

*A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*. Ed. Garry L. Hagberg & Walter Jost. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 44. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, xiv + 552 pp., € 132.99 hb.

Intersections between the disciplines of philosophy and literature are looked at in this collection, which is part of the “Blackwell Companions to Philosophy” series. Philosophy and literature interact with each other, so the editors put it, “clearly, concretely, precisely and humanely” (2). In order to give a “reasonably comprehensive” overview of “the relation of the complex set of relations that connects philosophy and literature” (2), Garry L. Hagberg and Walter Jost have summoned an impressive round of experts working in the field of the philosophy of literature. As a result, this volume brings together 28 articles, most of which are original contributions, adding up to more than 500 pages in total. These chapters are meant to consider both historical perspectives as well contemporary viewpoints and to reflect geographical and methodological varieties. They are sub-divided into seven sections: “Relations between Philosophy and Literature”, “Emotional Engagement and the Experience of Reading”, “Philosophy, Tragedy, and Literary Form”, “Literature and the Moral Life”, “Narrative and the Question of Literary Truth”, “Intention and Biography in Criticism”, “On Literary Language”. There is nothing to argue with the choice of these thematic sections, which are dedicated to the broad concerns that the two disciplines share. They mirror various points of entry where literary studies move into philosophical debates and vice versa. They allow for a discussion of different genres and periods in literary history, as well as different strands within philosophy, e.g. aesthetics, epistemology and ethics. The literary writers whose work seems to lend itself to discussion are rather predictable candidates, since “fairly canonical” (2): Henry James and George Eliot are the writers who seem to receive most attention in this volume.

The introduction is concise: the editors delineate the design of the companion as well as its purpose and intent. The seven sections are briefly introduced and summarized. However, it is a rather short introduction to such a voluminous collection, coming in two and a half pages only. Furthermore, the editors insist that despite this wide range of perspectives there are interconnections between the contributions and that the “chapters speak to each other in many ways” (3), which will reveal themselves to the reader. It would have been useful had some of these interconnections been made more explicit, exactly because the aimed for plurality makes it hard for readers coming from two different disciplines to discern and systematize these interrelations. Full credit, however, needs to be given to the editors for their inclusion of both young voices and established thinkers such as Arthur C. Danto, Martha Nussbaum, Cora Diamond and Stanley Cavell, all of which are working on the different aspects of philosophy and literature. The collaboration of philosophers as well as literary scholars attests to the ramifications of the points of connection between the two fields.

Part 1 approaches the relationship between philosophy and literature. Literary epistemology and the constitution of subjectivity (Shusterman); the continuum between literary and philosophical language (Shiner); philosophy and rhetoric (Jost) and metaphor as a link between literature and philosophy (Danto) are suggested pathways towards an understanding of this relationship.

The second part approaches literature from the side of the reader: emotional involvement in the act of reading (Robinson); our emotional response to fictional situations (Scruton); the status of the act as reading (Kivy) and the constitution of selfhood through reading (Hagberg) are the aspects covered. The third part turns

to tragedy as a genre whose history is ultimately entwined with ancient philosophy and questions of philosophical purport. The field is mapped by Anthony J. Cascardi's chapter. Catharsis is a central concern of two of the contributions (Joshua Landy, Jonathan Lear), and Plato's impact on Shakespeare's plays is discussed in a more thematic chapter by M.W. Rowe. Part 4 is beautifully opened by Martha C. Nussbaum's chapter on the interrelations between literary and ethical theory. The remaining three chapters focus mainly on the genre of the novel and moralism in nineteenth and twentieth-century novels, dealing with Henry James (Cora Diamond), more generally, the "literary potential of morality" (John 286), and "orientation" as both a feature of psychology and a philosophical category that literary texts engage with (Brudney). Part five deals with the epistemological implications of fiction. In his chapter "Literature and Truth", Peter Lamarque sums up the relevance question, i.e. whether readers of literary texts seek truth when reading a book. Point of view as a philosophical concern is discussed by Gregory Currie, and literary cognitivism, i.e. the question of what kind of knowledge literary fiction yields, is the subject of Mitchell Green's contribution. Richard Eldrige turns to poetry and the question of how universal or particular its representation of experience is. Part 6 examines authorial intentionalism as a factor in the making of a work of literature (Livingstone); the intentional fallacy in the context of poetry (Staten); biographism in literary criticism (Olsen) and a case study of the limits of biographical readings, in this case applied to Werner Heisenberg (Monk). Finally, the seventh part turns to the philosophy of language. Wittgenstein looms large in the background of this section with Jon Cook and Rupert Read opening up the field and Charles Altieri writing more specifically about exemplification. Ted Cohen's contribution dwells on metaphor theory and Stanley Cavell's chapter on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* brings both the chapter and the collection to a close.

This companion is a timely contribution to a field of research that in many ways is an established one. It ropes together long-lasting debates as well as more recent advances and thus gives a panoramic view of philosophical aspects that literary scholarship deals with on a regular basis, without much further reflection on how a philosopher would approach the problem. Bearing in mind that this collection is part of a philosophical series, it should be pointed out that not all of the points of discussion, such as the intentional fallacy, will captivate the literary scholar, especially those well-versed in contemporary literary theory. At the same time, readers with a literary background, but little familiarity with philosophy, are likely to struggle with some chapters and will profit less from reading the volume sequentially. Peter Lamarque comes to an interesting conclusion in his chapter. Reading literary texts from a philosophical perspective brings a "bonus", he states, but is not a "demand" (382). Some readers, Lamarque argues, search for truth, others don't (383). None enjoys literature less for what it is than the other. Put as simply as that, the question remains what is to be gained from this kind of interdisciplinary work, apart from interesting insights? Given this challenge, which many interdisciplinary projects face, my main point of criticism derives less from perceived obvious gaps, but from the appetizing force of one particular article: Martha Nussbaum's chapter on literary theory and ethics – and the wish for more programmatic advances in this direction. Nussbaum grinds her teeth into the heartland of literary studies, by reminding readers of how inseparable from if not identical with each other literary theory and philosophy have become. She makes an affirmative point for the two disciplines as having a practical impact on human life, while showing acute awareness of their sensitivities and particularities. One would have liked to read more similarly engaging chapters that are so spot-on. All in all, this is

a volume that provides solid groundwork and is a good source of reference for readers hoping to acquaint themselves with debates and discussions linking the two fields.

BERN

JULIA STRAUB