Literary Experience as (Visual) Experience of Literary Worlds. Imagination's Bearing on Literary Reality and Phantasy's Bearing on Literary Existence

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Introduction

While reading literary works, what do readers experience? Do they experience only the words they listen to or read? How can we describe the experience of reading literary works? Do phantasy and imagination play any role during such experiences? These kinds of questions usually give rise to a twofold kind of research: on the one hand, a philosophical effort of combing through literature itself as a philosophical object of study, and — on the other hand — an attempt to argue for a cognitive portrait of those processes triggered by reading or listening to words (cf. Dehaene, 2007). Nevertheless, if we put aside these two sets of studies, which are plenty widespread and partly related to scientific branches, three new and interwoven ways of broaching the issue of literary experience come to light: 1) readers' experiences of literary *worlds*; 2) readers' visual involvement in literary experiences; 3) phantasy's and imagination's involvement in such experiences. These issues are strongly interwoven since each of them deals with the experience of reading literary works from slightly different perspectives: the first concerns the objects of literary experiences, the second focuses on a specific component of literary experiences, while the third aims at comprehending what role is up to phantasy and imagination during such experiences. The following research purports to answer the aforementioned questions and, in so doing, it develops and argues for the following thesis, which is the heart of the matter: reading literary works means experiencing literary *worlds* and, consequently, describing literary experiences means describing the literary worlds we experience while reading literary works. In order to achieve this goal, the experience of reading literary works acts as a jumping-off point useful for grasping literary worlds' nature and the role imagination and phantasy play in literary experiences. The most striking outcome this study will attain concerns literary worlds' actual bearing on the so-called real world: they greatly

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affect our actions, beliefs and judgements much more than literature deemed as a mere description of reality or as a faraway fictional world may suggest.

The current research consists of five steps, coinciding with five paragraphs and serving five purposes, as the following overview clears up:

1) Literary experience consists in building literary worlds up. Such worlds are *represented* by literary works and are to be regarded as verbal images. The notion of "visual sketches" singles out a clear distinction between literary experiences and *visual* literary experiences.

2) By virtue of imagination readers unfold literary worlds; by virtue of phantasy readers reflect upon literary worlds and carry out the cognitive value typical of literature: the distinction between imagination and phantasy is a fundamental step in order to clearly understand the abilities literary experience appeals to.

3) The third section aims at taking stock of the link between the experience of reading literary works and the alleged knowledge we can acquire from them: despite the common and blurred agreement on the matter, can we argue for a thesis that clearly proves the possibility of deriving knowledge from literature? Thanks to phantasy readers can acquire knowledge from literary works.

4) Do appropriate literary experiences exist? This fourth section's purpose consists in identifying the standard of aesthetic appropriateness related to reading literary works. Phenomenology turns out to be useful for this identification and so its link with literature comes to light and gives rise to the possibility of a phenomenology of literature.

5) The goals so far achieved will enable us to identify a clear nexus between literary worlds and real world. This last step is the key to get to the heart of the matter and distinguish literary *reality* from literary *existence*: literary worlds are per se real and potentially existing.

1. Literary Experiences as (Visual) Experiences of Literary Worlds

If asked to describe our ordinary experiences of reading literary works, we would avail ourselves of these or analogous words: when reading literary works, we participate into characters' lives, we explore historical and geographical contexts different from the one we are sunk into, we feel emotions, we are

affected by what we read, we discover stories, and so forth. Otherwise, we could simply say that while reading literary works we experience *literary worlds*: thanks to *I Promessi Sposi*, Alessandro Manzoni allows us to experience the world of Renzo e Lucia, thanks to *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen allows us to experience the world of Elizabeth and Darcy, thanks to *Die Ungeduld des Herzens*, Stefan Zweig allows us to experience the world of Edith and Hofmiller. It seems we could describe our common literary experiences by asserting that every literary work represents and unfolds a literary world we can discover by reading the text itself. Given that this description seems suitable and relevant to our common literary experiences, the point is: how can we describe these worlds? Furthermore, what are they? Which traits define their nature? Trying to answer these questions is the first step useful for understanding the core of literary experience itself. So, this first section aims at achieving three goals: 1) explaining literary experiences in terms of experiencing literary worlds; 2) comprehending literary worlds' structure and nature; 3) bringing to light readers' visual involvement in literary experiences.

1.1. *Literary World as Umwelt, Coordinates System and Welt*
First of all, literary theorist Thomas Pavel (2006: 56) suggests an interesting meaning of the term "world" related to literary scope: world as *Umwelt*, that is to say, as an environment and habitat conceivable only by human beings since it is the only world's type humans can inhabit:

> Les mondes de la fiction, pour étranges, fantastiques ou bourrés de mythologie qu'ils soient, demeurent toujours pleinement *humains*. Il n'en saurait être autrement, et lorsqu'on parle de littérature et d'art, le terme de "monde", comme l'allemand *Umwelt*, désigne un milieu, un habitat humains. C'est la seule famille de mondes au sein de laquelle nous sommes susceptibles d'être accueillis, et par conséquent la seule à laquelle nous pouvons nous abandonner. (Pavel, 2006: 56)

It does not matter how literary worlds may seem to readers (strange, fictional, far apart from reality, absurd, etc.), Pavel draws our attention to their hallmark: they necessarily have to mirror a human habitat since they unavoidably arise from a human perspective. Provided that there are many different kinds of literary works, we can generally make the following distinction: some literary works refer to environments that are very akin to the

world we live in, whereas others refer to environments that are very different from the world we live in (cf. Walton, 1978a). Surely, many other possibilities range between these two extremes. We can think over this gradation, but what matters most is how strong is our belief that some literary worlds are more similar to our own world than others. And here Pavel's stance turns out to be worthwhile (Pavel, 2006): however far literary worlds might seem, they are human worlds by necessity; however authors' perspectives might be dissimilar, literary worlds arise from a human perspective by necessity. Therefore, literary worlds can be considered as instances of *Umwelt* since they arise from a human perspective by necessity and refer to a human habitat by necessity.

