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Stories and Minds

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: Stories and Minds

**Frontiers of
Narrative**



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Stories and Minds

Cognitive Approaches to Literary Narrative

EDITED BY LARS BERNAERTS, DIRK
DE GEEST, LUC HERMAN, AND BART VERVAECK

University of Nebraska Press | Lincoln and London

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Introduction

Cognitive Narrative Studies: Themes and Variations

LARS BERNAERTS, DIRK DE GEEST,
LUC HERMAN, AND BART VERVAECK

The present collection of essays offers a sample of cutting-edge research in the field of cognitive narrative studies. The workings and effects of literary narratives provide the main focus, but the collection also reflects upon the relations between hermeneutic and empirical tendencies as they increasingly affect the study of cognition and narrative. In particular, the chapters in this volume will show how speculative research on readers' positions can supplement empirical inquiries. In the remainder of our introduction, we first summarize some of the trends in the cognitive study of literature against the background of literary theory. We start off with a phenomenon that has been thoroughly examined in literary theory and that is approached with new tools in several of the chapters in this volume: the gappy nature of literary narratives. At the end of our introduction, we provide a synopsis of the separate chapters.

Minds, Narrative, and the Pursuit of Gappiness

One of the sections in B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), a book published in the form of twenty-seven unbound chapters in a box, starts with a reflection on narrativization and style. How will the narrator, who is a sports journalist, report on the local soccer derby? He considers using the bald spots on the field as a metaphor in his article: "The pitch worn, the worn patches, like There might be an image, there, if I can think of one, at this stage of the season, it might too stand for what these two teams are like, are doing. If I can think of one" (Johnson 1969, 1). While the character-narrator is thinking about these worn patches, they already materialize in front of the reader's eyes. The bald spots in Johnson's text echo the narrator's thoughts as well as the narrator's thinking. His mind and his narrative are full of gaps and sudden shifts, and

therefore the text is gappy. The fact that the chapters of the novel are loose and presented in a book-shaped box reinforces this idea and further transposes it into the reader's experience. As the author explains himself (in a BBC documentary broadcast in 1969), the physical and typographical presentation of the text is a metaphor for the mind of the narrating protagonist. In addition, it is a metaphor for the mind of the reader. *Albert Angelo* (1964), another novel written by Johnson, demonstrates that gaps in a narrative text not only require an additional effort of the reader but also *enable* him or her to see something else and to make new narrative connections. The holes cut in the pages (1964, 149–52) of *Albert Angelo* function as windows on the further course of the narrative.

Far from being mere places of emptiness, void of significance, gaps like the ones Johnson foregrounds in his texts provide access to some of the key concerns of this volume. In particular, as we discuss in what follows, there are various kinds and levels of narrative gaps discussed in narrative theory. By going into these theoretical constructs, we can show some of the constants appearing in cognitive approaches to narrative, and in this book in particular.

Minding the Gap

Bridging gaps and filling holes is what readers do all the time when they are comprehending or interpreting narratives. In literary theory, this process of gap-filling is widely recognized and linked to the reader's cognitive efforts. From Gérard Genette's paralipsis to Meir Sternberg's informational gaps, from Wolfgang Iser's *Leerstellen* to Lubomir Doležel's and David Herman's deliberations on gaps and action representations, the idea of narrative lacunae has been prominent in theories of the narrative.¹ The reader mobilizes his or her knowledge and experience to supplement what is left unsaid. More particularly, models of fictional minds such as Alan Palmer's stress the importance of gap-filling activities undertaken both by fictional characters and by real readers.

A similar line of reasoning can be found in the philosophy of mind (which has, in fact, inspired narrative scholars like Palmer), in cognitive science, and in neurological approaches to literature and art. Daniel Dennett's and Galen Strawson's views on consciousness, as taken up by Palmer (2009, 292–93) in his model of fictional minds, chime with the notion of lacunae-driven narrativization. In *Consciousness Explained*, Dennett

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stresses the “gappy and sparse” (1991, 366) nature of consciousness, on the one hand, and the narrative constitution of the self, on the other hand. The self is no more than “the center of narrative gravity”; our minds and selves are the “product [of narratives], not their source” (418).

