 308)

We remember: 'Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, the gods themselves throw incense' (V.iii. 20). Or do they laugh, and is the Lear universe one ghastly piece of fun?

We do not feel that. The tragedy is most poignant in that it is purposeless, unreasonable. It is the most fearless artistic facing of the ultimate cruelty of things in our literature. That cruelty would be less were there not this element of comedy which I have emphasized, the insistent incongruities, which create and accompany the madness of Lear, which leap to vivid shape in the mockery of Gloucester's suicide, which are intrinsic in the texture of the whole play. Mankind is, as it were, deliberately and comically tormented by 'the gods'. He is not even allowed to die tragically. Lear is 'bound

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upon a wheel of fire' and only death will end the victim's agony:

Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him/ That would upon the rack of this tough world/ Stretch him out longer. (V.iii. 315)

*King Lear* is supreme in that, in this main theme, it faces the very absence of tragic purpose: wherein it is profoundly different from *Timon of Athens*. Yet, as we close the sheets of this play, there is no horror, nor resentment. The tragic purification of the essentially untragic is yet complete.

Now in this essay it will, perhaps, appear that I have unduly emphasized one single element of the play, magnifying it, and leaving the whole distorted. It has been my purpose to emphasize. I have not exaggerated. The pathos has not been minimized: it is redoubled. Nor does the use of the words 'comic' and 'humour' here imply disrespect to the poet's purpose: rather I have used these words, crudely no doubt, to cut out for analysis the very heart of the play - the thing that man dares scarcely face: the demonic grin of the incongruous and absurd in the most pitiful of human struggles with an iron fate. It is this that wrenches, splits, gashes the mind till it utters the whirling vapourings of lunacy. And, though love and music - twin sisters of salvation - temporarily may heal the racked consciousness of Lear, yet, so deeply planted in the facts of our life is this unknowing ridicule of destiny, that the uttermost tragedy of the incongruous ensues, and there is no hope save in the broken heart and limp body of death. This is of all the most agonizing of tragedies to endure: and if we are to feel more than a fraction of this agony, we must have sense of this quality of grimmest humour. We must beware of sentimentalizing the cosmic mockery of the play.

And is there, perhaps, even a deeper, and less heartsearing, significance in its humour? Smiles and tears are indeed most curiously interwoven here. Gloucester was saved from his violent and tragic

suicide that he might recover his wronged son's love, and that his heart might

casts its darting shadow of the grotesque across the furrowed pages of *King Lear*.

'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,  
Burst smilingly.  
(V.iii. 200)

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Lear dies with the words

Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,  
Look there, look there!  
(V.iii. 312)

What smiling destiny is this he sees at the last instant of racked mortality? Why have we that strangely beautiful account of Cordelia's first hearing of her father's pain:

. . . patience and sorrow strove/  
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen/  
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears/  
Were like a better way: those happy smiles,  
That play'd on her ripe lip, seem'd not to know/  
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence,  
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief,  
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved,  
If all could so become it.  
(IV.iii. 18)

What do we touch in these passages? Sometimes we know that all human pain holds beauty, that no tear falls but it dewes some flower we cannot see. Perhaps humour, too, is inwoven in the universal pain, and the enigmatic silence holds not only an unutterable sympathy, but also the ripples of an impossible laughter whose flight is not for the wing of human understanding; and perhaps it is this that

Jonathan Dollimore: *King Lear* (c. 1605-6) and  
essentialist humanism (1984)

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When he is on the heath King Lear is moved to pity. As unaccommodated man he feels what wretches feel. For the humanist the tragic paradox arises here: debasement gives rise to dignity and at the moment when Lear might be expected to be most brutalised he becomes most human. Through kindness and shared vulnerability human kind redeems itself in a universe where the gods are at best callously just, at worst sadistically vindictive.

