

**THEORY AND INTERPRETATION OF NARRATIVE**

**James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, Series Editors**

# WHY WE READ FICTION

THEORY OF MIND AND THE NOVEL



*Lisa Zunshine*



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# PART 1

ATTRIBUTING MINDS



~ 1 ~

WHY DID PETER WALSH TREMBLE?

Let me begin with a seemingly nonsensical question. When Peter Walsh, a protagonist of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, unexpectedly visits Clarissa Dalloway "at eleven o'clock on the morning of the day she [is] giving a party," and, "positively trembling" and "kissing both her hands" (40), asks her how she is, how do we know that his "trembling" is to be accounted for by his excitement at seeing his old love again after all these years and not, for instance, by his progressing Parkinson's disease?

Assuming that you are a particularly good-natured reader of *Mrs. Dalloway*, you could patiently explain to me that had Walsh's trembling been occasioned by an illness, Woolf would have told us so. She wouldn't have left us long under the impression that Walsh's body language betrays his agitation, his joy, and his embarrassment and that the meeting has instantaneously and miraculously brought back the old days when Clarissa and Peter had "this queer power of communicating without words" because, reflecting Walsh's own "trembling," Clarissa herself is "so surprised, . . . so glad, so shy, so utterly taken aback to have [him] come to her unexpectedly in the morning!" (40). Too much, you would point out, hinges on our getting the emotional undertones of the scene right for Woolf to withhold from us a crucial piece of information about Walsh's health.

I then would ask you why is it that had Walsh's trembling been caused by an illness, Woolf would have had to explicitly tell us so, but as it is not, she simply takes for granted that we will interpret it as having been caused by his emotions. In other words, what allows Woolf to assume that we will automatically read a character's body language as indicative of his thoughts and feelings?

She assumes this because of our collective past history as readers, you perhaps would say. Writers have been using descriptions of their characters' behaviors to inform us about their feelings since time immemorial, and we expect them to do so when we open the book. We all learn, whether consciously or not, that the default interpretation of behavior reflects a character's state of mind, and every fictional story that we read reinforces our tendency to make that kind of interpretation first.<sup>1</sup>

Had this imaginary conversation about the automatic assumptions made by readers taken place twenty years ago, it would have ended here. Or it never would have happened—not even in this hypothetical form—because the answers to my naïve questions would have seemed so obvious. Today, however, this conversation has to continue on because recent research in cognitive psychology and anthropology has shown that not *every* reader can learn that the default meaning of a character's behavior lies with the character's mental state. To understand what enables most of us to constrain the range of possible interpretations, we may have to go beyond the explanation that evokes our personal reading histories and admit some evidence from our evolutionary history.

This is what my book does. It makes a case for admitting the recent findings of cognitive psychologists into literary studies by showing how their research into the ability to explain behavior in terms of the underlying states of mind—or *mind-reading* ability—can furnish us with a series of surprising insights into our interaction with literary texts. Using as my case studies novels ranging from Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to Dashiell Hammett's *Maltese Falcon*, I advance and explore a series of hypotheses about cognitive cravings that are satisfied—and created!—when we read fiction.

I divide my argument into three parts. The present part, "Attributing Minds," introduces the first key theoretical concept of this book: mind-reading, also known as Theory of Mind. Drawing on the work of Simon Baron-Cohen (*Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind*), I suggest that fiction engages, teases, and pushes to its tentative limits our mind-reading capacity. Building on the recent research of Robin Dunbar and his colleagues, I then consider one particular aspect of Woolf's prose as an example of spectacular literary experimentation with our Theory of Mind (hence, ToM). Finally, I turn to Steven Pinker's controversial analysis of Woolf in *The Blank Slate* to discuss the possibilities of a more profitable dialogue between cognitive science and literary studies.

The second part, "Tracking Minds," introduces my second theoretical mainstay: metarepresentationality. I base it on Leda Cosmides and John Tooby's exploration of our evolved cognitive ability to keep track of sources

of our representations (i.e., to metarepresent them). I begin by returning to the point made in the first part—which is that our ToM makes literature as we know it possible—to argue that the attribution of mental states to literary characters is crucially mediated by the workings of our metarepresentational ability. Fictional narratives, from *Beowulf* to *Pride and Prejudice*, rely on, manipulate, and titillate our tendency to keep track of *who* thought, wanted, and felt what and *when*. I further suggest that research on metarepresentationality sheds light on readers' enduring preoccupation with the thorny issue of the "truth" of literary narrative and the distinction between "history" and "fiction." I conclude with the case studies of two novels (Richardson's *Clarissa* and Nabokov's *Lolita*), showing how several overlapping and yet distinct literary traditions are built around the narratives' exaggerated engagement of our metarepresentational capacity.

The third part, "Concealing Minds," continues to explore the exaggerated literary engagement with our source-monitoring capacity by focusing on the detective novel. Following the history of the detective narrative over one hundred and fifty years, I show that the recurrent features of this genre, including its attention to material clues, its credo of "suspecting everybody," and its vexed relationship with the romantic plot, are grounded in its commitment to "working out" in a particularly focused way our ToM and metarepresentational ability. I conclude by arguing that the kind of cognitive analysis of the detective novel advocated by my study (and, indeed, the analysis of *any* novel with respect to its engagement of our Theory of Mind) requires close attention to specific historical circumstances attending the development of the genre.<sup>2</sup>

This emphasis on historicizing is in keeping with my broader view on the relationship between the "cognitive" and other, currently more familiar, approaches to literature. I do not share the feelings (be they hopes or fears<sup>3</sup>) of those literary critics who believe that cognitive approaches necessarily invalidate insights of more traditional schools of thought.<sup>4</sup> I think that it is a sign of *strength* in a cognitive approach when it turns out to be highly compatible with well-thought-through literary criticism, and I eagerly seize on the instances of such compatibility.<sup>5</sup> Given that the human mind in its numerous complex environments has been the object of study of literary critics for longer than it has been the object of study of cognitive scientists, I would, in fact, be suspicious of any cognitive reading so truly "original" that it can find no support in any of the existing literary critical paradigms.<sup>6</sup>

But, compatible with existing paradigms or not, any literary study that grounds itself in a discipline as new and dynamic as cognitive science is

today takes serious chances. In the words of cognitive evolutionary anthropologist Dan Sperber, “[O]ur understanding of cognitive architecture is [still] way too poor, and the best we can do is try and speculate intelligently (which is great fun anyhow).”<sup>7</sup> I proceed, then, both sobered by Sperber’s warning and inspired by his parenthetical remark. Every single one of my speculations resulting from applying research in cognitive psychology to our appetite for fiction could be wrong, but the questions that prompted those speculations are emphatically worth asking.

~ 2 ~

WHAT IS MIND-READING  
(ALSO KNOWN AS THEORY OF MIND)?

**I**n spite of the way it sounds, mind-reading has nothing to do with plain old telepathy. Instead, it is a term used by cognitive psychologists, interchangeably with “Theory of Mind,” to describe our ability to explain people’s behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires.<sup>1</sup> Thus we engage in mind-reading when we ascribe to a person a certain mental state on the basis of her observable action (e.g., we see her reaching for a glass of water and assume that she is thirsty); when we interpret our own feelings based on our proprioceptive awareness (e.g., our heart skips a beat when a certain person enters the room and we realize that we might have been attracted to him or her all along); when we intuit a complex state of mind based on a limited verbal description (e.g., a friend tells us that she feels sad and happy at the same time, and we believe that we know what she means); when we compose an essay, a lecture, a movie, a song, a novel, or an instruction for an electrical appliance and try to imagine how this or that segment of our target audience will respond to it; when we negotiate a multilayered social situation (e.g., a friend tells us in front of his boss that he would love to work on the new project, but we have our own reasons to believe that he is lying and hence try to turn the conversation so that the boss, who, we think, may suspect that he is lying, would not make him work on that project and yet would not think that he didn’t really want to); and so forth. Attributing states of mind is the default way by which we construct and navigate our social environment, incorrect though our attributions frequently are. (For example, the person

who reached for the glass of water might not have been thirsty at all but rather might have wanted us to think that she was thirsty, so that she could later excuse herself and go out of the room, presumably to get more water, but really to make the phone call that she didn't want us to know of.)

But why do we need this newfangled concept of mind-reading, or ToM, to explain what appears so obvious? Our ability to interpret the behavior of people in terms of their underlying states of mind seems to be such an integral part of what we are as human beings that we could be understandably reluctant to dignify it with fancy terms and elevate it into a separate object of study. One reason that ToM has received the sustained attention of cognitive psychologists over the last twenty years is that they have come across people whose ability to “see bodies as animated by minds”<sup>2</sup> is drastically impaired—people with autism. By studying autism and a related constellation of cognitive deficits (such as Asperger syndrome), cognitive scientists began to appreciate our mind-reading ability as a special cognitive endowment, structuring our everyday communication and cultural representations.