On yet another level of minds and narrative, there is an “explanatory gap” (Herman 2009, 146) between qualia, or the felt experience of subjective awareness, and neurophysiological descriptions of mental functioning. Up to now, the neurological repertoire—offering explanations in terms of neurons, synapses, and electrochemical transactions—remains partly unsatisfactory in accounting for the ways in which we experience the world through our consciousness. Because of its fragmented narrative structure, B. S. Johnson’s *The Unfortunates* can impose a feeling of disorientation on the reader. While this feeling is meaningful in the reader’s subjective experience, it might be insignificant or even barely distinguishable in a neurological description of that reader’s brain. Although they both theorize the mind, there is still quite a gap between phenomenological (subjective) and neurological (objective) inquiries. To give one more example, Ellen Spolsky’s *Gaps in Nature* (1993) characterizes the activity of compensating for lacunae as inherent not just in literary interpretation and literary historiography but also in the modular processing that goes on in our brains. It is not the smooth cooperation of modules (e.g., the senses) that generates new meanings, but the gaps and seams between them: “They are the sites of innovations resulting from the incommensurability between modules” (1993, 31).

Although there are significant differences as to the level and function of the “gaps” in these theories, they arise from a shared interest in minds and narrative, or what Herman (2009) terms the “nexus of narrative and mind” (137–60). The dynamics and interpretation of narratives depend on the absence of information and on discrepancies between the reader’s knowledge and the knowledge possessed by narrators and characters. As narrative theory teaches us, narratives come into being through the interaction between minds and narrative gaps. In brief, there is a profound awareness among theorists of mind as well as theorists of narrative that the construction and interpretation of narratives as coherent wholes paradoxically require gaps, empty spaces, and hidden information. The inquiry into minds and narrative has often taken the shape of pinpointing these gaps and describing how we fill them. In what follows we first

offer a thumbnail history of some of these approaches to narrative gaps. In that way, some of the theoretical affiliations connecting the history of literary theory to the current cognitive approaches will become apparent. Against that background, we will then focus on the novelties associated with cognitive approaches in particular.

Traditions in Narrative and Cognition

Narrative theorists have always shown interest in the relation between minds and narrative. But though this continuity is striking, there are some noticeable shifts in method and actual focus—shifts that, again, the issue of narrative gaps can help throw into relief. To clarify both continuity and shifts, we will simplify matters and present the evolution of thinking about minds and texts in three steps: the hermeneutic phase associated with phenomenology (largely preceding narratology), the structuralist stage of classical narratology, and the cognitive, postclassical approach.

Generally speaking, the hermeneutic tradition tries to integrate the objective, philological dimension of the text and the subjective processing of the text. In Schleiermacher's (1998, 9–18) terminology, the grammatical and psychological aspects must merge into one. This presupposes an endless back-and-forth movement between the “actual” text and the reader's interpretation of it. In this movement—which takes the form of the famous hermeneutic circle—the text becomes ever more meaningful and the reader continually learns more and more. Ideally, this would lead to a “complete” interpretation, but in practice there is always something left to be interpreted—a gap.

The tradition of hermeneutics and, more broadly, of phenomenology offers an explanation for these gaps. Thus, Roman Ingarden stresses that every interpretation or “concretization” (1973, 162) centers around “spots of indeterminacy” (246 ff.) that can never be fully determined as the literary text itself is necessarily indeterminate on all levels, for example, on the level of spatiotemporal representations and descriptions. In a novel such as B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* these indeterminacies are foregrounded typographically and thematically, but they are an integral part of each work of fiction and every act of reading. The evocation of a story can never be exhaustive, and a quasi-exhaustive account of a fictional world would probably be unreadable. The excess of information would kill the story.

Before the emergence of narratology and cognitive theory, Ingarden's discussion of the textual organization and the readerly filling out of blanks already deals with issues taken up by recent cognitive approaches. Hans-Georg Gadamer, another key figure in the hermeneutic tradition, uses the term "horizon" to frame the meeting between the mind of the reader and the demands of the text. As it is part of a larger textual and cultural tradition, the text "expects" a certain knowledge of its reader, who, in his or her turn, comes to the text with his or her own tradition and prejudices. Interpretation is the complex meeting point of the textual horizon with the readerly horizon. A good interpretation is the result of a "fusion of horizons" (1979, 306) that implies a "self-forgetfulness" (122) and aims at a specific truth. Such a complete fusion and forgetfulness is presented as an ideal. In many interpretations, this ideal is never attained.