In recent years the humanist view of Jacobean tragedies like *Lear* has been dominant, having more or less displaced the explicitly Christian alternative. Perhaps the most important distinction between the two is this: the Christian view locates man centrally in a providential universe;<sup>1</sup> the humanist view likewise centralises man but now he is in a condition of tragic dislocation: instead of integrating (ultimately) with a teleological design created and sustained by God, man grows to consciousness in a universe which thwarts his deepest needs. If he is to be redeemed at all he must redeem himself. The humanist also contests the Christian claim that the suffering of Lear and

Cordelia is part of a providential and redemptive design. If that suffering is to be justified at all it is because of what it reveals about man's intrinsic nature - his courage and integrity. By heroically enduring a fate he is powerless to alter, by insisting, moreover, upon *knowing* it, man grows in stature even as he is being destroyed. Thus Clifford Leech, an opponent of the Christian view, tells us that tragic protagonists 'have a quality of mind that somehow atones for the nature of the world in which they and we live. They have, in a greater or lesser degree, the power to endure and the power to apprehend' (*Shakespeare's Tragedies*, p.15). Wilbur Sanders in

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an influential study argues for an ultimately optimistic Shakespeare who had no truck with Christian doctrine or conventional Christian conceptions of the absolute but nevertheless affirmed that 'the principle of health - grace - is not in heaven, but in nature, and especially in human nature, and it cannot finally be rooted out'. Ultimately

this faith in nature and human nature involves and entails 'a faith in a universal moral order which cannot finally be defeated' (*The Dramatist and the Received Idea*, pp. 336-7). Here as so often with the humanist view there is a strong residue of the more explicit Christian metaphysics and language which it seeks to eschew; comparable with Sanders' use of 'grace' is Leech's use of 'atone'. Moreover both indicate the humanist preoccupation with the universal counterpart of essentialist subjectivity - either ultimately affirmed (Sanders) or recognised as an ultimate tragic absence (Leech).<sup>2</sup> The humanist reading of *Lear* has been authoritatively summarised by G. K. Hunter (he calls it the 'modern' view of the play):

[it] is seen as the greatest of tragedies because it not only strips and reduces and assaults human dignity, but because it also shows with the greatest force and detail the process of restoration by which humanity can recover from degradation . . . [Lear's] retreat into the isolated darkness of his own mind is also a descent into the seed-bed of a new life; for *the individual mind is seen here as the place from which a man's most important qualities and relationships draw the whole of their potential*' (*Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition*, pp. 251-2, my italics).

What follows is an exploration of the political dimension of *Lear*. It argues that the humanist view of that play is as inappropriate as the Christian alternative which it has generally displaced - inappropriate not least because it shares the essentialism of the latter.

I do not mean to argue again the case against the Christian view since, even though it is still sometimes advanced, it has been effectively discredited by writers as diverse as Barbara Everett, William R. Elton and Cedric Watts.<sup>3</sup> The principal reason why the humanist view seems equally misguided, and not dissimilar, is this: it mystifies suffering and invests man with a quasi-transcendent identity whereas the play does neither of these things. In fact, the play

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repudiates the essentialism which the humanist reading of it presupposes. However, I do not intend to replace the humanist reading with one which rehearses yet again all the critical clichés about the nihilistic and chaotic 'vision' of Jacobean tragedy. In *Lear*, as in *Troilus*, man is decentred not through misanthropy but in order to make visible social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition.

### Redemption and Endurance: Two Sides of Essentialist Humanism

'Pity' is a recurring word in *Lear*. Philip Brockbank, in a recent and sensitive humanist reading of the play, says: 'Lear dies "with pity" (IV.vii. 53) and that access of pity, which in the play attends the dissolution of the senses and of the self, is a condition for the renewal of human life' ('Upon Such Sacrifices', p. 133). *Lear*, at least when he

is on the heath, is indeed moved to pity, but what does it mean to say that such pity is 'a condition for the renewal of human life?' Exactly whose life is renewed? In this connection there is one remark of Lear's which begs our attention; it is made when he first witnesses 'You houseless poverty' (III.iv. 26): 'Oh, I have ta'en/Too little care of this!'. Too little: Lear bitterly reproaches himself because hitherto he has been aware of yet ignored the suffering of his deprived subjects. (The distracted use of the abstract - 'You houseless poverty' - subtly suggests that Lear's disregard has been of a general rather than a local poverty). He has ignored it not through callous indifference but simply *because he has not experienced it*.