Cognitive evolutionary psychologists working with ToM think that this adaptation must have developed during the “massive neurocognitive evolution” which took place during the Pleistocene (1.8 million to 10,000 years ago). The emergence of a Theory of Mind “module” was evolution's answer to the “staggeringly complex” challenge faced by our ancestors,<sup>3</sup> who needed to make sense of the behavior of other people in their group, which could include up to 200 individuals. In his influential 1995 study, *Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and a Theory of Mind*, Simon Baron-Cohen points out that “attributing mental states to a complex system (such as a human being) is by far the easiest way of understanding it,” that is, of “coming up with an explanation of the complex system's behavior and predicting what it will do next.”<sup>4</sup> Thus our tendency to interpret observed behavior in terms of underlying mental states (e.g., “Peter Walsh was *trembling* because he was *excited* to see Clarissa again”) seems to be so effortless and automatic (in a sense that we are not even conscious of engaging in any particular act of “interpretation”<sup>5</sup>) because our evolved cognitive architecture “prods” us toward learning and practicing mind-reading daily, from the beginning of awareness.

Baron-Cohen describes autism as the “most severe of all childhood psychiatric conditions,” one that affects between approximately four to fifteen children per 10,000 and “occurs in every country in which it has been looked for and across social classes.”<sup>6</sup> Although, as Gloria Origgi and Dan Sperber have pointed out, “mind-reading is not an all-or-none affair

. . . [p]eople with autism lack [this] ability to a greater or lesser degree,<sup>7</sup> and although the condition may be somewhat alleviated if the child receives a range of “educational and therapeutic interventions,” autism remains, at present, “a lifelong disorder.”<sup>8</sup> Autism is highly heritable,<sup>9</sup> and its key symptoms, which manifest themselves in the first years of life, include the profound impairment of social and communicative development and the “lack of the usual flexibility, imagination, and pretence.”<sup>10</sup> It is also characterized—crucially for our present discussion—by a lack of interest in fiction and storytelling (although one should keep in mind here, and I will address shortly, the important issue of *degree* to which people within the autistic range are indifferent to storytelling).

One immediate, practical implication of the last two decades of research in ToM is that developmental psychologists are now able to diagnose autism much earlier (e.g., the standard age for diagnosis used to be three or four years, whereas now it is sometimes possible to diagnose a child at eighteen months<sup>11</sup>) and to design more aggressive therapeutic techniques for dealing with it. Moreover, cognitive anthropologists are increasingly aware that our ability to attribute states of mind to ourselves and other people is intensely context dependent. That is, it is supported not by one uniform cognitive adaptation but by a large cluster of specialized adaptations geared toward a variety of social contexts.<sup>12</sup> Given this new emphasis on context-sensitive specialization and the fact that Theory of Mind appears to be our key cognitive endowment as a *social* species, it is difficult to imagine a field of study within the social sciences and the humanities that would not be affected by this research in the coming decades.

What criteria do psychologists use to decide whether a given individual has an impaired Theory of Mind? In 1978, Daniel Dennett suggested that one effective way to test for the presence of normally developing ToM is to see whether a child can understand that someone else might hold a false belief, that is, a belief about the world that the child knows is manifestly untrue. The first false-belief test was designed in 1983 and has since been replicated many times by scientists around the world. In one of the more widespread versions of the test, children see that “Sally” puts a marble in one place and then exits the room. In her absence, “Anne” comes in, puts the marble in a different place, and leaves. Children are then asked, “Where will Sally look for her marble when she returns?” The vast majority of normal children (after the age of four<sup>13</sup>) pass the test, responding that Sally will look for the marble in the original place, thus showing their understanding that someone might hold a false belief. By contrast, only a

small minority of children with autism do so, indicating instead where the marble really is. According to Baron-Cohen, the results of the test support the notion that “in autism the mental state of belief is poorly understood.”<sup>14</sup>

But, apart from the carefully designed lab test, how do people with autism see the world around them? In his book *An Anthropologist on Mars*, Oliver Sacks describes one remarkable case of autism, remarkable because the afflicted woman, Temple Grandin, has been able to overcome her handicap to some degree. She has a doctorate in agricultural science, teaches at the University of Arizona, and can speak about her perceptions, thus giving us a unique insight into what it means to be unable to read other people’s minds. Sacks reports Grandin’s school experience: “Something was going on between the other kids, something swift, subtle, constantly changing—an exchange of meanings, a negotiation, a swiftness of understanding so remarkable that sometimes she wondered if they were all telepathic. She is now aware of the existence of those social signals. She can infer them, she says, but she herself cannot perceive them, cannot participate in this magical communication directly, or conceive of the many-leveled, kaleidoscopic states of mind behind it.”<sup>15</sup>

To compensate for her inability to interpret facial expressions, which at first left her a “target of tricks and exploitation,” Grandin has built up over the years something resembling a “library of videotapes, which she could play in her mind and inspect at any time—‘videos’ of how people behaved in different circumstances. She would play these over and over again, and learn, by degrees, to correlate what she saw, so that she could then predict how people in similar circumstances might act.”<sup>16</sup> What the account of such a “library” suggests is that we do not just “learn” how to communicate with people and read their emotions (or how to read the minds of fictional characters based on their behavior)—Grandin, after all, has had as many opportunities to “learn” these things as you and I—but that we also have evolved cognitive architecture that makes this particular kind of learning possible, and if this architecture is damaged, as in the case of autism, a wealth of experience would never fully make up for the damage.

Predictably, Grandin comments on having a difficult time understanding fictional narratives. She remembers being “bewildered by *Romeo and Juliet*: ‘I never knew what they were up to.’”<sup>17</sup> Fiction presents a challenge to people with autism because in many ways it calls for the same kind of mind-reading—that is, the inference of the mental state from the behavior—that is necessary in regular human communication.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the correlation between the impaired ToM and the lack of interest in fiction and storytelling is highly suggestive, the jury is still out on the exact nature of the connection between the two. It could be argued, for example, that the cognitive mechanisms<sup>19</sup> that evolved to process information about thoughts and feelings of human beings are constantly on the alert, checking out their environment for cues that fit their input conditions. On some level, then, works of fiction manage to “cheat” these mechanisms into “believing” that they are in the presence of material that they were “designed” to process, that is, that they are in the presence of agents endowed with a potential for a rich array of intentional stances.

Thus one preliminary implication of applying what we know about ToM to our study of fiction is that it makes literature as we know it possible. The very process of making sense of what we read appears to be grounded in our ability to invest the flimsy verbal constructions that we generously call “characters” with a potential for a variety of thoughts, feelings, and desires and then to look for the “cues” that would allow us to guess at their feelings and thus predict their actions.<sup>20</sup> Literature pervasively capitalizes on and stimulates Theory of Mind mechanisms<sup>21</sup> that had evolved to deal with real people, even as on some level readers do remain aware that fictive characters are not real people at all.<sup>22</sup> The novel, in particular, is implicated with our mind-reading ability to such a degree that I do not think myself in danger of overstating anything when I say that in its currently familiar shape it exists because we are creatures with ToM.<sup>23</sup> As a sustained representation of numerous interacting minds, the novel feeds the powerful, representation-hungry<sup>24</sup> complex of cognitive adaptations whose very condition of being is a constant social stimulation delivered either by direct interactions with other people or by imaginary approximation of such interactions.

~ 3 ~

THEORY OF MIND, AUTISM, AND FICTION:  
THREE CAVEATS

**I**n theorizing the relationship between our evolved cognitive capacity for mind-reading and our interest in fictional narratives, one has to be

careful in spelling out the extent to which one builds on what is currently known about autism. Three issues are at stake here. First, though the studies of autism were crucial for initially alerting cognitive scientists to the possibility that we have an evolved cognitive adaptation for mind-reading, those studies do not define or delimit the rapidly expanding field of ToM research. For example, later in this section I discuss the work of cognitive evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar, who deals with autism only tangentially and who grounds his study of cognitive regularities underlying our mind-reading processes in a different kind of compelling empirical evidence. Similarly, Alan Palmer's recent groundbreaking study of cognitive construction of fictional consciousness, *Fictional Minds*, mentions autism only briefly. I use research on autism merely to provide a vivid example of what it means not to be able to attribute minds (just as in Part II I use research on schizophrenia to show what it means not to be able to keep track of the sources of one's representations); the bulk of my argument does not rely on it.