Nonetheless, this first meaning does not seem a sufficient feature to account for a thorough description of literary worlds' nature. Beyond this first meaning, a second and remarkable one can be ascribed to the expression "literary world". Let us consider *Silas Marner*'s beginning (by George Eliot):

> in the days when the spinning-wheels hummed busily in the farmhouses – and even great ladies, clothed in silk and thread-lace, had their toy spinning-wheels of polished oak – there might be seen, in districts far away among the lanes, or deep in the bosom of the hills, certain pallid undersized men, who, by the side of the brawny country-folk, looked like the remnants of a disinherited race.

At first glance, this quote is a simple opening description and the author avails himself of it in order for readers to be introduced to the novel's atmosphere. On closer inspection, however, the author seems to start providing readers with stable *coordinates* as means by which they can build a world up: spinning-wheels that hum, farmhouses, great ladies, lanes, toy spinning-wheels, polished oak, hills, pallid and undersized men, brawny country-folk, remnants of a disinherited race. These elements are like coordinates that enable readers to start building a literary world up: coordinates are like landmarks readers rely on in order to proceed with the reading and, at the end of the text, think of the literary work at issue as a whole, that is to say, as a literary world. Coordinates allow readers to comprehend every "piece" of the literary world at issue. For instance, let us consider *I Promessi Sposi*, by Alessandro Manzoni. The coordinates are simply those landmarks the novel relies on: there is a couple who aims at getting married, there are persons willing to help them and persons willing to prevent them from getting married, the historical frame is the XVII

century, there are religious characters that exemplify different portraits of the meaning of religion itself, and so on. All these elements are coordinates readers lean on to comprehend the novel as a whole, to comprehend it step by step. Thanks to coordinates, readers build up the literary world of *I Promessi Sposi*: the world where there is a couple who aims at getting married, where there are persons willing to help them, and so on. Similarly, while reading *Silas Marner*'s beginning, we identify a few coordinates (farmhouses, great ladies, lanes, toy spinning-wheels…) that enable us to gradually build up the world of *Silas Marner*.

So, literary worlds are forced to mirror a human perspective — according to world's first meaning — and are like coordinate systems — according to world's second meaning. Thanks to coordinates authors provide readership with, readers are able to give rise to literary worlds, which are to be described as sorts of coordinate systems. Naturally, coordinates are inherently intersubjective, otherwise every reader's literary experience would be related to a different world. Although readers' experiences are very different from one another, coordinates refer to passages that every reader could pinpoint in the text. Perhaps the coordinates identified by me are not the same another reader identifies, but the point is that every coordinate roots in the text itself. Coordinates do not refer to readers' own experiences, for example the emotions they personally feel during reading. Coordinates have to be shareable and characterized by accessibility: they are like a common thread that every reader of the same literary work shares. Hence, every literary world readers experience can be faithfully described as *Umwelt* and as a coordinate system.

With regard to literary world as *Umwelt*, it is worth bearing in mind Ricoeur's standpoint since he describes the dynamic that occurs between *Welt* and *Umwelt* right in literary scope. In order to understand his words accurately, it is necessary to put aside the meaning we have previously ascribed to the term *Umwelt* following Pavel's thesis. Now, Ricoeur's stance is useful for drawing a comparison between his own proposal and Pavel's. So, Ricoeur writes:

> Tel est pour moi le référent de toute littérature: non plus l'*Umwelt* des références ostensives du dialogue, mais le *Welt* projeté par les références non ostensives de tous les textes que nous avons lus, compris et aimés». (Ricoeur, 1986: 189)

According to Ricoeur, *Umwelt* refers to a common context designated by an oral discourse, while *Welt* refers to a non-ostensive referential world designated by a written discourse: «loin de dire que le texte est sans monde, je soutiendrai sans paradoxe que seul l'homme a un monde et non pas seulement une situation» (Ricoeur, 1986: 188). Briefly, Ricoeur highlights that written discourses allow us to free text from context so that text's reference is open, i.e. non-ostensive. At first glance, it could seem that Ricoeur's thesis (i) diverges from Pavel's (ii). Actually, these two theses are more alike than it could appear. According to (i), literary works refer to *Welt* since their references are open; according to (ii), literary works refer to *Umwelt* since they represent the only world's type humans can inhabit. These two theses seem to be completely compatible since they regard two different levels: Ricoeur's stance concerns literary works' *reference* as *Welt*, while Pavel's stance concerns literary works' *nature* as *Umwelt*. This means that these two different theses can be regarded as equally valuable means useful for describing literary worlds' nature.

So, a triple meaning is related to the expression "literary world": literary world as *Umwelt*, coordinate system and *Welt* — according to the strict meaning proposed by Ricoeur. This multilayer nature of literary world seems to be a first remarkable means useful for describing literary experiences: literary experiences are experiences of literary worlds and these worlds are marked by a triple meaning.