The idea of horizons meeting and, especially, clashing is omnipresent in the reception theory of Hans-Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser. They tend to contest the hermeneutic belief in a perfect interpretation and integration. Their interest lies less in situating literary works in a tradition than in identifying the mechanisms that underlie literary dynamics. To them, openness and conflict define the literary quality of a text, and therefore literature is incompatible with a perfect fusion of horizons or a complete filling in of blanks. Jauss (1970, 187) takes Gadamer to task for the latter's belief in a final reconciliation of minds and texts. As an alternative, Jauss defines literature in terms of the "aesthetic distance" between the horizons of the reader and the text. This distance is never bridged in literary works of art.

As Jauss corrects Gadamer, so Iser (1978, 274 ff.) corrects Ingarden. The gaps—or *Leerstellen* in Iser's terminology—can be filled in many ways (there is not one final and correct reading) and, indeed, will always remain open to some extent: "one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled. In this very act the dynamics of reading are revealed" (Iser 1972, 285). In its material presentation *The Unfortunates* underlines this fact: individual readers are invited to freely choose the order in which they read the chapters, thereby creating new gaps and filling them in very different ways. As the order of the chapters changes,

readers will interpret the events and the narrator's memories differently. The idea of "different realizations" becomes very palpable in the case of Johnson's novel.

Not unlike cognitive studies, Iser's reception theory offers a model for the understanding of the reader's mental response. That is why his ideas are often integrated in that context. Iser's approach, however, operates on a more abstract level of theorization than the cognitive approach. Instead of dealing with concrete cognitive processes or empirical readers, he adopts a broad phenomenological view—this is the term he himself (1978, 274) uses—on the reader's experience. The same goes for the other hermeneutic and phenomenological thinkers we mentioned: they introduce an idealized and abstract reader, not going into concrete cognitive processes involved in the idealized process of minds meeting narratives.

Structuralist and formalist theories tend to ignore subjectivity and instead emphasize the distribution and structure of textual gaps. For his part, Gérard Genette uses the term "paralipsis" to indicate information that is needed but absent in the narration (1980, 194). His classification is concerned with the surface structure of narrative texts, rather than a deep structure situated in the human mind. Similarly, when the French structuralists A. J. Greimas and J. Courtès examine "The Cognitive Dimension of Narrative Discourse" (1976), they are dealing with gaps in the distribution of knowledge. They suggest, for example, that "a *gap* or disjunction is produced between the acting subject (the *subject of doing*) and the knowing subject (the *cognitive subject*), a gap the sudden destruction of which can constitute an event of a different order, a cognitive event with repercussions and peripeteias" (1976, 439). For Greimas and Courtès, a cognitive imbalance exists on several levels, between characters as well as between the reader and the text.

There is, in formalist and structuralist thought, an undercurrent of thinking about narrative and literature in terms of minds. Structuralism is obviously built on linguistic foundations and textual features, but the universal underlying systems it discriminates are situated in the human mind. In Culler's seminal study on structuralism, *Structuralist Poetics* (1975), this becomes particularly clear when he discusses literary competence, convention, and naturalization. Culler's notion of "naturalization" stems from the Russian formalists' concept of "motivation" and the structuralist idea of "vraisemblabilisation" (Culler 1975, 161). Readers tend to recuperate tex-

tual material by placing it in a “discursive order” that is already familiar to them. The style and structure of *The Unfortunates*, for example, might strike us as unconventional and odd at first. However, if we consider the text as a mimetic and verbalized evocation of the narrator’s thought processes, we can easily naturalize the textual fragmentation. Another mechanism already involved here is that of “literary competence”: readers can use literary frames of reference to make sense of Johnson’s novel and read it as “experimental fiction.” More recently, the concept of “naturalization” has been expanded and revised in Monika Fludernik’s “natural” narratology (1996) and revitalized in schema-theoretical approaches to narrative texts. Likewise, David Herman systematically does justice to the structuralist tradition when he recalibrates narratological concepts (Herman 2002).

