Keeping Company with Dickens

Charles Dickens has had a significant place in the discussion of ethics and literature in recent years, appearing as a key figure in Richard Rorty’s *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989), and Martha C. Nussbaum’s *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (1995). Dickens writes a kind of book that Rorty says is “relevant to our relations with others, to helping us to notice the effects of our actions on other people. These are the books which are relevant to liberal hope, and to the question of how to reconcile private irony with such hope” (141). Martha Nussbaum examines Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1854) for its ethical imperative and call to sympathy and rejects “the economists’ habit of reducing everything to calculation” and seeing only “abstract features of people and situations” (44). Both these thinkers underscore the continuing ethical relevance of Dickens’s fiction for us. Their insights into the moral fiction of Dickens are tempered with an awareness of contemporary pluralism. However, they also reflect a perception of Dickens’s ethical merit that was held by Dickens’s own Victorian readers. Like Rorty and Nussbaum, these readers also saw that Dickens’s quality of sympathy speaks loudly of human values and ethical principles. As Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881) wrote:

> He had a heart which brought him into sympathy with all those phases of humanity which were intellectually interesting to him. He loved the rascals whom he painted, and enjoyed the society of the weakest men and women of his pages; and it is this sympathy which gives immortality to his novels. (71)

It is this sympathy in Dickens that Nussbaum pointed to in her advocacy of ethical fiction in *Poetic Justice*. Some philosophers have criticized Nussbaum’s early work as too attached to a principle of realism, or as too focused upon our affective response to literature. One might add that Nussbaum and Rorty both have notions about how a work of literature should be read. Readers do read in many different ways. They may or may not read in the manner that Rorty or Nussbaum anticipate that they will. Even so, it is clear that reading can have consequences, including moral and political ones. Imaginative literature- from Homer to Dickens to our day-conveys ideas, often with considerable power. Something happens when we keep company with literature.

Wayne C. Booth, in his book *The Company We Keep* (1998), argued for a re-centering of ethics in our contact with literature. Booth, who spoke of “friendship with books” and of “the exchange of gifts,” proposed that we who are concerned with ethics are interested in any effect on the ethos: in this case, on that of a reader or listener (46). Powerful stories, he said, may contribute toward a conversation among us. So we are led to ask, what happens as we read? With what quality do I accompany these authors and these characters, plots, and scenes? Who am I as I read and with whom am I keeping company?
Charles Dickens was quite aware of the ethical power of fiction upon his audience and he consciously sought connection with his readers through an appeal to *ethos*. Indeed, for Charles Dickens, his relationship with his readers constituted the greatest love affair of his life (Butt and Tillotson, 1957). They, in turn, kept company with this author. Keeping company with Dickens offered them connection with each other: a means of sympathetic identification that they shared. They were a community of readers engaged month to month with a serial publication that urged them to be attentive to issues of justice and to an ethics of care.

We can gain some insight into how deeply Dickens’s fiction affected his readers by looking for their responses in their journals, letters, and autobiographies. The comments of common readers tend to support the view that Dickens was able to weave bonds of human sympathy among them. The “vast sympathetic participation in the daily life of mankind” that George Santayana saw in Dickens (59-60) is echoed by Dickens’s contemporaries like James Nack, a poet who was a clerk at New York’s City Hall, who began his poem on Dickens with the words “Friend of my heart! Friend of the human race […]” (72) It is sounded by Lydia Marie Child, an American abolitionist, who wrote in a letter to her friend Sarah Shaw on March 23, 1856: “I have admired several of Bulwer’s heroines, but I never loved one of them and hugged them to my heart as I do Little Nell, and Esther, and Little Dorrit. Dickens is the great Apostle of Humanity” (96). The sympathetic responses of these readers to Dickens’s writings testify to the fact that the multiple voices we meet in the author’s works sound the plurality among us, as these texts call us to ethical reflection. As John Bowen observes, within Charles Dickens’s lyricism, we hear the voices of people of all classes that are “suddenly and overwhelmingly blown back toward us in the form of an ethico-political responsibility” (255-69). Dickens’s stories continue to play a role among us today as a point of reference in our efforts to construct a responsive society of mutual respect and ethical integrity.