Which brings me to the closely related second point. Increasingly probing and sophisticated as research on autism is becoming, it still is—and will remain for the foreseen future—a research-in-progress. Given the broad range of autistic cases—indeed it is often said that no two autistic individuals are alike—it seems that the more cognitive scientists learn about the condition, the more complex it appears. Again, the complexity of the issues involved should be a warning to cultural critics casually pronouncing some texts, individuals, or groups somehow deficient in their mind-reading ability—an increasingly popular practice, as autism becomes what one researcher has called a “fashionable”<sup>1</sup> cognitive impairment. I remember giving a talk once on ToM and fiction, after which one of my listeners suggested that adolescents today must all be “slightly autistic” because they are not interested in reading books anymore and want to watch television instead; as if—to point out just one of many problems with this suggestion—making sense of an episode of *Friends* or *Saved by the Bell* somehow did not require the full exercise of the viewer's Theory of Mind. Consequently, my present inquiry into Woolf's, Richardson's, James's, and Nabokov's experimentation with our mind-reading capacity should not be taken as a speculation about what so-called normal versus so-called borderline autistic readers can or cannot do.

My final point sounds a similar note of caution about applying our still-limited knowledge of autism to the literary-critical analysis of reading and writing practices. Although I used the now-iconic story of Temple

Grandin to illustrate the challenge faced by autistic individuals in understanding fictional narratives, we have to remember that this challenge varies across the wide spectrum of autism cases. For example, if we include within that spectrum people with Asperger syndrome<sup>2</sup>—which is sometimes classified as high-functioning autism and sometimes viewed as a separate condition (i.e., a nonverbal learning disability<sup>3</sup>)—we can say that a “dash of autism”<sup>4</sup> does not necessarily preclude people from enjoying fictional narratives.

Consider Christopher, a bright teenager with Asperger syndrome from Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, a novel drawing on Haddon’s previous work with autistic individuals. Although Christopher “mostly [reads] books about math and science” and is not interested in what he calls “proper novels” (4), he does like murder mysteries, appreciating, in particular, their puzzlelike structure. Following the advice of his teacher (a figure based, perhaps, on Haddon), Christopher decides to write his own mystery murder narrative. Christopher’s novel will tell the true story of his quest to find the person who killed the neighbor’s dog because, as he puts it, “it happened to me and I find it hard to imagine things which did not happen to me” (5).

In describing the story that Christopher wants to write, Haddon attempts to capture the boy’s peculiar mind-reading profile. For example, Christopher can figure out, at least partially, some states of mind behind some behavior. Thus he guesses that, when an elderly lady tells him that she has a grandson his age, she is “doing what is called chatting, where people say things to each other which aren’t questions and answers and aren’t connected” (40). Similarly, Christopher knows that “people do a lot of talking without using any words.” As his teacher tells him, “[I]f you raise one eyebrow it can mean lots of different things. It can mean ‘I want to do sex with you’ and it can also mean ‘I think that what you just said was very stupid’” (14–15). This nonverbal communication—which requires reconstructing (and, inevitably, often misconstruing) a mental state behind an ambiguous gesture—is one reason that Christopher finds people “confusing.”<sup>5</sup> Consequently, his murder mystery novel is mostly lacking in attribution of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes to its protagonists (we, the readers, supply those missing mental states, thus making sense of the story). Still, as a novel authored by a child with a compromised Theory of Mind (even if this child is himself a fictional character), *The Curious Incident* is a much-needed reminder about the complexity of the issues involved in the relationship between autism and storytelling.<sup>6</sup>

# CONCLUSION

WHY DO WE READ (AND WRITE) FICTION?



~ 1 ~

AUTHORS MEET THEIR READERS

I have argued throughout this book that certain fictional texts, such as eighteenth-century epistolary novels (e.g., *Clarissa*), early nineteenth-century comedies of manners (e.g., *Emma*), detective novels, stream-of-consciousness novels (e.g., *Mrs. Dalloway*), and novels featuring unreliable narrators (e.g., *Lolita*) all engage clusters of cognitive adaptations associated with our ToM and metarepresentational ability in a particularly focused way. This is not to say that other novels *do not* (for a characteristically excellent discussion of this issue, see Palmer's *Fictional Minds*) or that all of the above novels do it in the *same* way. Clearly, the novels of Woolf and Chandler affect readers very differently and may indeed appeal to very distinct audiences. Still, most of these narratives seem to demand outright that we process complexly embedded intentionalities of their characters, configuring their minds as represented by other minds, whose representations we may or may not trust.

I have also suggested that at certain junctures of human history (e.g., with the advent of print culture and growing literacy), a combination of new technological developments and socioeconomic conditions may make the cultural transmission of such "ToM-intense" fictional narratives possible. Such texts can then find their readers, that is, the people who like their ToM teased in this particular manner and who, once having gotten a taste of such a cognitive workout, want and can afford more and more of it.

Moreover, when we think of this cultural-historical process of "matching" texts with their readers, perhaps it makes more sense to speak not just in terms of the text that serendipitously finds its audience but also in terms of the writer who finds hers. For it seems to me that working on a story that engages the reader's Theory of Mind in a particularly focused way

must hit the author's own mind-reading spot as few other activities do. The process of writing can be excruciatingly difficult and is sometimes described in terms reminiscent of torture, but for a mind constituted the way the writer's mind is constituted, that process must represent something of a cognitive necessity. I am not saying that people who write fiction do it purely to stimulate or express their own peculiarly developed mind-reading ability. I do suspect, however, that other conscious and semiconscious incentives for writing, such as making a living, impressing potential mates, and advancing pet ideological agendas, would hardly suffice to make one offer up so much of her life to constructing elaborate mental worlds of people who never existed.

P. G. Wodehouse insisted that authors conjure up fictional worlds precisely for that kick of creating, controlling, and inhabiting other people's states of mind. He called it "liking to write," but the example that he used to illustrate that elusive "liking" shows that he thought that "what urges a writer to write" is the pleasurable opportunity for a particularly focused mind-reading:

I should imagine that even the man who compiles a railroad timetable is thinking much more of what fun it all is than of the check he is going to get when he turns in the completed script. Watch his eyes sparkle as he puts a very small (a) against the line

4:51 arr. 6:22

knowing that the reader will not notice it and turn to the bottom of the page, where it says

(a) On Saturdays only

but will dash off with his suitcase and golf clubs all merry and bright, arriving in good time at the station on the afternoon of Friday. Money is the last thing such a writer has in mind. (110–11)

In response to Dr. Johnson's categorical "nobody but a blockhead ever wrote except for money," Wodehouse would say that when the author has "written something, he wants to get as much for it as he can, but that is a very different thing from writing for money" (110). What drives the creative process is our hankering for mind-making and mind-reading. Some of us work it by compiling railroad timetables, others by writing scholarly books, still others by sailing the empyrean with the likes of Galahad Treepwood, Jeeves, and Ukridge.

Note how this view of writing fiction complicates an influential postulate of reader-response theory that "a text can only come to life when it

is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader.”<sup>1</sup> By now we are accustomed to thinking of a fictional narrative in terms of what it does to us (e.g., Booth is convinced that “it is good for [him] to be required to go through” *The Wings of the Dove*) and what we do to it (e.g., we bring it to life; we “participate in the production of [its] meaning”<sup>3</sup>). Deeply congenial as these two views are to the perspective espoused by this study, we need to add the third component to them: the mind-reading mind of the writer. To poach on Booth’s formulation, “[I]t is good” for the author to engage in the cognitive workout of constructing fictional minds. To poach on Iser’s, a text “comes to life” in the mind of the author just as richly as—if not more richly than, in some aspects—it does in the mind of her readers because it engages her ToM in a unique and pleasurable (if at times torturous) manner.

The novel, then, is truly a meeting of the minds—of the particularly inclined minds in a particular historical moment that has made the encounter serendipitously possible. Samuel Richardson could indulge the quirks of his ToM (boy, was he one interesting London businessman!) and write the 1,500-page *Clarissa* focusing obsessively on mind-reading and misreading because he had first tried it first on a lesser scale in *Pamela*. He must have liked how it felt, and, moreover, he must have come to believe that his second novel would be able to reach a group of readers who love just this kind of cognitive stimulation. Or, to put it slightly differently, some of the people (by no means all) who read *Pamela* when it first came out discovered that they like this kind of story, wished for more, and could afford more (what with reasonable book prices and increasing leisure time for readers of a certain social standing), thus ensuring that what we call today a “psychological” or “sentimental” novel would survive and give birth to several related genres.