1.2. Literary Experiences and Visual Literary Experiences: Literary Worlds as Verbal Images

Now, it seems that, if we intend to carry out a faithful description of the experience of reading literary works, the theoretical outcomes just mentioned are not enough: i) literary experiences consist in experiencing literary worlds and ii) every literary world we experience is an instance of *Umwelt*, coordinates system and *Welt*. Our literary experiences are inherently distinguished by another feature that demands to be highlighted and examined accordingly, i.e. our literary *visual* involvement. *Sometimes* it happens that, while reading, we *spontaneously* outline visual sketches, which seem to be more like blurred and vague outlines than clear and sharply defined images. It is even possible that

readers become aware of their visual involvement and corresponding sketches only once they have finished reading, that is, when sketches that were outlined during reading flow together and blend into the representation of a literary world. Nevertheless, it also possible that readers become aware of these visual sketches piecemeal and then gather them together at once.

This issue does not absolutely imply that every reader appeals to the words she reads as mainsprings useful for depicting mental images. Contrarily, the attempt to comb through and account for our visual involvement triggered by literary experiences is due to an extraordinariness that should pique our interest: words — read or just listened to — can act as mainsprings that lead us to outline visual sketches and then associate those sets of words with these sketches. Surely this kind of visual experience is not solely confined to literary field: it can also occur, for example, while we listen to words uttered by a friend, while we read a newspaper, and so forth. Nonetheless, this ordinary experience becomes a hallmark typical of literary experience since — in literature — such a visual involvement is related to an entire and complete set of words, that is to say, to a literary work. This means that those blurred sketches evoked by words flow together and give rise to a literary world.

It is worth noticing that, regardless of any possible visual involvement, reading literary works inherently entails disclosing literary worlds. As the previous paragraph has just pointed out, literary experience consists in building literary worlds up by means of the coordinates provided by the text. Given this first step, the next step draws our attention to the *possibility* of relating visual *sketches* to literary worlds. Hence, beyond the level of literary experience, there is the one of *visual* literary experience[1]: it can occur that, while reading literary

[1] The basis both experiences share is the perceptual or auditory one: reading or listening to words is the primary step required to experience literary worlds. From now on, literary experience will be referred to as an experience based in reading words rather than listening to words. Nowadays, the former seems to be more recurring and habitual than the latter: if we want to read *The Old Man and the Sea*, we take the book rather then ask someone to read it aloud for us. For this reason, we will explicitly refer to reading words rather than listening to them. Despite the huge differences between these two ways of experiencing literary worlds, the central issue of this study is equally relevant to both ways: literary experience consists in building literary worlds up by means of the coordinates provided by the author, regardless of the specific way worlds are unfolded (by reading or listening to words).

works, readers outline visual sketches. Thus, readers' literary experience can turn into *visual* literary experience and such an amazing experience demands to be better examined and comprehended.

Now, let us focus on our reading experiences and think about texts that we usually regard as literary works: for example, a novel, a poem, or a tale. It often happens that, while reading these texts, we mentally sketch visual images arisen from words and phrases we have just read and we gradually end up imagining an entire literary world. Let us take into account the beginning of *To the Lighthouse* (by Virginia Woolf):

> "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added. To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch. Since he belonged, even at the age of six, to that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that, but must let future prospects, with their joys and sorrows, cloud what is actually at hand, since to such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests, James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy stores, endowed the picture of a refrigerator, as his mother spoke, with heavenly bliss. It was fringed with joy. The wheelbarrow, the lawnmower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling — all these were so coloured and distinguished in his mind that he had already his private code, his secret language, though he appeared the image of stark and uncompromising severity, with his high forehead and his fierce blue eyes, impeccably candid and pure, frowning slightly at the sight of human frailty, so that his mother, watching him guide his scissors neatly round the refrigerator, imagined him all red and ermine on the Bench or directing a stern and momentous enterprise in some crisis of public affairs.

While we read this passage, it can occur that visual and blurred sketches start taking shapes: readers can find themselves *spontaneously* outlining sketches related to James Ramsay's joyful reaction, to his face, to his position in the room, to the sound of poplar trees and leaves whitening before rain he is fantasizing about, to the mother watching him, and so forth. Such a visual involvement is noteworthy: while we read literary works, it can happen that we, spontaneously, associate places, situations, events, characters' faces or their acts, emotions and feelings with visual sketches, although we experience only words. It is worth stressing that such sketches are blurred and vague: readers

would not be able to describe them in detail. If they tried and so if they focused on them on purpose, then it would be a kind of visual experience different from the literary one, which is inherently spontaneous (cf. McGinn, 2004: 12-17). This literary visual engagement is a remarkable component of our ordinary literary experiences and it is worth combing it through: it demands to be better comprehended. In order to account for it, this research proposes to employ the expression "verbal image": "verbal" since literary worlds' root is verbal (they *consist of* words); "image" since readers outline visual sketches. The term "image" will be largely used from now on and so it is worth specifying its exact meaning, which at first blush seems more puzzling in comparison with "verbal".