Critics engaged in the ethical turn in fiction, such as Wayne C. Booth or J. Hillis Miller, have viewed Dickens’s novels as among the great books that are our common cultural property. As philosopher Richard Rorty has pointed out, in the event of a disaster, novels like those of Dickens would preserve values (141). Books like those of Dickens are the kind of books that can sustain us. Dickens is, for Rorty, “a sort of anti-Heidegger” who is “paradigmatic of the West” and its commitment to democratic pluralism, freedom and liberty (ctd. in Bowen, 255-69).

The cultural work done by Dickens in creating ethical appeal through pathos and sympathy is significant, say these critics. Of course, since these may be only the attitudes of these critics, we must look to Dickens’s readers to better empirically ground these observations. We may look to contemporary readers like Andrew Kennedy Hutchison Boyd (1825-99), who wrote in a sermon:

Your returning good for evil must be a real thing. It must be done heartily and without reservation, or it is nothing at all. Uriah Heep, in Mr. Dickens’s beautiful story, forgave David Copperfield for striking him a blow. (207)
In readers’ comments we can see that from the first appearance of *Oliver Twist* in 1837-38, Dickens’s novels drew sympathy from his readers. Jane T.H. Cross, a writer from the American south, remarks in 1860, “I will read now, I will lose, in the pathetic story of Oliver Twist, a sense of my own miseries. It is one of the few novels I can read; there are some touches of deep feeling in it” (155). In Cross’s comment we see how greatly Dickens possessed a rhetorical talent for pathos. Among his gifts was his capacity to evoke from his readers sympathetic identification with his characters. As Thomas Wentworth Higginson observed, Dickens
can take a poor wretch like Fagin, whose emotions neither he nor his reader has experienced, and can paint him in colors that seem made of the soul’s own atoms, so that each beholder feels as if he, personally, had been the man (26).

Dickens’s sympathetic power in creating Little Nell, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* in 1840-41, prompted even greater public response from Dickens’s readers. Readers wrote to Dickens to spare Little Nell. Mothers wrote to him to tell him of their own children who had died, writing to him, as Edgar Johnson tells us, about “how good she was, and how, in this or that respect, she resembled Nell” (ctd. in Collins 114).

Many contemporaries of Charles Dickens proposed that his novels made important contributions to ethical reflection. As *Fraser’s Magazine*, Volume 21, in April 1840 said: “he has always espoused the cause of the humble, the persecuted, the oppressed” (400). Or, we may look to readers like Bishop Martin John Spalding of Louisville, who wrote in 1875: “He is the friend and advocate of the poor and distressed, and he strikes at tyranny and avarice in high places. Besides, he leaves a good moral impression in most of his works” (526).

A reading of Dickens’s texts shows that they address issues of justice and injustice in institutions and among individuals and also continually speak of the “connexion” between human beings. The first concern may remind one of John Rawls’s emphasis in *A Theory of Justice* (1971). The latter may remind one of Carol Gilligan’s notion of an ethics of care in *In A Different Voice* (1982), as she targets an individualistic Kantian framework and the Piaget-based developmental notions of the moral psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. Dickens’s sense of a human community of “connexion” was part of his insight into the nature of reality. He pointed to the fictive community of his characters and his readers when he wrote

> It struck me that it would be a new thing to show people coming together, in a chance way, as fellow travelers… as happens in life; and to connect them afterwards, and to make the waiting for that connection part of the interest.
> (Forster I: 624)

Dickens’s widely-read fiction itself created connections. His stories provided a language of life for those nineteenth century readers who were puzzled by the incomprehensibility of the modernizing world. Meanwhile, his texts presented a challenge to individualism, to the desirability of each individual pursuing the good in his own way, constrained only by legality or
social contract. Much as in Carol Gilligan’s ethics of care (In A Different Voice, Harvard UP, 1982), they presented a sense of “connexion” between persons, a deep social web of interrelationship that calls for helping, nurturing, and mutual respect. For Dickens, social progress has to do with what Carol Gilligan calls the “progress of affiliative relationship” (170) in which “the concept of identity expands to include the experience of interconnexion” (173).