I speak of the “ensured” survival of the psychological novel guardedly. It did not have to happen like this. As I argued in Part III, there is nothing really ensured or determined about how genres arise, metamorphose into other genres, or die out, even if they do “get at” our ToM in a particularly felicitous way. For all that we know, there might have been a man or a woman in the eighteenth century who wrote an experimental novel that could have started a new literary tradition stimulating our ToM in a wonderfully unpredictable fashion. That novel did not find a publisher; or it was lost in the mail; or its author changed his/her mind and never revisited this particular style of writing in his/her subsequent publications. Literary history reflects only a tiny subset of realized cognitive possibilities constrained by the myriad of local contingencies, and

those contingencies include personal inclinations and histories of individual writers and readers.

~ 2 ~

IS THIS WHY WE READ FICTION?

SURELY, THERE IS MORE TO IT!

This emphasis on local contingencies carries over to another claim that I think you think I have been making throughout this book (yes, that's the third level of embedment—we handle it easily). Theory of Mind is a cluster of cognitive adaptations that allows us to navigate our social world and also structures that world. Intensely social species that we are, we thus read fiction because it engages, in a variety of particularly focused ways, our Theory of Mind.

That's my general claim, and here are the promised qualifications. First of all, some texts experiment with our ToM more intensely than others, and some readers appreciate that experimentation more than others, or appreciate some forms of that experimentation more than others. (Again, neither preference is a meaningful indicator of the reader's emotional intelligence or any other personal characteristic. For example, people who love Woolf's prose at times apply to graduate programs in English, and that's as much as I can say about their overall personal profiles.)

Second, the reader's predilection for a certain form of novelistic experimentation with ToM does not mean that she is guaranteed to enjoy every well-written novel adhering to that form. For example, among the people who like the cognitive thrill offered by the figure of the unreliable narrator, somebody could be turned off by *Lolita's* theme of pedophilia. By the same token, an aficionado of a detective novel could find too depressing certain aspects of P. D. James's *The Black Tower*. Conversely, a person could find intolerable James's depiction of corruption in the house of assisted living but still be deeply touched by her portrayal of the novel's murdered protagonist, Father Baddeley. This is to say that factors other than the form of the novel's engagement with ToM enter into the assessment of our personal liking of the novel or our assessment of its relative aesthetic value.

Third—but here I ought to be interrupted by my long-suffering reader

who feels badly misrepresented by the argument of this book, in spite of all my qualifications. Let me play the role of that impatient reader myself and voice her main objection, which would sound (in case she happens to like Henry James) something like this:

There is more to my reading of fiction than simply having my ToM tickled! The argument of your book does not even begin to explain what I feel when I learn that the dearest wish of incurably ill Ralph Touchett of James's *The Portrait of a Lady* has always been to die at the same time with his father, and that Ralph is "steeped in melancholy" (84) when he realizes that this wish will not be granted, and, ill as he is, he will still outlive his father. As James puts it, "The father and the son had been close companions, and the idea of being left alone with the remnants of a tasteless life on his hands was not gratifying to the young man, who had always and tacitly counted upon his elder's help in making the best of a poor business" (85). Why I relate to this sentiment so strongly is my own business, but isn't it obvious that your book's theorizing on ToM and fiction does not capture or explain the instant recognition and heartache that is such an important part of my interaction with the novel? (A hypothetical reader, who insists, quite rightly, on the complexity and unpredictability of her feelings)

I expect that by now you have also thought of episodes like this and concluded that there must be more to our response to our favorite fictional stories than just having our ToM stimulated by them. Except that if you have, you are mistaken, and your mistake stems from our use of that little word "just." It is fair to say that my book has dealt with just a few aspects of the relationship between our ToM and fiction—with a tiny subset of that relationship, in fact. It does not make sense, however, to say that our interaction with fiction entails much more than just having our ToM stimulated. When it comes to our everyday social functioning (which includes making sense of the social world of the novel), ToM is always much more than whatever cluster of cognitive adaptations we have isolated to make the discussion of it manageable.

For instance, in practical terms, how do you separate our ToM and emotions? If, using my source-monitoring ability, I remember that it was my enemy who wanted my boss to promote me into a certain department, my emotions concerning that impending promotion might be quite different from what they were had I known that he hated the idea of my transfer. I might feel anxiety and anger instead of happy anticipation, and

I might imagine unknown dangers and difficulties lurking behind my new appointment. ToM gives meaning to our emotions and is in turn given meaning by them. As Palmer observes, “[T]he interconnections between cognition and emotion . . . are difficult if not impossible to disentangle. Cognitions tend to have a strong emotional element and vice versa. They also relate closely in causal terms: a character’s anger might be caused by a cognition of some sort that in turn results in further emotions and then other cognitions.”<sup>1</sup>

By the same token, my imagined reader’s argument about *The Portrait of a Lady* is a complex amalgamation of dynamically interacting emotions and cognitions. Her personal feelings about some elder relative that she herself feels very close to are made more poignant, first, because she is able to attribute a particular sentiment to a literary character; second, because she can keep track of the complex source of the sentiment, seeing it issuing from James via “Ralph” and not from herself; and third, because she is titillated by the similarity between something that she has quietly felt for a long time and something that a highly sympathetic personage, such as Ralph, is experiencing. She realizes that she is not alone in the wish that she used to consider odd, and her new awareness of this fragile but comforting community is not reducible to the sum of cognitions and emotions that went into it.

In other words, we do read novels because they engage our ToM, but we are at present a long way off from grasping fully the levels of complexity that this engagement entails. Fiction helps us to pattern in newly nuanced ways our emotions and perceptions;<sup>2</sup> it bestows “new knowledge or increased understanding” and gives “the chance for a sharpened ethical sense”;<sup>3</sup> and it creates new forms of meaning for our everyday existence. All of this exploratory work is inextricably bound up with ToM, and the overall effect of it on the reader is not reducible to the sum of this narrative’s engagements with our various cognitive adaptations. Some day we may have a conceptual framework that will allow us to speak about this overall effect—that “emergent meaning”<sup>4</sup> of the literary narrative. In preparation for that sophisticated future, here is a very specific, modest, take-home claim from my book. I can say that I personally read fiction because it offers a pleasurable and intensive workout for my Theory of Mind. And, if you have indeed read this study of mine from cover to cover and followed attentively its arguments about Clarissa, Lolita, Arsène Lupin, and Mrs. Dalloway, I suspect that this is why *you* read fiction, too.

# ~Notes~

## NOTES TO PART I

### I: 1

1. Like Hermione Lee, we could ground it in Woolf's position as a "pioneer of reader-response theory." Woolf, she writes, "was extremely interested in the two-way dialogue between readers and writers. Books change their readers; they teach you how to read them. But readers also change books. 'Undoubtedly,' Woolf herself had written, 'all writers are immensely influenced by the people who read them'" ("Virginia Woolf's Essays," 91).

2. On the possibility of connecting "cognition and culture, to question the boundaries which keep apart . . . psychology and history," see Sutton, 30–31.

3. For a suggestive discussion of such, see Meir Sternberg, "Universals of Narrative," I and II.

4. For an overview of the work of literary critics who call for an abandonment of the traditional criticism in favor of that grounded in cognitive sciences, see Richardson, "Studies in Literature and Cognition," 12–14.

5. Compare to Spolsky's hope that the work in cognitive literary criticism will "supplement rather than supplant current work in literary and cultural studies" ("Preface," *The Work of Fiction*, viii).

6. See Spolsky for a critique of the "common mistake of interdisciplinary studies" which consists in adapting a theory from a field outside of one's professional expertise as "(somehow) more reliable than the more familiar, but embattled assertions" in one's own field (*Gaps in Nature*, 2). Also, on the production of original readings of literary texts while using the cognitive framework, see Tabbi, 169.

7. Sperber, "In Defense of Massive Modularity," 49.

I: 2

1. For a useful introductory overview of the term, see Gopnik, “Theory of Mind,” in *The MIT Encyclopedia*.

2. Brook and Ross, 81.

3. On the social intelligence of nonhuman primates, see Byrne and Whiten, *Machiavellian Intelligence* and “The Emergence of Metarepresentation”; Gomez, “Visual Behavior”; and Premack and Dasser, “Perceptual Origins.”

4. Baron-Cohen, 21. For a discussion of alternatives to the Theory of Mind approach, see Dennett, *The Intentional Stance*.

5. For a useful related discussion of how we begin to articulate our thought processes when explicitly asked to explain the observed action, see Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 105–6.