First of all, the notion of verbal image has absolutely nothing to do with the widespread notion of mental image (Kosslyn 1994, 2005; Kosslyn - Denis, 1999): readers outline visual sketches, they do not depict mental images. When we talk about mentally sketched images, the word "image" refers to a visual sketch rather than to a well-defined visual shape (Bianca, 2009: 159-167). This remark is very notable and makes clearer literary worlds' nature as verbal images, i.e. as sets of visual sketches rooted into words. So, the thesis at stake does not entail that readers depict mental images starting from reading written words. They do not *draw* mental *images*, but they mentally *outline* visual *sketches*. Similarly, if the term "world" were misinterpreted and understood in accordance with its usual meaning, then the outcome would be something like this: while reading literary works, readers translate into mental images what they read and this procedure allows them to mentally portray everything in detail. Clearly, this inference is false and does not describe our literary experiences in a faithful way: let us consider an analogous instance that turns out to be very useful for showing this reasoning's slip.

A child sneaks under a table and, while playing, considers the table itself as a hut. So, this child acts *as if* the table were a hut and surely turns to imagination in order to play under the table as if it were a hut. Nonetheless, it seems that this child need not to draw a mental image of a hut in order to play under the table as if it were a hut. The child sees the table and behaves as if it were a hut: perhaps this behaviour implies some mental images of tables or

huts, but this hypothesis is not enough to believe that the kind of imagination arising while the child is playing is identical to the kind of imagination arising while she is drawing mental images *on purpose*. In fact, if the child at issue drew a mental image of a hut on purpose, then she would be able to describe its shape, colour, size and other physical features in detail. On the contrary, while playing, the child is focused on acting as if the table were a hut and not on visualizing the table as a hut: consequently, she does not concentrate on its shape, colour and size (Spinicci, 2009: 22-25). Similarly, while reading literary works, readers' visual involvement does not imply that readers visualize every character described, every landscape, every situation, and so forth: this description would not portray faithfully our ordinary literary experiences. If one asked me to describe how I have visualized some characters of *Silas Marner*, then I would attempt to portray them *on purpose* and I would become able to describe them in detail, though I did not focus on their visualization while I was reading. Similarly, if the child were asked to visualize the table as a hut, then she would be able to describe its shape, colour and size in detail.

These two instances of visualization are completely different: on the one hand, reading words triggers *spontaneous* shaping of visual sketches, on the other hand, one mentally shapes visual images — starting from words — *on purpose*. In the former case, we deal with images as mental and visual sketches; in the latter case, we deal with images as mental and visual sketches transformed into sharply defined pictures by focusing on them. Visual literary experiences arise from *spontaneously* shaping mental sketches readers are aware of: they did not *willingly* shape visual sketches, but they are aware of these sketches insofar as they *find themselves* outlining visual sketches starting from words. Visual literary experience refers to this spontaneous and possibly aware experience. Definitively and absolutely, it does not encompass cases in which readers shape mental images on purpose: this is not visual literary experience, whose main trait is spontaneity.

In its entirety, every literary world seems to be visualized as a *set* of visual as well as spontaneous sketches, i.e. images that were outlined during reading. Readers identify coordinates and associate them with visual sketches and then such visual outlines — piecemeal or all at once — flow together and blend into

the representation of a literary world. Coordinates are means by which readers build up and, possibly, visualize literary worlds. The kind of visualization at issue is to be regarded as a visualization of an *untidy* set of visual sketches: at the end of *I Promessi Sposi*, readers retain visual sketches concerning some coordinates, that is to say, some scenes, passages, emotions, characters' expressions, critical moments, and so on. They do not retain a portrait of the literary world at issue: they do not visualize it at as a picture. They associate it with blurred visual sketches. The outcome is an untidy set of visual sketches: Cardinal Federigo's arrival, Lucia's "Farewell to the mountains", the encounter between Renzo and the two "bravi", the dialogue between Renzo and Don Abbondio, Lucia's fainting, etc. Once the novel is entirely read, all these visual sketches flow together in a blurred set and constitute a visualized literary world. A literary world is visualized if readers associate it with a *series* of visual sketches: they do not have to associate the literary world at issue with a sort of picture that gathers visual sketches together. And if readers do not spontaneously outline visual sketches, they build up the literary world of *I Promessi Sposi* anyway.

Let us consider another example: are the readers of Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* able to draw or to describe Gregor Samsa's bedroom in detail? If they tried, they would achieve weak outcomes. Is this a proof that reading does not entail visualization? According to the proposed thesis, the answer would be dissenting. On the one hand, I am not definitively able to draw Gregor's bedroom, but on the other hand, it is possible that I associated Kafka's work, and so Gregor's bedroom too, with a set of *visual sketches*. I cannot describe his bedroom in detail, but, for example, I could say that, while reading, I positioned the bed on the right side: I mentally visualized it. Paradoxically, I am not able to describe bed's size, colour and shape, but I know that it is on the right side of the room. Moreover, I visualized his room's door, because I mentally positioned it behind the bed, but I am not able to say anything else about it. When his sister enters the room, I did not visualize her as a person since I am not able to describe her physiognomy. Puzzlingly, I visualized her as a sort of human outline who entered the room and saw Gregor's bed on her right. Paradoxically, I would not be able to say what she wears, how her hair and voice

look like, but I visualized her entering the room. There is a huge difference between this kind of visualization and the kind of visualization that enables readers to visualize every single detail they read about. In this last case, visual sketches take shape and then they turn into sharply defined pictures by readers' focusing on them on purpose. While we read or listen to words, sometimes it occurs that we *spontaneously* associate words with images and we visualize blurred and vague sketches rather than well-defined pictures: this spontaneous association refers to an astonishing human ability we can become aware of and that characterises our *visual* literary experiences.