Martha Nussbaum in Cultivating Humanity (Harvard UP, 1997) writes: “A novel that recognizes the struggle of working class people- as up to a point the novels of Dickens do- may have little sensitivity to the lives and experiences of many types of women” (101). While this may be so, Michael Slater makes a strong case in Dickens’s Women that the author hardly slighted them, or lacked sensitivity. Indeed, the cases of Sissy Jupe, Esther Summerson, and Florence Dombey argue against any proposition that Dickens lacked sensitivity to the lives of middle class or working women. Given this, this mention of Dickens by Nussbaum may not be the best example. Even so, she points to a larger phenomenon. While sensitivity toward women is present in industrial novels like Charlotte Bronte’s Shirley (1849) and Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South (1854), it is not everywhere present in the British fiction that depicts working class women. Nussbaum’s point is to suggest how this can affect one’s disposition toward reading. If a reader is sensitive to the plight of these women and the text is not this will affect one’s sympathetic reading of the novel, Nussbaum observes. “If we are reading with democratic ideals of equal concern and respect of mind we sense an incompleteness,” she says (102). Clearly, this is true: we each bring attitudes and experience to our reading and so did Dickens’s contemporaries.

Like many of Dickens’s contemporary readers, Nussbaum points to the “experience of sympathy” as central in our reading. The novels of Charles Dickens and George Eliot are cited for their awakening of this sympathy. There is in these authors a “commitment to the making of a social world” and a “deliberative community”(104). Considering Dickens and Eliot’s characters, Nussbaum asserts that it is impossible to care about these characters “without having some very definite political and moral interests awakened in oneself” (104). This sympathy, which permeates Dickens’s work, was also a significant aspect of George Eliot’s approach to fiction. Eliot once wrote: “If Art does not enlarge man’s sympathies, it does nothing morally.” (Letter to Charles Bray, July 5, 1859. Letters 3: 111). Eliot and G.H. Lewes, often pondering the Darwinian evolutionary scheme and natural selection, reflected upon altruism, human sympathy, and the ethical. For Joseph Jacobs, who called Eliot an ethical artist, there is “an extension of sympathy” to all her characters and “her whole work is imbued with ethical notions”(39-41).

Middlemarch (1871-72) is one of Eliot’s many novels that testify to this search for connection through sympathy. In the prelude we read of the desire for an epic life of noble ambition, high ideals, and self-sacrifice. There is a sense that “provincial life” will offer some challenges to this: A person of “spiritual grandeur” is “ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity” in this world (xiii). Dorothea could become a “St. Theresa,” or she might be the “foundress of nothing.” In contrast with Dorothea’s “spiritual ardour” and principled ambition is
Rosamond Vincy’s shallowness and “frippery.” We are brought into the life of a reformer, an idealist who imagines “generous schemes” and wishes to grow and to be useful: “to do something.” As Bert Hornback observes, while Lydgate’s, Causabon’s, and Will’s ambitions in this novel “are not or always bad, when they make mistakes it is because their values are wrong, and their ambitions are to serve themselves” (21-22). Dorothea, in contrast, seeks to serve the world. The novel explores ways to overcome egotism, as Hornback points out (100), to escape the egotism of a restricted point of view, to suppress desires, and to enlarge or sympathies, which is what Dorothea does, learning a kind of self-assertion and openness to others.

Dickens, in his novels, satirizes those characters who are deficient in this openness. A classic example is Jacob Marley and Ebeneezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol. Nussbaum regards Dickens’ character Jacob Marley as an image of poor citizenship. He drags the chains of all of the people he has injured and all the corrupt acts he has engaged in. Nussbaum writes, “We produce all too many citizens who are like Marley’s ghost, and like Scrooge before he walked out to see what the world around him contained” (14).

The work of Dickens and Eliot implies that by making the social world vivid and involving readers, fiction can help to produce citizens who leave those chains behind. Nussbaum notes that readers of a realist novel “do all that tragic spectators do- and something more. They embrace the ordinary.” This was true of Dickens’ readers who clearly embraced his Sissy Jupe, David Copperfield, and Oliver Twist. These were sympathetic, common characters rather than princes and kings, as Nussbaum points out (95) and Dickens joins his common readers in sympathy with them. To what extent does such sympathy, promoted by the novel, prompt action? In keeping company, we have an immersion experience of these fictional social worlds. Nussbaum’s view that this may be an experience that moves a reader to ethical awareness and action is borne out by the experience of Dickens’ contemporary readers, who personally and culturally, held his books to be a form of moral fiction.