“Motivation” is not the only formalist or structuralist term adumbrating the current cognitive models of minds and narrative. Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarization (“ostranenie”) and Mukařovský’s foregrounding (“aktualisace”) also entail hypotheses about the reader’s mental functioning. The reader’s perception of reality is presumed to be affected by the reading of literary texts. In the empirical study of literature, these explicit and implicit claims about the reader’s mind have been tested. Willie van Peer’s *Stylistics and Psychology* (1986) is a classic example, on which a number of other scholars have built (see Miall 2006, 112–13). Focusing on foregrounding, van Peer’s study provides empirical data for literary-theoretical hypotheses developed by Mukařovský. In that way, the empirical study of literature tackles the problem of the reader’s position—a problem that remains tacit in structuralist approaches. As Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon indicate, structuralism seems to approach readers as “universal, aggregate, hypothetical entities responding in unison” (2003, 6), whereas empirical studies factor in the (individual) responses of real readers. Instead of divining the reader’s response to *The Unfortunates*, we could set up an experiment. We can, for example, empirically test whether the reader’s image of the characters is affected by the order in which he or she reads the chapters. One group of readers can be asked to read the chapters in a certain order, and their reading experiences (documented on the basis of a questionnaire) can be compared with those of another group.

Another prominent model of narrative gaps is developed in Meir Sternberg’s *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (1978). According to Sternberg, the dynamics of reading arise from the informa-

tional gaps between the represented time and the communicative time. In *The Unfortunates*, the particular succession of these gaps—which, in turn, lead to surprise/suspense/curiosity—depends on the order in which the reader processes the text. For example, information about the narrator’s relationship with his passed-away friend can be announced but withheld in one chapter and then disclosed in the next one. If the latter chapter is read first, then the effect might be “surprise” rather than “curiosity.”

For their part, more recent cognitive approaches² to narrative systematically relate such textual patterns to the workings of a human mind keyed to information processing. For the sake of clarity, we can distinguish between the terms “cognitive” and “cognitivist” here. The former is a generic term used for a broad variety of approaches directly affected by the cognitive turn, ranging from cognitive narratology to evolutionary, neurological, and empirical studies of literature. “Cognitivist” is the term we use in a strict sense for those forms of inquiry that focus not on the reader’s subjective experience but on the mental operations required to comprehend narratives. The main goal is to describe these cognitive responses (e.g., the activation of memory patterns). While phenomenology deals with minds and narrative in intentionalist terms and neurology in biological, materialist terms (cf. Hogan 2003, 31), cognitivist research often hovers between those two poles. When we use the term “empirical,” we draw attention to a particular *method* in the examination of readers’ minds.

Moving beyond structuralist emphases on the grammar of gapping, cognitivist, empirical, and neuropsychological views on narrative sense-making situate the gap-filling process in both the brain (the computer) and the mind (the software). Simplifying these positions, we can say that the cognitivist reading ends when the mental processes have been described, whereas the structuralist reading ends when the rules that govern the narrative have been reconstructed. Meanwhile, more traditionally hermeneutic approaches address empty spaces in a particular narrative by following the hermeneutic circle. In that sense, the hermeneutic reading *never* ends, since the hermeneutic circle entails an endless feedback loop between the content of the narrative and the consciousness of the interpreter.

Empirical studies of literature may focus on surface phenomena such as eye movements and speed of reading, but they may also try to explain these behavioral phenomena in terms of mental patterns behind them. In

their empirical approach to aspects of the narrative, for example, Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon (2003) pay particular attention to the way textual cues are processed by readers on the basis of their convictions and prior knowledge. In sum, the way minds and narrative are conceptualized depends on the research object the researcher has in mind: the deep structure of the narrative for structuralism, the cognitive processes that make up narrative comprehension for cognitivist studies, the concrete text as a whole for hermeneutics, or the patterns of the reader's behavior for the empirical study of literature.

Narrative Studies and Cognitive Theory

The cognitive turn has reinforced the empirical basis of narrative studies and strengthened the connection with other disciplines (such as artificial intelligence, discursive psychology, evolutionary biology, philosophy of mind, cognitive linguistics, neuroscience, etc.). Whereas the first wave of cognitive approaches to narrative mainly imported insights from the cognitive sciences, the second wave has displayed a stronger awareness of the unique qualities of (literary) narratives and their potential value for cognitive research. In other words, second-wave cognitive narrative studies can see more clearly how the study of narratives can enrich theories of the mind.

We can find several versions of this development in cognitive literary studies. Mark Turner situates the roots of typical human mental functioning in “literary” processes. The way we think is based on literary, narrative devices such as “metaphor,” “story,” and “parable” (Turner 1996). In her accounts of sociocognitive complexity in literature, Lisa Zunshine (2006) suggests that levels of intentionality can be multiplied in narrative fiction, so that readers are challenged and tested in their ability to read the minds of others. In *Basic Elements of Narrative*, David Herman (2009, 143–53) explains the interconnection between narratives and qualia, stressing the unique capacity of narratives to create “an environment in which versions of what it was like to experience situations and events can be juxtaposed, comparatively evaluated, and then factored into further accounts of the world (or *a* world)” (151). In the same vein, Uri Margolin, who also touches upon the importance of qualia (2003, 286–87), considers literature as “probably the most eloquent and differentiated non-scientific mode of describing specific instances of the mind in action” (288).