*King Lear* suggests here a simple yet profound truth. Far from endorsing the idea that man can redeem himself in and through an access of pity, we might be moved to recognise that, on the contrary, in a world where pity is the prerequisite for compassionate action, where a king has to share the suffering of his subjects in order to 'care', the majority will remain poor, naked and wretched. The point of course is that princes only see the hovels of wretches during progresses (walkabouts?), in flight or in fairy tale. Even in fiction the wheel of fortune rarely brings them that low. Here, as so often in Jacobean drama, the fictiveness of the genre or scene intrudes;

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by acknowledging its status as fiction it abdicates the authority of idealist mimesis and indicates the better the reality it signifies; resembling in this Brecht's alienation effect, it stresses artifice not in the service of formalism but of realism. So, far from transcending in the name of an essential humanity the gulf which separates the privileged from the deprived, the play insists on it. And what clinches this is the exchange between Poor Tom (Edgar) and Gloucester. The latter has just arrived at the hovel; given the circumstances, his concern over the company kept by the king is faintly ludicrous but very telling: 'What, hath your Grace no better company?' (III.iv. 138; cf. Cordelia at IV. vii. 38-9). Tom tells Gloucester that he is cold. Gloucester, *uncomprehending rather than callous*, tells him he will keep warm if he goes back into the hovel (true of course, relatively speaking). That this comes from one of the 'kindest' people in the play prevents us from dismissing the remark as individual unkindness: judging is less important than seeing how unkindness is built into social consciousness. That Gloucester is unknowingly talking to his son in this exchange simply underscores the arbitrariness, the woeful inadequacy of what passes for kindness; it is, relatively, a very precious thing but as a basis for human kind's self-redemption it is a nonstarter. Insofar as Lear identifies with suffering it is at the point

when he is powerless to do anything about it. This is not accidental: the society of *Lear* is structured in such a way that to wait for shared experience to generate justice is to leave it too late. Justice, we might say, is too important to be trusted to empathy.

Like Lear, Gloucester has to undergo intense suffering before he can identify with the deprived. When he does so he expresses more than compassion. He perceives, crucially, the limitation of a society that depends on empathy alone for its justice. Thus he equates his earlier self with the 'lust-dieted man . . . that will not see/Because he does not feel' (IV. i. 69-71, my italics). Moreover he is led to a conception of social justice (albeit dubiously administered by the 'Heavens', l. 68) whereby 'distribution should undo excess,/ And each man have enough' (IV. i. 72-3).

By contrast, Lear experiences pity mainly as an inseparable aspect of his own grief: 'I am mightily abus'd. I should e'en die

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with pity/ To see another thus' (IV. vii. 53-4). His compassion emerges from grief only to be obliterated by grief. He is angered, horrified, confused and, above all dislocated. Understandably then he does not empathise with Tom so much as assimilate him to his own derangement. Indeed, Lear hardly communicates with anyone, especially on the heath; most of his ut-

terances are demented mumbling interspersed with brief insight. Moreover, his preoccupation with vengeance ultimately displaces his transitory pity; reverting from the charitable reconciliation of V.iii to vengeance once again, we see him, minutes before his death, boasting of having killed the slave' that was hanging Cordelia.

But what of Cordelia herself? She more than anyone else has been seen to embody and symbolise pity. But is it a pity which significantly alters anything? To see her death as intrinsically redemptive is simply to mystify both her and death.<sup>4</sup> Pity, like kindness, seems in *Lear* to be precious yet ineffectual. Far from being redemptive it is the authentic but residual expression of a scheme of values all but obliterated by a catastrophic upheaval in the power structure of this society. Moreover the failure of those values is in part due to the fact that they are (or were) an ideological ratification of the very power structure which eventually destroys them.