6. Baron-Cohen, 60.

7. Origg and Sperber, 163.

8. Baron-Cohen, 60.

9. Autism was first described in 1943 by Leo Kanner, 217–50. For more than twenty years after that, autism was “mistakenly thought to be caused by a cold family environment.” In 1977, however, “a landmark twin study showed that the incidence of autism is strongly influenced by genetic factors,” and, since then, “numerous other investigations have since confirmed that autism is a highly heritable disorder” (Hughes and Plomin, 48). For the “pre-history” of the term *autism*, particularly as introduced by Eugen Bleuler in 1911 and developed by Piaget in 1923, see Harris, 3.

10. Baron-Cohen, 60.

11. For a discussion of the comparative mind-reading prowess of fifteen- and eighteen-month-olds, see Paul Bloom, 18–19.

12. See Clark H. Barrett, “Adaptations to Predators and Prey,” and Lawrence Hirschfeld, “Who Needs a Theory of Mind.”

13. As Robin Dunbar points out, “Children develop ToM at about the age of four years, following a period in which they engage in what has come to be known as ‘Belief-Desire Psychology.’ During this early stage, children are able to express their own feelings quite cogently, and this appears to act as a kind of scaffolding for the development of the true ToM (at which point they can ascribe the same kinds of beliefs and desires to others)” (“On the Origin of the Human Mind,” 239).

14. Baron-Cohen, 71.

15. Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, 272.

16. *Ibid.*, 259–60.

17. *Ibid.*, 259.

18. An important tenet of a cognitive approach to literature is that, as Paul Hernadi puts it, “there is no clear division between literary and nonliterary signification. . . . Literary experience is not triggered in a cognitive or emotive vacuum: modern readers, listeners, and spectators mentally process the virtual comings and goings of imagined characters as if they were analogous to remembered actual events” (60, 62). For a related discussion, see Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind*. When it comes to the construction of literary characters, see Hogan’s argument that we build up the “intentional” (that is, as imagined by [us]) characters “just the same way that [we] build up intentional versions of real people, imputing motives and broad character traits on the basis of the per-

son's/character's actions, statements, and so on." We may know that Hamlet "is not real, but the process of constituting an intentional version of Hamlet is automatic or spontaneous. [We] do not plan it out. It is just part of the way our minds work. Once an intentional person is constituted, then he/she is open to the same sort of emotive response as anyone else" (*The Mind and Its Stories*, 70). For further discussion, see Boyd, *Heads and Tales*, forthcoming.

19. By using the word *mechanism*, I am not trying to smuggle the outdated "body as a machine" metaphor into literary studies. Tainted as this word is by its previous history, it can still function as a convenient shorthand designation for extremely complex cognitive processes.

20. The scale of such investment emerges as truly staggering if we attempt to spell out the host of unspoken assumptions that make it possible. This realization lends new support to what theorists of narrative view as the essential underdetermination or "undertelling" of fiction, its "interior nonrepresentation" (Sternberg, "How Narrativity Makes a Difference," 119). See also Herman's argument that "narrative comprehension *requires* situating participants within networks of beliefs, desires, and intentions" ("Stories as a Tool for Thinking," 169).

21. Compare my argument here to that developed in Steven Pinker's *How the Mind Works*, 524–26.

22. The question of just how we manage to keep track of the "unreality" of literary characters is very complicated. I address some aspects of it in later sections when I speak of source monitoring. For a further discussion, see the debates by cognitive scientists and cognitive literary critics of what cognitive mechanisms or processes make pretence (and imagination as such) possible: Leslie, 120–25; Carruthers, "Autism as Mind-Blindness," 262–63; and Spolsky, "Why and How."

23. Compare to Palmer's argument that "the constructions of the minds of fictional characters by narrators and readers are central to our understanding of how novels work because, in essence, narrative is the description of mental functioning" (*Fictional Minds*, 12). Palmer further observes (an observation with which I strongly agree) that this claim applies not just to "the consciousness novels of Henry James or the stream of consciousness or interior monologue novels," but to "the novel as a whole, because all novels include a balance of behavior description and internal analysis of characters' minds" (25).

24. I am borrowing the term from Andy Clark, 167. For a discussion of Clark's theory of representational hunger and its application to literary criticism, see Spolsky, "Women's Work."

### I: 3

1. Fred Volkmar, quoted in "Uncovering Autism's Mysteries." Online at <http://www.cnn.com/2003/HEALTH/conditions/03/02/autism.ap/> (March 2, 2003).

2. For further information about Asperger syndrome, see Uta Frith's edited volume, *Autism and Asperger Syndrome*. Particularly relevant for the present discussion are the essays by Frith, Dewey, and Happe.

3. For a discussion, see Frith, 12.

4. *Ibid.*, 31.

5. Another reason is their tendency to use metaphors (Haddon, 15).
6. For a discussion of autobiographies written by adults with Asperger syndrome, see Happe.

I: 4

1. Baron-Cohen, 29; emphasis added.
2. Dennet, 48.
3. See Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, 269.
4. Easterlin, "Making Knowledge," 137. For a qualification of the term *inborn* in relation to the processing of incoming data, see Spolsky, *Satisfying Skepticism*, 164.
5. Hayles, 145. For a discussion of "constraints," see Spolsky, "Cognitive Literary Historicism."
6. For a discussion of individual readers' reactions, see Hogan, *Cognitive Science*, 130, 160, and 162–65.
7. Fish, "How to Recognize a Poem," 110–11.
8. *Ibid.*, 110.
9. Brook and Ross, 81.
10. *Ibid.*, 112; emphasis in original.
11. For a discussion, see Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, 197–267.

I: 5

1. For a discussion, see Leslie, 120–25; Carruthers, "Autism as Mind-Blindness," 262–63; Hernadi, 58; and Spolsky, "Why and How."
2. Carruthers also sees decoupling as an unnecessarily complicated attempt to strengthen the mind-blindness theory of autism in the face of alternative explanation posited by such scholars as Alison Gopnik, Andrew Meltzoff, and Uta Frith, who argue that "mind-blindness of autistic people is a consequence of some other basic deficit" (Carruthers, 258). See Gopnik and Meltzoff, "The Role of Imitation," and Uta Frith, *Autism: Explaining the Enigma*. For Gopnik and Meltzoff's suggestive alternative to the Theory of Mind theory—their "child as scientist" paradigm—see Gopnik and Meltzoff, *Words, Thoughts, and Theories*. For a response to the "child as scientist" paradigm, see Carruthers, "Simulation and Self-Knowledge."
3. Carruthers, "Autism as Mind-Blindness," 265. Emphasis in original. For the most recent revision of this argument, see Carruthers, *The Architecture of the Mind*.
4. Carruthers, "Autism," 264. Though the terms of this comparison may be too broad, still compare Carruthers's observation that autistic children do less pretending because they do not enjoy it to David Miall and Don Kuiken's observation that the "less experienced readers seem less committed to the act of reading" (335). Enjoyment of mind-imagining, both in real life and in reading fiction, seems to come with practice.
5. Carruthers, "Autism," 267. For an interesting complication of the idea of enjoyment predicated upon nonautistic mind-reading, see Stuart Murray, "Bartleby, Preference, Pleasure and Autistic Presence."
6. Tsur, "Horror Jokes," 243. Compare to Dorrit Cohn's argument that "in narra-

tology, ‘as elsewhere, norms have a way of remaining uninteresting, often even invisible, until and unless we find that they have been broken—or want to show that that they have been broken’” (*The Distinction of Fiction*, 43; quoted in Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 6). Compare, also, to Margolin: “The fictional presentation of cognitive mechanisms in action, especially of their breakdown or failure[,] is itself a powerful cognitive tool which may make us aware of actual cognitive mechanisms and, more specifically, of our own mental functioning” (“Cognitive Science,” 278).

7. Tsur, 248–49; emphasis in original. For a more detailed treatment of the topic, see Tsur, *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*.

8. Phelan, *Living to Tell about It*, 28.

9. *Ibid.*, 20.

10. Marvin Mudrick, 211.

11. The colleague shall remain anonymous. His students’ debate was apparently prompted by the interview between Colin Firth and Bridget Jones in Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*.

12. For very different and suggestive discussions of this point, see Peter Rabinowitz, *Before Reading*, 94, 96, and Paul Bloom, 218–19.

13. Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 599.

14. Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 10.

15. *Ibid.*, 35.

16. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 549.

17. Note that I am drastically simplifying Booth’s argument in order to keep my own argument easy to follow. In the quoted passage, Booth writes not about Henry James—the “real” James, “capable in his ‘declining’ years” of “daily pettiness,” but of the “great implied author” of *The Wings of the Dove*—the “James” who was “superior” to his maker, “purged of whatever [that maker] took to be [his] living faults” (“The Ethics of Forms,” 114), an entity characterized by Booth on a different occasion as our “intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole” (*The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 73). For further discussion, see Part II, Section 9, “Source-Monitoring and the Implied Author,” in this book.