For all these reasons, narrative texts and literary reading can be of special interest to cognitive theorists. Or to put it differently, if philosophers and psychologists claim that our self and our mind are fundamentally the product of narrativization, it would follow that a discipline with decades of expertise in the theory and interpretation of narrative can contribute to the understanding of narrative self-construction. The succession of a narrative and a cognitive turn has made narrative theory into a privileged partner for other disciplines. It is the logical consequence of the work of, for example, Jerome Bruner, Daniel Dennett, and Daniel Hutto. Bruner, who states that “we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative” (1991, 4), recognizes the expertise of literary theory in this respect (5). Commenting on Hutto’s hypothesis about the narrative foundations of our thinking, Herman also makes this logical consequence explicit: “further work on the NPH [Narrative Practice Hypothesis] would itself stand to benefit from a fuller integration of ideas developed by scholars of story” (2008, 512). Narrative theory and literary studies in general can enrich the cognitive study of artistic creations. They have a strong tradition of accounting for linguistic deviation, semantic density, narrative complexity, and interpretive layeredness.

As this overview suggests, cognitive studies of minds and narrative can indeed benefit from a strong awareness of the work done in literary theory from Aristotle to Russian formalism, reception theory, reader-response criticism, and so on. This is recognized and put into practice by many scholars in the field—for example, by Peter Stockwell, who states in his *Cognitive Poetics* that the old insights from literary theory are “useful starting points” for a cognitive analysis that allows us “to conceptualise things differently” (2002, 6). After the cognitive turn, familiar questions (What is literature? Why do we read fiction?) can be conceptualized in new ways, the reader’s consciousness can be theorized on various levels (from intentionalist to neurological), and the evocation of fictional consciousness can be analyzed accordingly.

Threats and Opportunities of Cognitive Approaches

While we do not doubt the relevance of a cognitive approach, we should not be blind to criticism that has been leveled against it. Possible threats surfacing in comments on cognitive literary studies are its blindness to

tradition, the potential backfire of eclecticism, a new essentialism based on naive positivistic optimism, and a reductionist teleological thinking. First, for Meir Sternberg, who discusses the “cognitivist fortunes” at length, blindness to the theoretical traditions we just sketched is one of the reasons why interdisciplinarity after the cognitive turn has remained largely unsuccessful (2003, 314). In the same vein, Marie-Laure Ryan recently stressed that cognitive approaches to narrative often confirm what narrative theory already knows. They are not yet able to be more precise or to surprise narrative theorists with less obvious findings (2010, 471–2).

Second, cognitive approaches may become so eclectic that they lose the quality of sharing a repertoire of terms and models, which is one of the major benefits of cognitive studies. The benign image used by H. Porter Abbott for cognitive literary studies is that of a group of pirates: “scholar-pirates who plunder for their purposes troves of hypotheses, bright ideas, and yes, rigorous scientific work” (2006, 714). The loot hauled in by these pirates can be very diverse. In an essay on blending theory and narratology, Monika Fludernik observes that a lot of cognitive literary studies display this “strong eclecticism.” Scholars select a diversity of “perhaps not compatible” cognitive tools to renew literary theory (2010, 3). For example, prototype theory, schema theory, and blending theory (cf. Turner 1996; Stockwell 2002) approach narrative phenomena in different ways because they start from different accounts of cognitive representations and mental functioning. Arguably, the appropriateness of the model depends on the task we are describing (e.g., building fictional spaces or understanding irony), but how do we decide which model is preferable?

Third, the cognitive turn threatens to elicit essentialist or reductionist thinking. Researchers might suggest that evolutionary or neurological readings reveal the “essence” of literature—which may become reduced to its cognitive dimension—or that ultimate explanations of literary texts spring from these readings. We do not need postmodern ruminations to show that in essentialist thought the interpretive potential of literature is denied. In neurological and evolutionary theories of literature in particular, the belief that the new paradigm will be able to provide conclusive answers to a variety of age-old questions is striking. In this way, one of the major benefits of cognitive approaches, namely, the promise of an empirical basis (i.e., biological materialism), can become the instigator of positivistic optimism. What is problematic is not the conviction that our

interpretations can be described as cognitive and neurological processes, but rather the idea that these processes are the be-all and end-all.