In *Lear*, as we shall see in the next section, there is a repudiation of stoicism similar to that found in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*. Yet repeatedly the sceptical treatment, sometimes the outright rejection, of stoicism in these plays is overlooked; often in fact it is used to validate another kind of humanism. For convenience I call the kind outlined so far ethical humanism and this other one existential humanism. The two involve different em-

phases rather than different ideologies. That of the latter is on essential heroism and existential integrity, that of the former on essential humanity, the universal human condition. Thus, according to Barbara Everett (in another explicitly anti-Christian analysis):

In the storm scene Lear is at his most powerful and, despite moral considerations, at his noblest; the image of man hopelessly confronting a hostile universe and withstanding it only by his inherent powers of rage, endurance and perpetual questioning, is perhaps the most purely 'tragic' in Shakespeare. ('The New *King Lear*', p. 333)

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Significantly, existential humanism forms the basis even of J. W. Lever's *The Tragedy of State*, one of the most astute studies of Jacobean tragedy to date. On the one hand Lever is surely right in insisting that these plays 'are not primarily treatments of characters with a so-called "fatal flaw", whose downfall is brought about by the decree of just if inscrutable powers . . . the fundamental flaw is not in them but in the world they inhabit: in the political state, the social order it upholds, and likewise, by projection, in the cosmic state of shifting arbitrary phenomena called "Fortune"' (p. 10). By the same criteria it is surely wrong to assert (on the same page) that: 'What really matters is the quality of [the heroes'] response to intolerable situations. This is a drama of adversity and stance . . . The rational man who remains master of

himself is by the same token the ultimate master of his fate'. In Lever's analysis Seneca is the ultimate influence on a drama (including *King Lear*) which celebrates man's capacity inwardly to transcend oppression (p. 9).

If the Christian mystifies suffering by presenting it as intrinsic to God's redemptive and providential design for man, the humanist does likewise by representing suffering as the mysterious ground for man's *self*-redemption; both in effect mystify suffering by having as their common focus an essentialist conception of what it is to be human: in virtue of his spiritual essence (Christian), essential humanity (ethical humanist), or essential self (existential humanist), man is seen to achieve a paradoxical transcendence: in individual extinction is his apotheosis. Alternatively we might say that in a mystifying closure of the historical real the categories of idealist culture are recuperated. This suggests why both ethical and existential humanism are in fact quasi-religious: both reject the providential and 'dogmatic' elements of Christianity while retaining its fundamental relation between suffering, affirmation and regeneration. Moreover they, like Christianity, tend to fatalise social dislocation; its causes are displaced from the realm of the human; questions about them are raised but only rhetorically, thus confirming man's impotence to alleviate the human condition. This clears the stage for what really mat-

ters: man's responsive suffering and what it reveals in the process about his essential nature. Recognisable here is the fate of existentialism

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when merged with literary criticism as a surrogate or displaced theology; when, specifically, it was co-opted to the task most symptomatic of that displacement, namely the obsession with defining tragedy. It will be recalled that for the existentialist existence precedes essence, or so said Sartre, who later tried to develop this philosophy in the context of Marxism. In literary criticism the social implications of existentialism, such as they were, were easily ignored, the emphasis being instead on a modernist angst and man's thwarted spiritual potential. This is another sense in which existential humanism is merely a mutation of Christianity and not at all a radical alternative; although it might reluctantly have to acknowledge that neither Absolute nor Essence exist, it still relates man to them on a principle of Augustinian privation: man understands his world only through the grid of their absence.

### **King Lear: A Materialist Reading**

More important than Lear's pity is his 'madness' - less divine furor than a process of collapse which reminds us just how precarious is the psychological equilibrium which we call sanity, and just how depen-

dent upon an identity which is social rather than essential. What makes Lear the person he is - or rather was - is not kingly essence (divine right), but, among other things, his authority and his family. On the heath he represents the process whereby man has been stripped of his stoic and (Christian) humanist conceptions of self. Consider what Seneca has to say of affliction and philosophy:

Whether we are caught in the grasp of an inexorable law of fate, whether it is God who as lord of the universe has ordered all things, or whether the affairs of mankind are tossed and buffeted haphazardly by chance, it is philosophy that has the duty of protecting us. (Letters, p. 64)