18. Again, here Booth contrasts the “real” James with the “implied” James of the novel.

19. Booth, “The Ethics of Forms,” 114–15, 120. Emphasis in original.

## I: 6

1. For an important related discussion, see Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, chapter 6.

2. Compare to Palmer’s argument that a “good deal of twentieth-century narration is characterized by a reluctance to make the decoding of action too explicit and a disinclination to use too much indicative description or contextual thought report.” Palmer further points out that in the “behaviorist narratives of Ernest Hemingway, Raymond Chandler, and Dashiell Hammett, in which very little direct access to minds is given, the behavior of the characters only makes sense when it is read as the manifestation of an underlying mental reality” (*Fictional Minds*, 140). For a related discussion, see Fludernik on “neutral narratives” (*Toward a ‘Natural’ Narratology*, 172–75), and Cohn and Genette on a form of narration that “yells for interpretation” (263).

3. Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters* [*Tri Sestry*], 120. Translation mine.
4. Chekhov, *Seagull* [*Chaika*], 22.
5. *Ibid.*, 27.
6. Compare to the important discussion of misreadings in Rabinowitz, *Before Reading*, 173–208.
7. Phelan, e-mail communication, May 23, 2005.
8. For an important related discussion of animism, see Blakey Vermeule, *Making Sense of Fictional People: A Cognitive and Literary Project*, in press.
9. As Marie-Laure Ryan puts it, “How many of us can honestly say that we never skip descriptions?” (“Cognitive Maps,” 219).
10. Compare to Ryan’s elaboration of Ralf Schneider’s observation that “readers focus their interest in the fictional world on the characters, rather than, for instance, fictional time or space or narrative situations.” As Ryan demonstrates, in constructing mental models of the fictional narrative’s topography, readers start with the characters and remember most effortlessly the landmarks associated with the dramatic turns in the careers of the characters: “Mental models of narrative space are centered on the characters, and they grow out of them” (“Cognitive Maps,” 236).

## I: 7

1. Dunbar, “On the Origin of the Human Mind,” 241.
2. For the more recent version of this study, which sets the bar at the fifth level by factoring in the mind of the author (which does not change the present results if we do not factor in the author), see Stiller and Dunbar.
3. For a discussion, see Carey and Spelke, and Cosmides and Tooby, on domain specificity; and Dunbar, *Grooming*. For a recent application of the theory of domain specificity to the study of literature, see Zunshine, “Rhetoric, Cognition, and Ideology.”
4. To which Uri Margolin may add: and *how* it is being represented. As he puts it, the “reason for the difference is that the first [sequence] is linear or sequential, unfolding step by step with all members being on the same level, while the second is hierarchical and simultaneous and needs to be grasped in its totality or unpacked in reverse order of presentation” (“Reader’s Report,” 3). One may thus speculate that the linear processing might be supported by cognitive adaptations somewhat different from ones supporting the simultaneous processing, the emergence of the latter correlated with our evolutionary history as an intensely social species.
5. For a discussion, see Part III, Section 4, “A Cognitive Evolutionary Perspective: Always Historicize!,” of this book.
6. Now, of course, it does not seem that random anymore, since it has served my purposes so well. Perhaps I should consider it a “randomly selected serendipitous” passage.
7. Dunbar, “On the Origin of the Human Mind,” 240.
8. Thus, bringing the findings of cognitive scientists to bear upon the literary text does not diminish its aesthetic value. As Scarry has argued in response to the fear that science would “unweave the rainbow” of artistic creation, “[T]he fact of the matter is that when we actually look at the nature of artistic creation and composition, understanding it does not mean doing it less well. To become a dancer, for example, one must

do the small steps again and again and understand them, if one is to achieve virtuosity. Right now we need virtuosity, not only within each discipline, but across the disciplines as well" ("Panel Discussion," 253).

I: 8

1. For a discussion, see Easterlin, "Voyages in the Verbal Universe."
2. As Blakey Vermeule observes, "[L]iterature-fiction-writing is so powerful because it eats theories for breakfast, including cognitive/evolutionary approaches" (personal communication, November 20, 2002).
3. For a useful most recent review of the field of cognitive approaches to literature, see Richardson, "Studies in Literature and Cognition."
4. Hogan, "Literary Universals," 226. For a discussion of embodied cognition, see also Hart, "Epistemology."
5. Herman, "Regrouping Narratology."
6. Butte, 237.
7. For a related discussion, see Spolsky, "Preface," ix.
8. Benjamin, 97.
9. For a related discussion, see Hogan, "Literary Universals," 242–43.
10. Hernadi argues that "literature, whether encountered in live performance or in textual and electronic recording, can challenge and thus enhance our brains' vital capacities for expression, communication, representation, and signification." He further connects the fictional text's capacity for developing our minds to the evolutionary history of the literary endeavor. He points out that "the protoliterary experiences of some early humans could, other things being equal, enable them to outdo their less imaginative rivals in the biological competition for becoming the ancestors of later men and women" (56).
11. Richardson and Steen, 3.
12. Michael Whitworth, 150.
13. Susan Dick, 51, 52.
14. Auerbach, 531. Strictly speaking, Auerbach's question refers to *To the Lighthouse*, but it is equally pertinent for our discussion of *Mrs. Dalloway*.
15. A valuable new study by George Butte, *I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from Moll Flanders to Marnie*, offers a fascinating perspective on a writer's interest in constructing a "present moment" as a delicate "connection" among the characters' subjectivities. Applying Merleau-Ponty's analysis of interlocking consciousnesses (*Phenomenology of Perception*) to a broad selection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels, as well as to the films of Hitchcock, Hawks, and Woody Allen, Butte argues compellingly that something had changed in the narrative representation of consciousness at the time of Jane Austen: writers became able to represent the "deep intersubjectivity" (39) of their characters, portraying them as aware of each other's perceptions of themselves and responding to such perceptions with body language observable by their interlocutors and generating a further series of mutual perceptions and reactions. Although Butte does not refer in his work to cognitive science or the Theory of Mind, his argument is in many respects compatible with the literary criticism that does.

16. On Woolf's definition of narrative ventriloquism, see Maria DiBattista, 132.
17. Phelan, e-mail communication, May 23, 2005.

## I: 9

1. Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 413.
2. *Ibid.*, 404, 409–10.
3. Anonymous reader for *PMLA*.
4. For a related discussion of cognitive scientists' interest in literature and the arts, see Hogan, *Cognitive Science*, 3.
5. For a discussion of Heliodorus's influence, see Doody, *The True Story of the Novel*.
6. Compare to my argument in the last chapter about a compelling love story that knows how to push our emotional buttons because it is built on the bones of millions of forgotten love stories that didn't. Note that even the most difficult experimental modernist or postmodernist text would still have to engage the reader emotionally, and, in doing so, it does *not* depend on preserving "omniscient narration, structured plots, the orderly introduction of characters, and general readability."
7. Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 53.
8. Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, 170.
9. Compare to Richardson's programmatic assertion that cognitive literary criticism "rejects naïve realism. It refuses to dismiss (for example) important twentieth-century avant-garde traditions as unnatural or misguided, but rather seeks to understand their appeal to serious artists and informed audiences. Nor does it typically designate certain forms of literary activity . . . as 'natural' or normative in order to devalue others" ("Studies in Literature and Cognition," 24).
10. James Phelan, personal communication, April 17, 2003.

## NOTES TO PART II

### II: 1

1. For a useful introductory discussion of the term, see Sperber, "Metarepresentation," in *The MIT Encyclopedia*.
2. Cosmides and Tooby, "Consider the Source," 60–61.
3. Compare to David Herman's discussion of Jerome Bruner's argument that when "an interlocutor tells me a story incriminating a mutual acquaintance, I am likely to construe specific details in the light of what I know about the storyteller's past history with the person who is the focus of the story" ("Stories as a Tool for Thinking," 164).
4. For a further discussion of our ability to carry our inferences on information that we know to be false or that we do not (fully) understand, see Sperber, "The Modularity of Thought." Also, compare to Wittgenstein's observation that one "can *draw inferences* from a false proposition" (41; emphasis in original).
5. Cosmides and Tooby, "Consider the Source," 69.
6. For a discussion of episodic and semantic memories, see Tulving.
7. Klein et al., "Is There Something Special about the Self?," 491.