1.3. Literary Representation and the Dynamic Between Visual Images and Verbal Images
The notion of verbal image seems to describe only one side of the coin: it defines the spontaneous process though which readers associate words or set of words with visual sketches. The process through which authors employ words to disclose literary worlds is left out of account. This paragraph aims at examining this other side of the coin, authors' one.

Now, which is the element that relates literary works to literary worlds? Given that literary works are the sole means that enables us to discover literary worlds, which is the nexus between literary worlds and literary works? That is to say, how is it possible that literary works disclose literary worlds? If we focus on the means authors avail themselves of, i.e. words, it becomes possible to answer these questions. What do authors pursue through words?

> The use of words as I understand it — that is, words as a perpetual pursuit of things, as a perpetual adjustment to their infinity variety». (Calvino, 1988: 26)

This quote illustrates the huge gap that ranges from words to "ideas": every time we translate "ideas" into words, we always attain something different from what we had in mind. When authors start writing, they know what they are going to write about: let us referring to it with the general and overall term "ideas" and let us say that authors have "ideas" on the matter. The coincidence between ideas and the corresponding verbal and written translation seems unattainable. Let us try an experiment: think about something and then try to translate it into words. It happens that one ponders about every single word and attempts to find those words that best suit her own ides. Eventually, one

finds these words, writes them down and then re-reads them: the person at issue knows the mainspring these words ensued from and so she is able to evaluate whether these words are a suitable translation of the original ideas. So, she will be less or more satisfied with this brief text. But if someone else reads this text, then it surely gives rise to new ideas and, possibly, visual sketches different from those the author associated the words with. Translating "ideas" into words is inherently difficult since re-reading these words gives rise to new ideas and new visual sketches. So, this simple example shows an amazing human ability, that is, the one that enables us to shape visual sketches starting from reading or listening to words. Words act as mainspring of visual sketches and this dynamic applies to readers as well as to authors. Now, how can the process of translating ideas into words be called? Answering this question means singling out the element we are searching for, i.e. the element that ties literary works to literary worlds and vice versa.

"Representation" seems to be the missing element: literary works *represent* literary worlds[2]. What does "to represent" mean? What does "representation" hint at? The Italian literary scholar Cesare De Marchi suggests a valuable and remarkable proposal on this matter: in literary scope, representing means translating a subjective experience into words (De Marchi, 2007: 16). Consequently — he maintains — writing means trying to grasp through words one's own viewpoint towards world and this effort especially characterises literary scope: authors endeavour to find words that seem to them as suitable as possible to *represent* their viewpoint towards world. Writing consists in the effort of translating "ideas" into words, that is to say, in *representing* these "ideas". Thanks to De Marchi's proposal we can argue that literary works *represent* literary worlds: authors represent literary worlds and so representation is the element that ties literary works to literary worlds and vice versa.

Once the author has found those words that seem suitable to *represent* what she has in mind, if one reads them, verbal images arise. These images will never exactly mirror author's original ideas and will never coincide with those images that other readers would outline while reading. The basic and starting *idea* that

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[2] In literary scope, I would translate "to represent" and "representation" into the more eloquent German words "darstellen" and "Darstellung".

acts as a jumping-off point for the act of writing is translated into words by authors: the overall term "ideas" refers to text's contents — chosen by authors — and visual contents that authors *possibly* visualize while writing (for example, while describing). Authors translate "ideas" into words and readers give rise to verbal images. So, a dichotomy between two items underlies the text of every literary work: authors' ideas and readers' images. Following Calvino's terminology (1988: 83), the first one can be called «visual image»; following this research's proposal, the second one can be called "verbal image". The expression "visual image" does not absolutely refer to authors' possible visual experiences: it regards the ideas that authors translate into words and these ideas embrace also authors' possible visual sketches. Although it seems possible that authors do not appeal to visualization while writing, the expression "*visual* image" turns out to be useful since it also embraces authors' possible visual experiences and since it can be put in relation with readers' images, that is to say, *verbal* images. The dynamic at stake occurs between two different kinds of images: visual and verbal images. Authors translate visual images into words and every reader who reads them gives rise to verbal images. Consequently, verbal images become gradually independent of visual images since every reader gives rise to different verbal images starting from those words chosen by authors: text's words act as midpoint between visual images and verbal images.

Once we have taken stock of the dynamic between visual and verbal images, we can claim that literary works are first of all *verbal* entities that consist of a set of words: this set embraces those words authors regarded as suitable means to translate their own visual images, that is to say, to represent a literary world. Every single word is a necessary step in order for authors to represent a literary world and for readers to disclose it. Authors *represent* literary worlds through words: they translate visual images into words and this gradual translation consists in the act of writing. Is there a word able to summarize the entirety of this process related to writing? The term "unfold"[3] seems suitable: to unfold means to "unroll" visual images through words. Accordingly, readers *re*-unfold what authors unfolded and in so doing verbal images arise.

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[3] I would translate "to unfold" into the more eloquent German verb "ausstellen".