Lear, in his affliction, attempts to philosophise with Tom whom he is convinced is a 'Noble philosopher', a 'good Athenian' (II.iv. 168 and 176). It adds up to nothing more than the incoherent ramblings of one half-crazed by just that suffering which philosophy, according to the stoic, guards against. It is an ironic subversion of neo-stoic essentialism, one

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which recalls Bacon's essay 'Of Adversity,' where he quotes Seneca: '*It is true greatness to have in one the frailty of a man, and the security of a god*' only to add, dryly: 'This would have done better in poesy, where transcendences are more allowed' (Essays, p. 15). As I have already shown (chapter 4) Bacon believed

that poesy implies idealist mimesis - that is, an illusionist evasion of those historical and empirical realities which, says Bacon, 'buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things' (*Advancement*, p. 83). He seems to have remained unaware that Jacobean drama was just as subversive of poesy (in this sense) as he was, not only with regard to providentialism but now its corollary, essentialism. Plays like *Lear* precisely disallow 'transcendences': in this at least they confirm Edmund's contention that 'men/Are as the time is' (V.iii. 31-2). Montaigne made a similar point with admirable terseness: 'I am no philosopher: Evils oppresse me according as they waigh' (*Essays*, III. 189). The Fool tells Lear that he is 'an O without a figure' (I.iv. 192); both here and seconds later he anticipates his master's eventual radical decentredness, the consequence of having separated 'The name, and all th' addition' of a king from his real 'power' (I.i. 129, 135): 'Who is it that can tell me who I am?' cries Lear; 'Lear's shadow' replies the Fool.

After he has seen Lear go mad, Gloucester offers this inversion of stoicism:

Better I were distract  
So should my thoughts be sever'd from  
my griefs,/ And woes by wrong imagination  
lose/ The knowledge of themselves.  
(IV.vi. 281-4)

For Lear dispossession and displacement entail not redemptive suffering but a kind of suffering

recognition - implicated perhaps with confession, depending on how culpable we take this king to have been with regard to 'the great *image* of authority' which he now briefly demystifies: 'a dog's obey'd in office' (IV.vi. 157, my italics). Lear does acknowledge blame, though deludedly believing the power which made him blameworthy is still his: 'Take that of me, my friend, who have the power/ To seal th' accuser's lips' (IV. vi. 169-70). His

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admission that authority is a function of 'office' and 'power', not intrinsic worth, has its corollary: power itself is in control of 'justice' (l. 166) rather than vice versa:

The usurer hangs the cozener.  
Through tatter'd clothes small vices do  
appear;/ Robes and furr'd gowns hide all.  
Plate sin with gold/ And the strong lance  
of justice hurtless breaks;/ Arm it in rags,  
a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.  
(IV.vi. 163-7)

Scenes like this one remind us that *King Lear* is, above all, a play about power, property and inheritance. Referring to Goneril, the distraught Lear cries: 'Ingratitude thou marblehearted fiend,/ More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child/ Than the sea-monster' (I.iv. 259-61). Here, as throughout the play, we see the cherished norms of human kind-ness shown to have no 'natural' sanction at all. A catastrophic redistribution of power and property - and, eventually, a civil war -

disclose the awful truth that these two things are somehow prior to the laws of human kindness rather than viceversa (likewise, as we have just seen, with power in relation to justice). Human values are not antecedent to these material realities but are, on the contrary, informed by them.<sup>5</sup>

Even allowing for his conservative tendency to perceive all change as a change for the worse, Gloucester's account of widespread social discord must surely be taken as at least based on fact: 'These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us . . . Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide, in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason . . . there's son against father; the King falls from bias of nature: there's father against child' (I.ii. 100-11). "'Tis strange', concludes the troubled Gloucester and exits, leaving Edmund to make things somewhat less so. Significantly, Edmund does not deny the extent of the discord, only Gloucester's mystified sense of its cause. In an earlier soliloquy Edmund has already repudiated 'the plague of custom . . . The curiosity of nations' which label him bastard (I. ii. 3-4). Like Montaigne he insists that universal law is merely municipal law (above, p. 16). Here he goes further, repudiating the ideological process whereby the latter is misrecognised as the former; he rejects,