We can find this type of reasoning, for example, in Brian Boyd's version of literary Darwinism (a term he himself rejects), in which evolutionary criticism is presented as the solution to the mistakes made by critical theory (2009, 384–92): “[Capital-T theory] has isolated literary criticism from the rest of modern thought and alienated literary studies even from literature itself. A biocultural or evolutionary approach to fiction can reverse these trends” (384). However, Boyd explicitly states that evolutionary criticism “does not limit itself to scientific reduction” (390). Even though his approach has a proclivity toward essentialism, it rejects the kind of reductionism with which cognitive literary studies are sometimes associated.

What is sometimes overlooked is not so much the interpretive power of literature but the extent to which observations and explanations are based on interpretive acts. When literary Darwinists formulate literature's adaptive functions (see Carroll 2008, 119–28), they are *interpreting* the features of literature and the meaning of literature within a constrained explanatory framework and an a priori system of assumptions (e.g., that literature has an adaptive function). In sum, different interpretations of literature as adaption are put forward, but the interpretive act and the ideology underlying these activities are not always acknowledged.

Finally, reductionism in cognitive approaches can take the shape of speculative and teleological thinking. Alan Richardson (2004, 4), for example, criticizes Turner's propensity to stress continuities and universalities. In his approach to “the literary mind,” Turner does not do justice to cultural differences and to the specificity of literature and literary reading. Richardson also notes that the empirical evidence for a lot of the claims in cognitive literary studies is rather poor, a criticism that has been seconded by David Miall (2006, 35–46). Teleological reasoning can be found, for example, in straightforward Darwinistic underpinnings such as Boyd's claim that “our minds reflect evolution's design” (2009, 25), as if the evolution of mind is goal-oriented. As Richardson indicates, the generalizing claims of evolutionary literary studies are often speculative and, until now, lack an empirical basis (2004, 13).

As we have suggested in the previous sections, the cognitive turn has a lot to offer. The possibility of a dialogue across disciplinary boundaries

and the promise of an empirical basis are of great value. What is more, there seems to be an increasing awareness of the aforementioned risks, and a lot of cognitive literary studies provide integrative models (e.g., Spolsky 1993; Herman 2002; Palmer 2004; Herman 2009). Rather than turning away from structuralist narratology, cognitive narratologists such as David Herman and Alan Palmer build on the insights from structuralism and combine them with cognitive studies. When Ellen Spolsky applies cognitive theory to literary criticism in *Gaps in Nature*, she consistently integrates ideas from a range of literary theories: New Criticism, deconstruction, poststructuralism, feminism, and so on. More recently, Spolsky (2002) demonstrates that both cognitive theory and poststructuralism acknowledge the fuzziness of categories and the instability of meanings. In that respect, Spolsky suggests, Darwin and Derrida are compatible. In brief, these studies bridge the space between disciplines (cognitive sciences, literary studies) and between subdisciplines (structuralist narratology, poststructuralism, cognitive narratology).

An Outline of the Chapters

The same conviction that narratives thrive on gappiness underlies some of the central questions of this book: How do gaps in our *memory* for texts shape our comprehension of a given narrative? How does the stylistic control of the reader's *attention* create and remedy the gappiness of the narrative? What makes us capable of filling the lacunae in visual representations, the portrayal of bodily experiences, or the figuring of fictional minds? Why do we fill some of the empty spaces and ignore others? Why do we pursue this gappiness and at the same time try to resolve it? New cognitive research on narratives is brought together here to investigate these and related questions, with a focus on the real mind of the reader as well as the fictional minds of characters.

On the one hand, this collection brings together inquiries into fictional minds and the examination of the reader's mind. On the other hand, it stages a dialogue between the three orientations mentioned earlier on—the interpretive (hermeneutic), the empirical, and the cognitive. Issues such as the gappiness of fictional minds and their transparency or opacity are brought up, questioned, and examined in new ways (Mäkelä, Sommer). Several aspects of the reader's mind are explored in the essays, ranging from the moral component of folk psychology (Keunen) to the

way the reader mobilizes his or her perceptual and bodily experiences (Auyoung, Caracciolo, Kuzmičová). Several modules of processing, such as memory (Bortolussi and Dixon) and attention (Emmott, Sanford, and Alexander) are specified.