To sum up, literary works represent literary worlds that are understandable as verbal images. The notion of verbal image singles out a clear distinction between literary experiences and visual literary experiences: the former is related to literary worlds as instances of coordinates system, *Umwelt* and *Welt*; the latter is related to literary worlds as instances of coordinates system, *Umwelt*, *Welt* and verbal images. In order to avoid misunderstandings, some concluding remarks turn out to be relevant. Firstly, it is very important to emphasize that the word "images" refers to visual sketches, blurred and vague visual outlines. Secondly, it is worth underlining that the expression "visual images" does not entail that authors visualize what they write about: this expression mainly refers to text's contents that authors chose to write about and, if authors visualize some visual sketches while writing, then this expression encompasses these cases too. Thirdly, the dichotomy between visual and verbal images enables us to recognize visualization's role in literature without claiming that writing literary works consists in visualizing literary worlds and that reading literary works consists in translating literary worlds into mental images.

1.4. *Reading Without Visualizing: Verbal Image and its Overarching Meaning*

Let us pay attention to the thesis just discussed: the concept of *verbal image* concerns the whole of images readers devise while reading literary works. It is a matter of visual sketches rooted into words. At first glance, it seems that this thesis is partly incomplete since visualization does not start working reading *every* literary work. It seems that readers do not *always* outline visual and mental sketches. For this reason, the notion of verbal image would apply only to a certain extent since it would be useful for describing only *visual* literary experiences rather than literary experiences in general. Let us call to mind the well-known poem by Giuseppe Ungaretti (1919), *Mattina* (*Morning*): «M'illumino /d'immenso» (Clive Wilmer's English translation: "I flood myself with the light of the immense"). We can generally say that a reader of this short poem does not associate it with a verbal image by necessity. Certainly, perhaps there are readers who associate it with some visual sketches, but it does not always occur and it is plausible and reasonable to believe that this poem gives rise to verbal images less frequently than a, for example, a passage from a novel. The concept

of verbal image is so fruitful and valuable that embraces cases of reading without visualizing and so it can be even related to those literary works that do not trigger readers' visualization. This implies that Ungaretti's poem should be regarded as an instance of verbal image, although verbal images do not probably arise by reading it. How could we stretch the meaning of the term "verbal image"? We are going to argue that the expression "verbal image" refers to a double meaning: firstly, it highlights that literary worlds can be regarded as a set of visual sketches that are verbal as they arise from words; secondly, the expression "verbal image" also encompasses those literary works that do not act as sources of visual sketches and so it can be appealed to as a valuable description of literary experiences in general, regardless of the possible visual involvement readers could experience.

Now, we are arguing that those literary worlds that do not trigger readers' visualization are to be described as instances of verbal images anyway: what does it mean? This simply means that for those readers who do not devise verbal images while reading, the literary work at issue still represents a literary world as a verbal image. Therefore, all literary works represent literary worlds that can be considered as verbal images. If readers' visualization is triggered and so they spontaneously outline visual sketches, then we will have an instance of verbal image (according to verbal image's first meaning). On the contrary, if readers' visualization is not triggered and so spontaneous outlining of visual sketches is not at stake, then we will have an instance of verbal image anyway: in fact, the text itself would be considered as an image of *emotions* arisen from reading or *themes* exemplified by the text (according to verbal image's second meaning). The distinction between these two meanings is not sharp, because it exclusively depends upon readers' experiences. Nonetheless, both kinds of images — visual sketches and verbal images of emotions or themes — are inherently *verbal* since they arise from a linguistic substratum (a single sentence, a set of sentences or an entire literary work). So, literary works that do not trigger visualization are verbal images anyway: this occurs since they are images, rooted into words, of *emotions* arisen during reading and/or *themes* exemplified by the text. Let us consider an example.

While reading the aforementioned poem "Morning" we can be emotionally involved and, at the same time, spontaneously give rise to verbal images or, contrariwise, we can be just emotionally involved without giving rise to any verbal image. In the first case, readers would associate the poem with visual sketches; in the second case, readers would associate the poem with emotions only. For instance, the poem "Morning" could be associated with an emotion of calmness. This means that the poem becomes a *representation* (a translation into words) of the emotion of calmness: the poem is a verbal *image* of calmness. The words it consists of constitute a sort of verbal portrait of the emotion of calmness. For readers who associate "Morning" with calmness, this poem is a *verbal image of calmness*. Literary worlds could be verbal images of *themes* too: for example, *Uno, nessuno e centomila* by Pirandello could be regarded as a verbal image of the *themes* of alienation and isolation, *Se questo è un uomo* by Levi as a verbal image of the *theme* of sorrow and angst, *Ficciones* by Borges as a verbal image of lightness, and so forth.

The broad meaning of the expression "verbal image" enables us to deem every literary world represented by literary works as an instance of verbal image. Emotions, themes and visual sketches related to literary worlds strictly depend upon readers and so they can be deeply different from one another (visual sketches could even not arise). Nevertheless, emotions, themes and visual sketches rely on a basis shared by every reader's literary experience, that is to say, text's coordinates and literary worlds themselves, i.e. the heart of (visual) literary experiences.

1.5. Visual Experiences Aside from Literary Experiences
The outcomes so far achieved with regard to visual literary experiences highlight a significant point: starting from verbal stimuli (words) readers outline visual sketches. While reading literary works, they possibly outline visual sketches and so end up building literary worlds up: they associate words with visual sketches and so verbal images arise. These images are rooted into words, but then they become independent of them: readers sketch verbal images *starting from* words, they do not sketch images *with* words. Readers' visualization points out a dynamic between two elements: verbal stimuli and verbal images. Visual literary

experiences are just a token of a broader range of visual experiences springing from verbal stimuli. Equally, verbal stimulus is just a type whose tokens are newspapers, magazines, tales, conversations, and so forth. Every other set of words and phrases (both oral and written) is a token of verbal stimulus. So, thanks to the concept of verbal image it is possible to realize the extraordinariness of an astonishing human ability, that is, the ability to shape mental and visual images starting from verbal stimuli. Beyond verbal stimuli, other kinds of stimuli can act as mainsprings of visual sketches: in this sense, visual experiences surely exceed the verbal field typical of literary experiences and the verbal field in general.