that is, a way of thinking which represents the contingent as the necessary and thereby further represents human identity and the social order as metaphysically determined (and therefore unalterable): 'When we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion . . . by a divine thrusting on' (I. ii. 122-31). Closely related to this refusal of the classical ideological effect is the way Edmund also denaturalises the theatrical effect: 'Pat! He comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy' (I.ii. 128). Yet this revolutionary scepticism is discredited by the purpose to which it is put. How are we to take this? Are we to assume that Edmund is simply evil and therefore so is his philosophy? I want to argue that we need not. To begin with we have to bear in mind a crucial fact: Edmund's scepticism is made to serve an existing system of values; although he falls prey to, he does not introduce his society to its obsession with power, property and inheritance; it is already the material and ideological basis of that society. As such it informs the consciousness of Lear and Gloucester as much as Cornwall and Regan; consider Lear first, then Gloucester.

Lear's behaviour in the opening scene presupposes first, his absolute power, second, the knowledge that his being king constitutes that power, third, his refusal to tolerate what he perceives as a contradiction of that power. Therefore what Lear demands of Cordelia - authentic familial kindness - is precluded by the very terms of the demand; that is, by the extent to which the occasion as well as his relationship to her is saturated with the ideological imperatives of power. For her part Cordelia's real transgression is not unkindness as such, but speaking in a way which threatens to show too clearly how the laws of human kindness operate in the service of property, contractual, and power relations:

I love your Majesty  
According to my bond . . .

I  
Return those duties back as are right fit . . .

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Why have my sisters husbands, if they say/  
They love you [i.e. Lear] all?  
(I.i. 91-2; 95-6; 98-9)

Presumably Cordelia does not intend it to be so, but this is the patriarchal order in danger of being shorn of its ideological legitimation - here, specifically, a legitimation taking ceremonial form. (Ironically yet predictably, the 'untender' (l. 105) dimension of that order is displaced on to Cordelia). Likewise with the whole issue of dowries.

Prior to Lear's disowning of Cordelia, the realities of property marriage are more or less transmuted by the language of love and generosity, the ceremony of good government. But in the act of renouncing her, Lear brutally foregrounds the imperatives of power and property relations: 'Here I disclaim all my paternal care,/ Propinquity and property of blood' (I.i. 112-3; cf. ll. 196-7). Kenneth Muir glosses 'property' as 'closest blood relation' (ed. *King Lear*, p. 11). Given the context of this scene it must also mean 'ownership' - father owning daughter - with brutal connotations of the master/slave relationship as in the following passage from *King John*: 'I am too highborn to be propertied/ To be a . . . serving man' (V.ii. 79-81). Even kinship then - indeed *especially* kinship - is informed by the ideology of property relations, the contentious issue of primogeniture being, in this play, only its most obvious manifestation. Later we witness Lear's correlation between the quantity of retainers Goneril will allow him and the quality of her love: Regan offers twenty-five retainers, upon which Lear tells Goneril: 'I'll go with thee./ Thy fifty yet doth double five-and twenty,/ And thou art twice her love' (II.iv. 257-9).

Gloucester's unconscious acceptance of this underlying ideology is conveyed at several points but nowhere more effectively than in Act II scene i; even as he is coming to terms with Edgar's supposed

treachery he is installing Edmund in his place, offering in *exchange* for Edmund's 'natural' behaviour propriety:

of my land  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the  
means/ To make thee capable.  
(II. i. 83-5)

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Thus the one thing which the kind Gloucester and the vicious Cornwall have in common is that each offers to reward Edmund's 'loyalty' in exactly the same way (cf. III.v. 16-18). All this would be ludicrous if it were not so painful: as their world disintegrates Lear and Gloucester cling even more tenaciously to the only values they know, which are precisely the values which precipitated the disintegration. Hence even as society is being torn apart by conflict, the ideological structure which has generated that conflict is being reinforced by it.