Indeed, Dickens insisted upon the passion of generosity. He wanted to change social organizations for the betterment of persons. His social critique aimed at the reform of institutions and the support of individuals whose lives were beset, rather than aided, by those institutions. His stories point to the loss of self to abstractions, the absorption of lives in the fog of Bleak House. The workhouse of Oliver Twist (1837), the Chancery and Mrs. Jellyby’s telescopic philanthropy in Bleak House (1852), and the Marshalsea Prison and Circumlocution Office of Little Dorrit (1856), all pose ethical claims. Dickens sees through illusions of mastery. He is paradigmatic of a commitment to human freedom and integrity and the right to equality. Indeed, Dickens’s work underscores the capacity of language to engage clearly and truthfully with the world, not in circumlocution, not in evasive legal jargon or bureaucratic double-speak, and not in abstract reason or Gradgrindian fact.

Charles Dickens was fundamentally concerned with ethical action and believed that novel writing and reading was a practice that was fully engaged with life. We read at the conclusion of
Hard Times, Dickens’s narrator’s final words: “Dear Reader! It rests with you and me, whether in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be” (266). Dickens here calls us here to create a just world- even where the Coketown of Hard Times or the London of Bleak House are unjust and characters like Stephen Blackpool or Jo the crossing Sweeper die without justice.

In this sense, Dickens’s novels may remind one of John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, in which he writes that “justice is the first virtue of social institutions” (3-4). Justice is about fairness and Rawls sought to develop a series of principles that could be applied to our institutions, to judge whether they are just or unjust. Like Dickens, Rawls holds that laws and institutions must be reformed if they are unjust. Dickens provides a narrative and a different language for this same idea: a person has an inviolable dignity founded upon this justice. An interesting aspect of Rawls’s theory is how he invites us to imagine. Rawls writes, “Thus we are to imagine that those who engage in social cooperation choose together, in one joint act, the principles which are to assign basic rights and duties and to determine the division of social benefits” (3-4). He also says that if we can imagine people in some initially unfair situation and determine what they would view as principles of justice then we would have some valid principles. We are also welcomed to imagine a “principle of redress” that would provide equality of opportunity and allocate resources to those who are disadvantaged. Rawls believes that there must be a concern in justice to provide for the least advantaged.

This concern for the disadvantaged appears throughout Dickens’s novels. In his panoramic cross-section of London, Dickens shows us people in poverty and in need. He prompts his audience to ask where justice is when bad things occur in this world. How can innocent Little Nell of The Old Curiosity Shop (1840) die so miserably? Why are there Poor Laws that send Oliver Twist out onto the streets? Why must Tiny Tim be handicapped and perhaps die so young? Why do villains get away with murder? Why does justice get tied up in interminable cases before the courts of Chancery?

Dickens appealed to a Victorian audience seeking moral grounding in a changing world. Critiquing institutions, bureaucracies, and legal systems, he sounded the call to make these institutions responsive and responsible. With Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickelby (1839), he criticized institutions responsible for the plight of poor children. With Bleak House, he examined the legal system. With Hard Times, he assessed the educational and personal losses of imagination to utility and fact.

Beyond this, he expressed a kind of virtue ethics, urging the humanization of his characters. His characters, from David Copperfield and Pip to Sidney Carton and Eugene Wrayburn (and his readers) are led to ask the question, what ought I to be? In Dickens, the moral life is about discovering the ideals for human life and learning to embody them in one’s life. He finds virtue and the wellsprings of life in sympathy.
The sympathetic and moral challenges of Dickens’s fiction were an important resource for Victorians, who responded to the changing world around them: a crowded, diversified environment caught up in the engine of modernity. Dickens and his readers met at this busy intersection of their world. Serial fiction was alive in periodical rhythm that has been likened by some to the train and its movement. It held a sense of the suspense and passage of time. Its readers were living in history and creating a home, as Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund have pointed out. They too were heroes and heroines in danger of being pulled by the speed of the city, as we are pulled today by the rhythm of globalization and technologies. Reading fiction was, in a sense, performed in a space apart from history, or at least in a moment of reflection and respite from the challenges of the commercial world. As Anne C. Rose has pointed out, Victorians “read to each other to build bonds of sentiment by savoring literature together” (123). Dickens’s serialized stories participated in this reflective and often communal moment, before people plunged back into change and the rhythms of their industrial world. For in these moments in the family circle, or the reading group, there was companionship between the book and its readers and between the readers, or listeners, and each other.