8. Ibid.
9. Cosmides and Tooby, "Consider the Source," 53, 57.
10. Ibid., 54.
11. Ibid., 58.
12. Ibid., 60.
13. Ibid., 105.
14. Ibid., 104. See also Sperber, *Explaining Culture*, 146–50.
15. Cosmides and Tooby, "Consider the Source," 77.
16. Ibid., 104.
17. Sacks, "The Mind's Eye," 52.
18. Ibid., 55.
19. Compare to a discussion of metarepresentationality by Antonio Damasio, who sees "constructing metarepresentations of our own mental process" as "a high-level operation in which a part of the mind represents another part of the mind. This allows us to register the fact that our thoughts slow down or speed up as more or less attention is devoted to them; or the fact that thoughts depict objects at close range or at a distance" (*Looking for Spinoza*, 86).

## II: 2

1. Cosmides and Tooby, "Consider the Source," 101.
2. Klein et al., "A Social-Cognitive Neuroscience," 111.
3. Ibid., 127.
4. Frith, *The Cognitive Neuropsychology of Schizophrenia*, 116, 133–34.
5. Ibid., 115.
6. Ibid, 127, table 7.1.
7. Ibid., 126.
8. Ibid., 122.

## II: 3

1. Compare to Mitchell's argument in "The Psychology of Human Deception," 837.
2. Spolsky, "Iconotropism"; *Satisfying Skepticism*, 7; "Darwin and Derrida," 52.
3. See Tooby and Cosmides, "The Psychological Foundations of Culture," 53–55; "Origins of Domain Specificity," 87; "From Evolution to Behavior," 293.

## II: 4

1. For a suggestive related analysis of Darcy and Elizabeth's conversation, see Nicholas Dames, 26.
2. For a useful background discussion of the literary phenomenon of "idiom of the group," see Brian McHale, 270.

3. Of course, as Hilary Schor reminds us, the story's outcome bears out the truth of the former belief—"there are no wealthy bachelors at the end of *Pride and Prejudice*"—"but that does not mean that no experimentation went on in between" (97).

4. Belton, "Mystery without Murder," 55–56; emphasis added.

5. Cosmides and Tooby, "Consider the Source," 61.

6. *Ibid.*, 58.

## II: 5

1. Cosmides and Tooby, "Consider the Source," 91–92.

2. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 67.

3. Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 148.

4. Cosmides and Tooby, 92.

5. *Ibid.*, 90.

6. Quoted in Mayer, 2, 224.

7. Compare to Lanser's discussion of "the readers' outrage" in the cases of *Famous All Over Town*, *The Education of Little Tree*, and Alan Socal/*Social Text* Affair ("The 'I' of the Beholder").

8. For further discussion, see Zunshine, "Eighteenth-Century Print Culture."

9. Lloyd, 6.

10. *Ibid.*, 16.

11. Cosmides and Tooby, 58.

12. Compare to the discussion of progressive modalization in Bruno Latour's *Science in Action* and Latour and Steve Woolgar's *Laboratory Life*, especially as adapted by Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter, 104–7.

13. Compare to Lanser's discussion of "the rather flimsy and accidental form of a narrative's placement within categorical space . . . [such as] the 'fiction' or 'nonfiction' shelves in a bookstore" ("The 'I' of the Beholder").

14. Lloyd, 17.

## II: 6

1. Compare to Tabbi's assertion that the "cognitive framework," while including "the main features of modernist reflexivity," also introduces "a more supple materialism, one that preserves literature's capacity for achieving common understanding in terms that remain specific to each text and true to the moment by moment operations of the reading mind" (168).

2. Compare to Hogan's development of Chomsky's point that "the normal use of language is constantly innovative" (*Cognitive Science*, 62).

## II: 7

1. For a suggestive related discussion, see Francis Steen.

2. Another such character is Ian McEwan's Briony (*Atonement*). Briony, incidentally,

writes a play, *The Trials of Arabella*, in which she intends to star herself as the “spontaneous . . . but inexperienced” title heroine (15–16)—McEwan’s nod, perhaps, to the “troublesome adventures” (Lennox, 87–88) of that other eighteenth-century Arabella, whose source-monitoring has gone seriously awry. For a discussion of McEwan’s construction of Briony’s unreliability, see Phelan, “Narrative Judgments.”

## II: 8

1. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 157. Quoted in Nunning, 59–60.
2. Fludernik, *The Fictions of Language*, 349. Quoted in Nunning, 66.
3. Margolin, “Cognitive Science,” 284.
4. Phelan, *Living to Tell about It*, 219.
5. *Ibid.*, 52.
6. For discussion, see *ibid.*, 34–35, 51–52.
7. *Ibid.*, 51.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 219.
11. *Ibid.*, 53.

## II: 9

1. Prince, 42; quoted in Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 17.
2. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 73.
3. Nunning, 55–57.
4. Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 17.
5. The stricter source-monitoring here, as Phelan points out, would be, “Austen has her narrator claim that Lydia ran away with Wickham” (personal communication, May 23, 2005). I am tempted here, however, to stretch Lanser’s argument that “readers have very little incentive to distinguish the narrator of *Northanger Abbey* from Austen” (“The ‘I’ of the Beholder”) to make it apply to *Pride and Prejudice* as well.
6. Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, 49–50.
7. *Ibid.*, 46. For Lanser’s most recent discussion of the term *implied author*, see “The ‘I’ of the Beholder.”

## II: 10

1. As Fludernik observes, the “rise of the consciousness novel would be unthinkable without *Clarissa*” (*Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology*, 171). For a suggestive discussion of Richardson (but also Fielding!—a claim that Butte may disagree with [see *I Know That You Know*, 74–79]) as representing the beginnings of what she calls “the high theory of mind tradition” in the English novel,” see Vermeule, “God Novels,” 148.
2. This interpretation is owed to Warner’s *Reading Clarissa*, especially chapter 4.
3. Blythe, xiv.

4. Compare to Mitchell's argument that "by introducing safeguards against deception, victims influence deceivers to introduce further deceptions to quash the skepticism and satisfy the new evidence requirements, and, thus, deception escalates" (853).

5. Christopher Frith, 122.

6. Mitchell, 832; emphasis in original.

## II: 11

1. See Eaves and Kimpel, "The Composition of *Clarissa*." But also see Sabor on Richardson's occasional "startling defense of certain aspects of his hero" (36) and Barchas on Richardson's confession that he liked playing "the Rogue" with his readers, "intending them to think now one way, now another of the very same Characters" (Richardson, *Selected Letters*, 248; quoted in Barchas, 121).

2. A new modern edition of *Clarissa* is currently being prepared by John Richetti and Toni Bowers, based on the 1751 revision. It will be interesting to see if a back cover of that edition will reflect a darker view of Lovelace.

3. Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov*, 230.

4. *Ibid.*, 232.

5. Rabinowitz, "Lolita: Solipsized or Sodomized?" 326, 327.

6. Compare to Rabinowitz's argument in "Lolita: Solipsized or Sodomized?," especially on p. 327.

7. The concept of distributed social cognition in fictional narrative has been compellingly explored by Alan Palmer and by David Herman. In his discussion of Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Palmer points out that Tertius Lydgate's "identity is socially distributed before we meet him, and there are a number of discussions of him throughout the novel that continue the town's exploration of his identity. It is striking that the early part of the novel contains far more information on the 'Lydgates' that exist in the minds of other characters than it does the 'Lydgate' that emerges from direct access to his own mind" ("The Lydgate Storyworld," in press). See also chapter 5 (part 5.5: "The Mind beyond the Skin") of Palmer's *Fictional Minds*. Similarly, Herman argues that cognition "should be viewed as a supra- or transindividual activity distributed across groups functioning in specific contexts, rather than as a wholly internal process unfolding within the minds of solitary, autonomous, and de-situated cognizers," and he demonstrates compellingly the workings of this "distributed social cognition" in Edith Wharton's 1934 story "Roman Fever" ("Regrounding Narratology," in press).

8. Of course, this is not an altogether *unpleasant* mental vertigo. Compare to Fludernik's argument about the "delight" experienced by readers faced with unreliable narrators ("Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters," 257).

9. For a useful discussion, see Rabinowitz, *Before Reading*, 96. Although Rabinowitz does not deal with *Lolita* in his study, his analysis of "narrative audience" and "authorial audience" is highly pertinent to the present argument about Humbert's construction of his reader.

10. Though, as Rabinowitz reminds us, the scene might be "quite funny even from a non-pedophilic perspective." As he points out, "[A]fter all, anyone who's ever attempted a tryst at a hotel—or imagined attempting a tryst at a hotel—has experienced the same 'trouble'; and even those who haven't can certainly imagine themselves in Humbert's

position” (Reader’s Report). I agree with Rabinowitz and, in fact, see his point as illuminating certain limitations of my “metarepresentational” reading of *Lolita*. Once you start applying the missing source tags to *Lolita*, it is very easy to lose sight of the comic side of the text.