When Edmund in the forged letter represents Edgar complaining of 'the oppression of aged tyranny' which commands 'not as it hath power, but as it is suffered' (I.ii. 47-8), he exploits the same personal anxiety in Gloucester which Cordelia unintentionally triggers in Lear. Both fathers represent a challenge to their patriarchal authority by offspring as unnatural behaviour, an abdication of familial duty. The trouble is they do this in a society where 'nature' as ideological concept is fast losing its power to pro-

lice disruptive elements for example: 'That nature which contemns its origin/Cannot be border'd certain in itself' (IV.ii. 32-3). No longer are origin, identity and action a 'natural' ideological unity, and the disintegration of that unity reveals something of fundamental importance: when, as here (also, eg at I.ii. 1-22) nature is represented as socially disruptive, yet elsewhere as the source of social stability (eg. at II. iv. 176-80), we see an ideological construct beginning to incorporate and thereby render visible the very conflicts and contradictions in the social order which it hitherto effaced. In this respect the play activates a contradiction intrinsic to any 'naturalised' version of the Christian metaphysic; to abandon or blur the distinction between matter and spirit while retaining the basic premises of that metaphysic is to eventually construe evil as at once utterly alien to the human condition (unnatural) yet disturbingly and mysteriously inherent within it (natural) and to be purged accordingly. If deep personal anxiety is thus symptomatic of more general social dislocation it is also what guarantees the general reaction formation to that dislocation: those in power react to crisis by entrenching themselves the deeper within the ideology and social organisation responsible for it.

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At strategic points in the play we see how the minor characters have

also internalised the dominant ideology. Two instances must suffice. The first occurs in Act II scene ii where Kent insults Oswald. He does so almost entirely in terms of the latter's lack of material wealth, his mean estate and consequent dependence upon service. Oswald is, says Kent, a 'beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking . . . superserviceable . . . one-trunk-inheriting slave' (II.ii. 15 ff; as Muir points out, servants were apparently given three suits a year, while gentlemen wore silk as opposed to worsted stockings). The second example involves the way that for the Gentleman attending Cordelia even pity (or more accurately 'Sorrow') is conceived as a kind of passive female commodity (IV. iii. 16-23).<sup>6</sup>

We can now see the significance of Edmund's scepticism and its eventual relationship to this dominant ideology of property and power. Edmund's sceptical independence is itself constituted by a contradiction: his illegitimate exclusion from society gives him an insight into the ideological basis of that society even as it renders him vulnerable to and dependent upon it. In this respect Edmund resembles the malcontents already encountered in previous chapters: exclusion from society gives rise both to the malcontent's sense of its worthlessness and his awareness that identity itself is dependent upon it. Similarly, Edmund, in liberating himself from the myth of innate inferiority, does not thereby

liberate himself from his society's obsession with power, property and inheritance; if anything that obsession becomes the more urgent: 'Legitimate Edgar, I *must* have your land' (I.ii. 16, my italics). He sees through one level of ideological legitimisation only to remain the more thoroughly enmeshed with it at a deeper level.

Edmund embodies the process whereby, because of the contradictory conditions of its inception, a revolutionary (emergent) insight is folded back into a dominant ideology. Witnessing his fate we are reminded of how, historically, the misuse of revolutionary insight has tended to be in proportion to its truthfulness, and of how, as this very fact is obscured, the insight becomes entirely identified with (or as) its misappropriation. Machiavellianism, Gramsci has reminded us, is

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just one case in point (*Selections from Prison Notebooks*, p. 136).

### The Refusal of Closure

Lionel Trilling has remarked that 'the captains and kings and lovers and clowns of Shakespeare are alive and complete before they die' (*The Opposing Self*, p. 38). Few remarks could be less true of *King Lear*. The notion of man as tragic victim somehow alive and complete in death is precisely the kind of essentialist mystification which

the play refuses. It offers instead a decentring of the tragic subject which in turn becomes the focus of a more general exploration of human consciousness in relation to social being - one which discloses human values to be not antecedent to, but rather in-formed by, material conditions. *Lear* actually refuses then that autonomy of value which humanist critics so often insist that it ultimately affirms. Nicholas Brooke, for example, in one of the best close analyses of the play that we have, concludes by declaring: 'all moral structures, whether of natural order or Christian redemption, are invalidated by the naked fact of experience', yet manages in the concluding sentence of the study to resurrect from this unaccommodated 'naked experience' a redemptive autonomy of value, one almost mystically inviolable: 'Large orders collapse; but values remain, and are independent of them' (*Shakespeare: King Lear*, pp. 59-60). But surely in *Lear*, as in most of human history, 'values' are shown to be terrifyingly dependent upon whatever 'large orders' actually exist; in civil war especially - which after all is what *Lear* is about - the two collapse together.