In this respect, the classification suggested by Paivio and Sadoski turns out to be remarkable and relevant (Paivio - Sadoski, 2004). They distinguish verbal stimuli from non-verbal ones. Starting from these two main classes, they sort all the other possible kinds of stimuli: the first set embraces sight (visual language [writing]), hearing (auditory language [speech]) and touch (Braille, handwriting), whereas the second one embraces sight (visual objects), hearing (environmental sounds), touch ("feel" of objects), taste (taste memories) and smell (smell memories). This kind of classification ensues from the following assumption: «all mental representations retain some of the concrete qualities of the external experiences from which they derive. These experiences can be linguistic or non linguistic» (Paivio - Sadoski, 2004: 3). Commenting on Kant's stance about imagination, Hannah Arendt argued for an analogous thesis: according to her, imagination is a *reproductive* faculty that enables human beings to represent what is absent. By contrast, a *productive* faculty enables human beings to "produce" something totally new and this faculty concerns the artistic scope. Nevertheless, she underlines how this faculty cannot be completely productive: «it produces, for instance, the centaur out of the given: the horse and the man» (Arendt, 1992: 79). Similarly, Paivio and Sadoski highlight that visual sketches retain qualities of the stimuli they spring from: stimuli give rise to images that retain signs of stimuli themselves. Furthermore, they point out another notable issue: there are many different kinds of stimuli triggering visualization. The connection between visually shaped images and stimuli they spring from is at stake. In literary scope, such a connection occurs between

visual sketches and words, literary worlds and literary works, text's coordinates and verbal images.

So, visualization is not confined to literary experiences, which are just an instance of this human ability. The nexus between stimuli and visual images occurs in many other scopes: on the one hand, one devises images starting from stimuli, and on the other hand, these images are often appealed to in order to achieve many different goals. As the Italian philosopher Bianca clearly underlines, we appeal to these visual and mental images in order to fulfil different tasks: for example, recognize objects, solve practical problems, remember something or someone, plan and design future possible events (Bianca, 2009). Moreover, visualization can be triggered without a specific practical purpose: mental images can just spontaneously arise, without a specific reason and function (McGinn, 2004: 7-41). All these visual experiences, despite their deep differences, share a common feature: we associate verbal and non-verbal stimuli with images, we store these images up and, possibly, we use them when we need them. Thus, visual literary experiences call for a broader scope of visual experiences: regardless of the specific kind at issue, every visual experience highlights a dynamic between visual sketches and their wellspring, and the former retains signs of the latter. In literary scope, the dynamic between visual sketches and words is at stake: readers carry it out as a dynamic between words and verbal images, whereas authors carry it out as a dynamic between words and visual images. The entire dynamic between visual and verbal images characterizes literary experience itself.

2. What Role is up to Phantasy and Imagination in Literary Experiences?
The first section has just enabled us to comprehend literary experience's hallmark, literary worlds' nature and readers' visual involvement. From these outcomes the following question arises: is there a specific ability readers avail themselves of in order for them to *unfold* literary worlds? That is to say, how can they unfold literary worlds? Furthermore, is there a specific ability readers avail themselves of in order for them to *reflect upon* literary worlds? Another fundamental question follows from these doubts: is literature endowed with cognitive value? That is to say, are our reflections upon literary worlds endowed

with cognitive value? Do these reflections enable us to gain knowledge with regard to their contents?

An account of literary experience should face these questions and try to answer them. It seems that each of these questions deals with the same issue: readers' abilities on which literary experiences rest. In fact, once fully understood that literary experiences are (visual) experiences of literary worlds, it seems necessary to identify those abilities that enable us to disclose literary worlds and to reflect upon what they *represent*. These abilities would be in fact other elements that inherently constitute every literary experience, regardless of any possible visual involvement. And so, which are these abilities?

It seems that two different faculties are at stake: the one that allows us to re-unfold literary worlds, and the one that allows us to reflect upon the re-unfolded literary worlds. This research's proposal is the following: *imagination* is the key to literary worlds, whereas *phantasy* is the key to every reflection focused on literary worlds. By virtue of *imagination* readers re-unfold literary worlds; by virtue of *phantasy* readers reflect upon literary worlds and carry out the cognitive value typical of literature. In the ordinary language imagination often overlaps phantasy and their distinction remains blurred and faint: literary experience calls for a clear distinction between them since it entails both of them in two remarkably different ways.

Fantasizing and imagining are widespread and common experiences: these two phenomena play a prevailing role in our ordinary life and they often seem to overlap each other. We usually avail ourselves of imagination or phantasy in order to explain and describe phenomena like daydreaming (cf. Somer, 2002), escapism from reality, making believe, children's games, hypothetical reasoning, visualization and several experiences somehow related to the aesthetic scope. Whatever ability enables us to have such experiences surely it leaves us spellbound: no matter how I could appear in the others' eyes, now I could make believe that right here in front of me there is a dragon chasing me, that this room is a cave, that this desk is a boat helpful for escaping. Moreover, I am able to put reality into brackets and start fantasizing about an exotic place, a new job or an historic context different from the one I am sunk into. Similarly, I could take a paper, draw a few lines and then conceive those lines as a representation

of a human face; and if one told me that she hardly manages to recognize it, then I would say: "Just imagine it by using the lines as a mere prompter".