11. Same as note 10 above.

12. Compare to Crane’s useful discussion of how “claims to knowledge based on embodied feelings can [be] easily be falsified, simplified, and used as a rhetorical tool” (“Fair Is Foul,” 120).

13. Sterne, *Sentimental Journey*, 96.

14. Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, 1–2.

15. Phelan, *Living to Tell about It*, 51.

16. *Ibid.*, 121.

17. *Ibid.*, 129.

18. *Ibid.*, 120.

19. *Ibid.*, 119.

20. *Ibid.*, 120.

21. *Ibid.*, 121.

22. *Ibid.*, 121–22.

23. *Ibid.*, 129.

24. *Ibid.*, 127.

25. Cohn, “Discordant Narration,” 312.

26. See Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, *Detecting Texts*.

## NOTES TO PART III

### III: 1

1. Sayers, “Aristotle on Detective Fiction,” 31.

2. Belton, 50.

3. Routley, 176.

4. For example, we can consider a bildungsroman a safe-setting exploration of the real fears and anxieties of both adolescent children and their parents.

### III: 2

1. Compare my argument here to Palmer’s discussion of what narrative theorist Menakhem Perry calls the “primacy effect.” As Palmer points out, when we begin to read a fictional story, “the initial reading frames that are set up at the beginning of a text have long-lasting effects, and they tend to persist until the reader is compelled by the accumulating weight of contrary evidence to abandon them and set up new frames” (“The Lydgate Storyworld”). For a related discussion, see Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, who builds on the work of Perry and Jonathan Culler to observe that the “dynamics of reading can thus be seen not only as a formation, development, modification, and replacement of hypothesis . . . , but also—simultaneously—as the construction of

frames, their transformation, and dismantling” (123–24).

2. However, as Phelan correctly observes, weightlifting is not really “decoupled from reality” for “competitive athletes and people who lift to rehabilitate injuries.” For them, weightlifting is crucial part of their reality. Similarly, “people who write detective stories or who write about and teach them find them integral to their reality” (“Reader’s Report,” 6).

3. The argument about the instructive value of a detective novel or the pointed lack thereof can be expanded to doubt the instructive value of any fictional narrative. I thus strongly agree with Hogan’s critique of Pinker’s argument that “fictional narratives supply us with a mental catalogue of the fatal conundrums we might face someday and the outcomes of strategies we could deploy in them.” Using as an example Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Pinker suggests that we consider the following question: “What are the options if I were to suspect that my uncle killed my father, took his position, and married my mother?” (*How the Mind Works*, 543; quoted in Hogan, *Cognitive Science*, 211). As Hogan observes, “*Hamlet* does not actually teach us how to respond in that situation . . . The very best it could be said to do is to teach us to check someone’s identity before killing him (due to the Polonius accident)” (211). Along the same lines, Hogan points out in *The Mind and Its Stories* that although literature “humanizes us in the sense that it tends to develop certain sorts of compassionate identification, [it is] not at all clear that this sort of identification extends beyond the literary work to the real world” (206). See Spolsky (“Purposes Mistook”) for a related response to Hernadi’s argument that “the creation and consumption of fictional narratives provide evolutionary advantages to a group that prepares them to anticipate challenges they may some day face by familiarizing its young with a range of hypothetical scenarios.” Finally, see David Lodge for the discussion of the ambiguous feeling that we have after reading a novel that we have “‘learned’ something” (30–32).

4. Womack, 266.

5. Two of these examples are taken from Charney, 101; Oedipus has been suggested by James Phelan.

6. The issue of genre has been a topic of a productive inquiry by several literary critics interested in cognitive approaches. See Spolsky, *Gaps in Nature* and “Darwin and Derrida,” and Hart, “Embodied Literature.”

### III: 3

1. The phrase comes from Ronald Blythe’s Introduction to the 1966 Penguin edition of the novel and is quoted in Catherine Kenney, “The Mystery of *Emma* . . .,” 138. See also P. D. James, “*Emma* Considered as a Detective Story,” an appendix to *A Time to Be in Earnest: A Fragment of an Autobiography*, 243–59. For an analysis of mind-reading in *Emma*, see Alan Richardson, “Reading Minds and Bodies in *Emma*.”

2. I use the word *internal* to emphasize again that, apart from what is going on *inside* the fictional story, we store the story as a whole as a large metarepresentation with an implicit source tag, such as, “Austen says” or “Conan Doyle says.”

3. Ronald R. Thomas, 4.

4. *Ibid.*, 9.

5. Similarly, we can tweak the terms of Cawelti’s observation that when we are read-

ing a detective story, “in addition to the attempt to figure out the crime, we are also confronted with the puzzle of the detective’s [mental] activity” (190). The puzzle of another person’s (here, the detective’s) mental activity is not something we figure out “also,” or “in addition to,” the main puzzle of the crime. Instead, the puzzle of crime is a handy pretext to let us fall to our favorite activity of mind-reading. For a related discussion, see Vermeule, “Theory of Mind,” in which she offers a valuable analysis of mind-reading behind clues-reading as a correction to Franco Moretti’s recent groundbreaking work on detective fiction (“Slaughterhouse of Literature”). For a broader discussion of mind-reading and fiction, see also Vermeule, “Satirical Mind Blindness” and “God Novels”

6. Howard Haycraft, 130.

7. W. H. Auden, “The Guilty Vicarage,” 21.

8. Quoted in John T. Irwin, 28.

9. Haycraft, 239.

10. Symons, 138.

11. Routley, 177.

12. Ousby, 187.

13. One could say that it is this intuitive acknowledgment that a detective story focuses on one particular kind of mind-reading and is not amenable to others that has fueled the traditional criticism of the genre as “wasteful of time and degrading to intellect” (Robin W. Winks, 1). For a famous articulation of this view, see Edmund Wilson’s essay, “Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?”

14. Damasio, *Descartes Error*; quoted in Hogan, *Cognitive Science*, 170.

15. Hogan, *Cognitive Science*, 170.

16. *Ibid.*, 185.

17. See Hogan’s *The Mind and Its Stories* and *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists*.

18. Compare Hogan’s argument here to that of Uri Margolin, who points out that “folk psychology itself *is* a part of psychological reality! On occasion, upon reading a literary representation of some aspect of cognitive mental functioning, a reader also feels something akin to Buhler’s Aha-Erlebnis (‘Aha! experience’) . . . , realizing all of a sudden that this is how she herself perceives, categorizes, or recalls, that the fictional representation has made her aware of the very nature of mental activity in which she constantly engages, but of which she had not been aware ever before, or which she had not been unable to describe so effectively. This point is reinforced by the claim of cognitive science that many of our cognitive processing activities are indeed ‘unconscious,’ not accompanied by any self-awareness of self-consciousness. The reading of literary representations of mental functioning is also a major source of another undeniable common psychological fact, namely, readerly engagement with fictional figures, caring for their fortunes, and sometimes empathizing with their mental states and episodes” (“Cognitive Science,” 285).

19. Hogan, *Cognitive Science*, 185.

20. For a discussion of this “slaughterhouse of literature,” see Moretti, 207–10.

21. See, for example, the discussion of various hybrid forms of the detective story in the volume edited by Merivale and Sweeney.

22. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading*, 211.

23. Of course, my evaluation of “success” and “failure” is open to debate. Sayers’s experimentation with romance in *Gaudy Night* has led one critic to pronounce that

novel “less than successful” (Haycraft, 138) and another to assert that Sayers “has now almost ceased to be a first-rate detective writer and has become an exceedingly snobbish popular novelist” (John Strachey; quoted in Haycraft, 138).

24. Jacques Barzun, 150.

25. Compare to Rabinowitz’s excellent discussion of detective-story readers’ “presumption that diverse strand of action will in some way be linked” (*Before Reading*, 132).

26. Compare to Rabinowitz’s view of the genre “as preformed bundles of operations performed by readers in order to recover the meanings texts” (*ibid.*, 177).

### III: 4

1. Cawelti, 134.
2. *Ibid.*, 135.
3. Spolsky, *Satisfying Skepticism*, 4.
4. *Ibid.*, 10.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

### Conclusion: 1

1. Iser, 2–3.
2. Booth, “The Ethics of Forms,” 120.
3. Rimmon-Kenan, 117.

### Conclusion: 2

1. Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 19. Compare to Margolin’s argument in “Cognitive Science,” 272.
2. For a related analysis of the “environment of information” created by cultural representations, see Tabbi, 174.
3. Phelan, *Living*, 143.
4. For a useful discussion of emergent meaning and cognition, see Mark Turner, *Cognitive Dimensions*, 9, 138–43.

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