When the novelist John Gardner wrote *On Moral Fiction* several decades ago, he rested his argument upon a tradition of the book that has been important in Western culture: the belief that fiction can point to significant issues and can have a moral effect upon readers. However, much literary theory has not been comfortable with ethical criticism. It has been argued that the value of art cannot be ethical: some art is good although its ethics are bad. Oscar Wilde once wrote: “There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well-written or badly written” (1). More recently, Suzanne Keen, considering fiction alongside neurology, recognizes “affective transaction” and immediate “feeling” but is skeptical that ethical action follows (*Empathy and the Novel*. Oxford UP, 2007). Then there are those who think that ethical judgments about stories are merely subjective opinion. So what can we say about literature’s presumed salutary effects upon the reader? Some critics have held the moral consequences of art to be “unresearchable” and impossible to predict. Who knows whether an author helps people to empathize with others or makes people perceptive of others’ states, these critics will say. Who knows whether reading novels is good or bad for one’s character? The Puritans certainly thought novel reading was one of the worst things a person could do in life.

These critics could stand to do a little work in the archival records left by ordinary readers. Recently developed methodologies for the empirical study of actual readers can indeed suggest the moral consequences that reading fiction may have had in their lives. For example, the circulation records of the New York Society Library demonstrate that one reader, George Pierce, checked out Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* twice in 1854. Not long afterward, he created two orphanages in upstate New York. As his own journal shows, there appears to be a correlation between his reading and his action.

Gauging whether a work of fiction has an ethical appeal for a reader may be problematic because of the many variations of reader response to a literary work. Thus, critics from Paulette
Kidder to J. Plotz and D.Z. Phillips will say that for Martha Nussbaum to assert that reading Dickens’s *Hard Times* moves readers in a particular way and has social, ethical benefits may express her way of reading more than theirs. However, Nussbaum’s reading of Dickens’s *Hard Times* appears quite similar to the readings produced by Dickens’s contemporaries. Some of them did not like the novel, saying that they preferred the comical Dickens. However, in their letters and journals these readers regularly point to the moral quality of his stories. Meanwhile, in Victorian journals we can see abundant comment that Dickens is widely recognized for his social sympathy and the ethical core of his writing. The experience of these readers affirms that Dickens’s fiction, in its “complex psychological and moral motives” is full of possibilities and these include the possibility of an ethical reading. His books include an appeal to the ethical, not only an aesthetic appeal. His books are “good,” in part, because they did affect their readers.

There may, of course, be some other objections to turning to Dickens for an ethics of fiction. Dickens has been soundly criticized by writers on aesthetics, from Mill to James, as popular, vulgar, and low. John Stuart Mill, after reading Dickens’s *Bleak House* in 1852 complained about “that creature Dickens,” who was neither philosopher nor human” (Letter to Harriet Taylor, March 20, 1854, in Collins 297-98). The narrator of Justin McCarthy’s 1874 novel *Massie- A Romance* writes of the Reverend Eustore Massie:

Dickens he endured because of his generally commendable morals, although he thought several of his characters terribly vulgar, but he supposed that certain natures needed such entertainments (60).

One may also trot out several *ad hominem* arguments against Dickens, the man. Dickens challenged Utilitarians while sometimes being utilitarian and he disparaged political economists while making a lot of money. He apparently enjoyed creating the sinister criminals and villains in his books and got quite excited enacting murder in his public readings. In the mid-1850’s, he divorced his wife of several decades, leaving her for a younger woman. So this is the author Martha Nussbaum and Richard Rorty will turn to for ethical fiction? How are we to read Dickens? As a center of narrative control and surveillance, as D.A. Miller sees him? Or as a source for the promotion empathy and understanding for disadvantaged people, as Nussbaum sees him? Is it not so that, as the American philosopher George Santayana said, Dickens expressed “sympathetic participation in the daily life of mankind”? (537). Research into the response of his readers to his novels suggests that his contemporary readers felt this sense of sympathetic participation. Dickens’s contemporary reading audience appears to offer us some accounts that Dickens’s writings touched sympathetic chords in them.