In the opening section of the book, authors who are well known for the way they integrate narratology, stylistics, and empirical study present new research. Two chapters in this section work in tandem, examining two compatible concepts: memory and attention for narratives. In their study of memory for the literary text, Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon first show that the extant research on this topic is far from extensive. Neither literary theory nor psychology has produced in-depth studies of the ways literature uses and tests the memory capacity of readers. Bortolussi and Dixon first map the research on the three levels of memory representation distinguished by cognitive psychology and discourse analysis—namely, the surface structure, the semantic content, and the situation model. Next, they distinguish what is characteristic about memory for *literary* texts. They introduce three blank spots in this domain, which they term the surface-structure puzzle, the distal-coherence puzzle, and the extended-text puzzle. In order to solve the first puzzle, they present the results of their own experiments, which show the relatively poor quality of the memory for the literary surface structure. In their conclusion, Bortolussi and Dixon discuss ways in which this research could and should affect our teaching.

It can be said that our memory is sharpened when the literary text uses stylistic devices to draw our attention. Catherine Emmott, Anthony J. Sanford, and Marc Alexander test the plausibility of this proposition, exploring how narrative texts can capture the reader's attention through stylistic and narratological devices. The authors conducted several experiments within the framework of the STACS (Stylistics, Text Analysis, and Cognitive Science) Project in order to identify the rhetorical strategies that control the reader's attention. In their chapter, they summarize the work in cognitive psychology and discourse analysis on such related issues as attention, change blindness, depth of processing, and text change detection. The results of the recent STACS experiments reveal the wide variety of textual strategies (e.g., mini-paragraphs, italics, cleft sentences, pre-announcements) that can be used to draw the reader's attention. The authors' narrative-continuation experiment shows how the attention

of the reader is focused differently if scenario-dependent characters (as opposed to principal characters) behave in unexpected ways. Finally, the authors go into four distinct strategies characteristic of detective fiction. Burying and revealing information, distractors, and false reconstructions typically manipulate the reader's attention in detective fiction, so that the reader is efficiently guided from ignorance through suspicion to recognition and surprise.

In the third chapter of this section, Elaine Auyoung analyzes the paradoxical nature of reading. On the one hand, reading entails the ongoing combination of smaller units (sentences, words, even letters) into a larger, more comprehensive whole. This process is often described as the shift from surface information to in-depth processing. On the other hand, readers are often confronted with partial—sometimes even minimal—cues that nevertheless are sufficient to prompt recognition. Auyoung discusses this intriguing phenomenon by making recourse to both literary and psychological theories. In her reading of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, two levels of inferencing are examined: the level on which characters decipher each other's actions, and the level on which the reader of the novel displays similar behavior. Auyoung shows that blanks need not be filled in—contrary to what Ingarden assumed—and that themes and stylistic devices often exploit this lack of definiteness. She links this tolerance for gaps with our everyday way of coping with incomplete cues.

The second part of the book deals with readers' experiences from a philosophical viewpoint. Marco Caracciolo bridges the study of minds and the study of narratives by integrating narratological and philosophical models. His central claim is that the consciousness the reader "finds" in narrative texts is not represented or projected but enacted in the reader's imagination. He takes issue with Fludernik's conception of experientiality in narrative texts and proposes to lay more weight on the reader's consciousness. He takes his departure from Fludernik's "experientiality" as well as Herman's focus on qualia. In the philosophy of mind, and more specifically in "enactivist" research, Caracciolo finds the appropriate concepts to specify the reader's mental engagement with the literary work. According to enactivist theories, human experience amounts to an active and embodied interaction with the world. When we are reading, experiences are simulated in our imagination. By implementing philosophical thought into literary theory and applying it to Saramago's *Blindness*,

Caracciolo elucidates the implications of enactivism for the understanding of the reading experience.

The contribution by Anežka Kuzmičová ties in with Caracciolo's enacted consciousness as she focuses on the "embodied mind of the reader." She starts from a phenomenological approach, which studies narrative as a verbal presence (inducing the reader to experience things via descriptions) and as a direct presence (inducing the reader to experience, more immersively, the imaginary world described). By elaborating on the second aspect, she tries to fill one of the gaps in narratology, namely, the relative lack of attention paid to the reader's sensorimotor participation in the imaginary storyworld. As a case study, Kuzmičová analyzes the sensorimotor details in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy*. She pays special attention to motor imagery and movement descriptions, linking those narrative elements to the reader's experience not only by combining narratology with phenomenology but also by using findings from experimental psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and the history of reading. This enables her to draw some general conclusions about the sensorimotor effects of narrative texts and to indicate some of the problems that need to be tackled before this approach can really fill these lacunae in narrative theory.