In the closing moments of *Lear* those who have survived the catastrophe actually attempt to recuperate their society in just those terms which the play has subjected to sceptical interrogation. There is invoked, first, a concept of innate nobility in contradistinction to innate evil and, second, its corollary:

a metaphysically ordained justice. Thus Edgar's defeat of Edmund is interpreted as a defeat of an evil nature by a noble one. Also nobility is seen to be like truth - it will out: 'Methought thy very gait did prophesy/A royal nobleness' (V. iii. 175-6). Goneril is 'reduced' to her treachery ('read thine

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own evil', l. 156), while Edmund not only acknowledges defeat but also repents, submitting to Edgar's nobility (ll. 165-6) and acknowledging his own contrary nature (ll. 242-3). Next, Edgar invokes a notion of divine justice which holds out the possibility of rendering their world intelligible once more; speaking of Edmund of Gloucester, he says:

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices/  
Make instruments to plague us:/  
The dark and vicious place where thee he got/  
Cost him his eyes.  
(V.iii. 170-3)

Thus is responsibility displaced; but perhaps Edgar is meant to wince as he says it since the problem of course is that he is making his society supernaturally intelligible at the cost of rendering the concept of divine justice so punitive and 'poetic' as to be, humanly speaking, almost unintelligible. Nevertheless, Albany persists with the same process of recuperation by glossing thus the deaths of Goneril and Regan: 'This judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble,

/Touches us not with pity' (V.iii. 230-1). But when he cries 'The Gods defend her!' - ie. Cordelia - instead of the process being finally consolidated we witness, even before he has finished speaking, Lear re-entering with Cordelia dead in her arms. Albany has one last desperate bid for recuperation, still within the old, punitive/poetic terms:

All friends shall taste  
the wages of their virtue, and all foes  
The cup of their deservings.  
(V.iii. 302-4)

Seconds later Lear dies. The timing of these two deaths must surely be seen as cruelly, precisely, subversive: instead of complying with the demands of formal closure - the convention which would confirm the attempt at recuperation - the play concludes with two events which sabotage the prospect of both closure and recuperation.

### Endnotes:

1. Thus Irving Ribner (for example) argues that the play 'affirms justice in the world, which it sees as a harmonious system ruled by a benevolent God' (*Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 117).
2. Other critics who embrace, invoke or imply the categories of essentialist humanism include the following: A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, lectures 7 and 8; Israel Knox, *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer*, p. 117; Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, p. 264; Kenneth Muir, ed. *King Lear*, especially p. lv; Grigori Kozintsev, *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy*, pp. 250-1. For the essentialist view with a pseudo-Nietzschean twist, see Michael Long, *The Unnatural Scene*, pp. 191-3.
3. Barbara Everett, 'The New *King Lear*'; William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*; Cedric Watts, 'Shakespearean themes: the Dying God and the Universal Wolf'.
4. For John Danby, Cordelia is redemption incarnate; but can she really be seen as 'allegorically the root of individual and social sanity; tropologically Charity "that suffereth long and is kind"; analogically the redemptive principle itself?' (*Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature*, p. 125; cf. p. 133)
5. In-form rather than determine: in this play material factors do not determine values in a crude sense; rather, the latter are shown to be dependent upon the former in a way which radically disqualifies the idealist contention that the reverse is true, namely, that these values not only survive the 'evil' but do so in a way which indicates their ultimate independence of it.
6. By contrast compare Derek Traversi who finds in the imagery of this passage a 'sense of value, of richness and fertility . . . an indication of redemption . . . the poetical transformation of natural emotion into its spiritual distillation' (*An Approach to Shakespeare*, II. 164).

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