The energy and excess that critics like John Kuchich see in Dickens’s texts communicates sympathetic relationship within the human condition. As the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin once wrote in his reflections on Fyodor Dostoevsky, “To be means to communicate […] I cannot become myself without the other” (quoted in Todorov 96). Dickens became an author of worldwide importance in connection with his audience. In his novels he
offered his readers a dialogism of voices of all classes in which the claims of abstract reason and power discourse are deposed and people are allowed to speak. Through his writing we are invited into a mutual engagement in life. Dickens’s texts enact human connection through sympathy. It is through the details of his characters’ lives that we enter the material circumstances and meet his narrative mobility and strangeness, and what John Bowen calls “the ways in which the works make an ethical claim upon or call to us” (208).

Dickens’s appeal was not to conventional Victorian morality. His novels emphasize the necessity of making moral choices and life choices. For example, Pip in *Great Expectations* has to mature and learn to see his place in the world, to choose authenticity. It is in his characters like Pip that Dickens speaks to us still, as he spoke to his contemporaries, through his universal sympathy. We respond to Oliver Twist or Esther Summerson as they seek a kind of liberty and wholeness.

The characters and settings that Dickens portrayed point outward, beyond the page, to sites of the search for liberty and dignity in the world. To put liberty into practice, in the 1830’s-70’s or today, requires responsive institutions: ones anchored in values. Conveying the quest for human sympathy and dignity within a broad and pluralistic social panorama, Charles Dickens’s novels help us to map today’s ethical turn in fiction. They call us to responsibility and continue to speak to the heart of the humanities, which today is very alive on the margins of a world that is largely absorbed in commercial and techno-scientific activity.

To see how Dickens’s novels continue to speak to the inner life of people and to the crisis of modernity, we must look at the reader as well as at text. The voices of readers suggest how they thought and felt about Dickens’s stories. To listen to them can lend some further support to the view that Dickens’s novels perform cultural work, including evoking sympathy and a sense of ethical responsibility from his readers. What do Dickens’s stories do for us? What do his different modes of narrative invite us to in our reading? Can they prompt us toward ethical reasoning, or perhaps encourage ethical conduct? How can Dickens’s novels be useful in probing what is right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust? Can his stories help people to understand the nature of an ethical problem? Can they provide conceptual tools to enable students to think critically or to feel and reason about ethical matters? What happens when we see fiction, like that of Dickens, not so much as a mimetic reflection of its times but as an active and dynamic part of history?

From his first appearance with *Sketches by Boz* and *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens made his readers laugh. He caught the popular imagination and his characters became topics of discussion. They invited readers to keep company with them in what Patricia Okker has called “social stories” in which “reading magazine novels provided individuals with an opportunity to connect with a community of disparate members and, at the same time, to reshape the community itself” (159).
Considering this manner of “keeping company” with Dickens’s fiction, with George Santayana, we may agree

what he had was a vast sympathetic participation in the daily life of mankind; and what he saw of ancient institutions made him hate them, as needless sources of oppression, misery, selfishness, and rancor. His one political passion was philanthropy, genuine but felt only on its negative, reforming side. (59-60)
References


Dickens, Charles (1836) *Sketches By Boz* Oxford: Oxford University Press.


(1837) *Oliver Twist* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(1838) *Nicholas Nickelby* Oxford: Oxford University Press

(1840) *The Old Curiosity Shop* Oxford: Oxford University Press.


*Fraser’s Magazine*, 21 (April 1840): 400.


McCarthy, Justin. (1874) *Massie- A Romance*.


New York Society Library. Circulation Registers.


**Notes**


2. Catherine Waters remarks, “Dickens’s writing is a constitutive element of Victorian history: his writings played a significant role in shaping that culture’s sense of reality” (157).

3. Ethical criticism, however, has had many proponents: Judith Butler, Irving Babbitt, Tobin Siebers, Lillian Furst, Christopher Clausen, Martha Nussbaum, and J. Hillis Miller among them.