In linking narrative fiction with real minds and worlds one may downplay the literariness of fiction, and this may lead to "serious literary theoretical losses." Maria Mäkelä wants to redirect the general cognitivist attention to the specific literariness of texts and readerly responses to them. She points to the dangers of reducing "literary experientiality" to everyday experience and offers a way out of this impending reductionism. Literary narratives evoke a sense of cognitive familiarity *and* estrangement. The familiar and the other are intertwined more closely and more intricately in literary texts than in everyday life. They go together with a multilayered narrative construction demanding "a multi-level cognitive performance" that refuses the smooth "naturalization" of regular experientiality and that sets great store by uncertainty, unreliability, foregrounding, self-reflexiveness, and lack of closure. Mäkelä scrutinizes all these aspects in two short stories by Richard Ford, showing that much can be gained if one does not reduce literary *constructions* to familiar forms of communicative (or informational) *transmission*.

The final section of the book puts some of the questions raised in the

earlier chapters in a broader cultural and anthropological perspective. Roy Sommer adds an important dimension to the understanding of interactions between the reader and the narrative text. In theorizing intercultural aspects of reading, he draws our attention to the narrative gaps emerging from cultural difference and to our ways of filling them. In Sommer's exploration of these issues, cognitive, hermeneutic, stylistic, and empirical methods are nicely geared to one another. Cognitive concepts such as "narrative empathy," "inferencing," and "categorization" are adopted in an intercultural reading of Ajub Khan-Dhin's play *East Is East* and Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road*. Sommer's interpretation of empathy in *East Is East* shows how the interactions between the characters stage their subjectivity and provide scaffolds for narrative empathy. In the last part of the essay, Billy Clark's method of sophisticated inferentialism is used to analyze the way a group of students reads the opening of Ben Okri's intercultural novel. The students' responses enable Sommer to distinguish between several cognitive strategies for resolving intercultural gaps.

Bart Keunen places the reading mind in the broader frame of folk psychology, which tends to ascribe intentions to subjects and objects alike. This is done not only to make sense of them but also to evaluate them in terms of moral principles. In addition, this activity always involves the construction and the influence of a specific social and cultural context. Thus, the social-cultural context and moral heuristics are essential aspects of our reading activity, whereas these two dimensions hardly come into the purview of existing cognitive narrative studies. In order to accommodate these aspects of literary interpretation, Keunen develops a functional frame for narrative practices that avoids reductionism as it stresses the literary nature of the discussed functions. He shows that literature deals with "thick moral concepts" (complicated, multilayered concepts such as loyalty and courage) rather than thin concepts such as "right" and "wrong." These thick moral concepts imply complex action models and multilayered ("maximalist") causality attributions. Modernist novels exhibit these narrative complexities, whereas myths and moralistic stories tend to simpler forms of models and attributions. The functional frame developed by Keunen not only fills a gap in the "narrative practice hypothesis" of folk psychology theory but also enables us to distinguish between various forms of narrativity and literariness.

This collection of essays provides the reader with fresh theoretical per-

spectives as well as insightful literary analyses in the field of cognitive narrative studies. As a whole, it also shows the tensions and the complementary nature of different methodological strands. Interpretive and empirical research can and should join forces to improve our understanding of stories and minds. In addition, the volume reflects upon the nature of literary narratives from the point of view of cognitive theory. Finally, its chapters demonstrate that cognitive narrative studies offer added value for general cognitive theory. In sum, we are convinced this volume helps to fill gaps in theory and in reading, but we also hope it exposes new explanatory lacunae worth filling in the future.

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Notes

1. Significantly, the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* has a separate entry on “gapping” (Spolsky 2005, 193–94; see also the entry on “indeterminacy” by Emma Kafalenos).
2. Since several surveys of cognitive literary studies have been published in recent years, we are only briefly touching upon some developments here. See, for example, Crane and Richardson (1999), Richardson (1999), Richardson and Steen (2002), Richardson (2004), Richardson and Steen (2002), Herman (2010), and Zunshine (2010).

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