We have taken into account just a few of the several experiences that we would commonly regard as experiences somehow involving phantasy or imagination. These experiences draw our attention to and highlight an amazing human ability: we can imagine the impossible, we can fantasize about the non-existent, we can visualize what we imagine and fantasize about while carrying on living our life in the real world; we can give rise to worlds and scenarios that are totally incompatible with what actually happens or happened: in this scope, it seems that nothing is impossible to us. The constrains that force us in the real world seem to lose their binding power as well as scenarios of endless possibilities seem to become disclosed before us: «in contrast to animals, we can doubt reality and imagine things that do not exist — i.e. we can think and act in terms of "as if". The irrealis mood in language — would, should, could — is the verbal expression of our ability to fantasize, fictionalize, and virtualize» (Fuchs, 2014: 153). What role is up to phantasy and imagination while we experience literary worlds?

2.1. The Possibilities Imagination Yields: Imagination as Making Believe
Readers unfold literary worlds: which ability do readers appeal to? It seems that readers' process of unfolding literary worlds relies on imagination as making believe (cf. Pavel, 1986; Kind, 2001). Thanks to imagination readers *make believe*: they make believe that Elizabeth is in love with Darcy, they make believe that Gregor Samsa has lost his human physiognomy, and so forth. While reading, we *imagine* and, possibly, we visualize the worlds we imagine, those worlds we *make believe that are world* (cf. Voltolini, 2010; Walton, 1980, 1983): we make believe that the world of Elizabeth and Darcy really exists, that the world of Gregor Samsa really exists. This making believe does not imply that we believe that Darcy, Elizabeth and Gregor really exist in the real world as we ourselves exist. Literary making believe refers to the following "alief" (Gendler, 2010: 238-255): we make believe that the literary world where Elizabeth and Darcy get married and the one where Gregor Samsa loses his human physiognomy

exist. This issue does not imply any ontological claim concerning literary worlds' existence. The way of existence typical of Elizabeth's and Gregor's world is *representation*: literary worlds exist insofar as they are represented. Literary works represent literary worlds and, in so doing, literary works give rise to literary worlds that readers unfold: the ability that enables readers to unfold literary worlds is *imagination*. While reading, we *imagine*[4], that is to say, we lean on text's coordinates and, slowly and gradually, we end up imagining an entire world.

Now, let us focus on this particular instance of imagination, i.e. making believe: it seems that when making believe we appeal to imagination as the ability that allows us to yield possibilities that are more constrained rather than unconstrained (cf. Kind, 2016; Kind, 2011). While making believe, for example, that right here in front of me there is a dragon chasing me, I am by necessity hedged in by some physical constraints I cannot elude: first of all, the physical space I am in. If I made believe to flee from the dragon, I could not make believe that walls and objects like chairs or desks do not exist: they would be obstacles I need to dodge. Contrariwise, if I just daydreamed about a dragon chasing me, then in this fantasized world I would not face with constraints that hedge me in: I could daydream to flee from the dragon thanks to my power to pass through walls and any other physical obstacle. Nonetheless, at the same time, we should acknowledge that imagination enables us to yield unconstrained possibilities: when making believe that I did not get a bad mark — although I actually got it — I am giving rise to a possibility that loosens reality's constraints and so we could describe this possibility as an unconstrained one. However, the *constraints* that tether this possibility to reality are prevailing: the bad mark I got cannot be eluded, this reality's constraint cannot de loosened. So, it seems that the possibilities imagination, as making believe, yields are more constrained than unconstrained: imagination enables us to slacken reality's constraints rather than eluding them (cf. Saraiva, 1970: 53).

While reading literary works, we imagine the corresponding literary worlds: which are the constraints imagination faces with? Which constraints rule over our making believe? These constraints coincide with the coordinates authors provide readership with: readers' making believe that Elizabeth and

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[4] I would translate "to imagine" into the more eloquent German verb "sich vorstellen".

Darcy get married slacken reality's constraints insofar as readers unfold a literary world. Nonetheless, these possibilities are strictly hedged in by precise constraints that guide our reading, and so our unfolding, and so our making believe.

When dealing with making believe as an instance of imagination, we should also encompass hypothetical reasoning — i.e. factual and counterfactual reasoning — and the kind of imagination appealed to during children's games (cf. Plessner, 1982): both these cases seem to share imagination's feature of yielding possibilities that are more constrained than unconstrained. Hypothetical reasoning consists in imagining possible scenarios, imagining what could happen in the future and what could have happened in the past (cf. Sacks 2010). This kind of imagination seems to be endowed with an *epistemic* value. The expression "epistemic value" is used in accordance with the meaning proposed by philosopher Amy Kind: what is endowed with epistemic value can justify our beliefs in a contingent claim about the world: «there are a variety of situations — real situations — in which it is plausible to claim that the justification for a non-modal belief owes to an act of the imagination — that is, in which an imagining can justify our belief in a contingent claim about the world» (Kind, 2013: 2). For example, if I carried out an hypothetical reasoning in order for me to make a decision — decide whether to spend holidays in the mountains or at the sea — then this imagining could justify my future decision: to this extent, imagination as hypothetical reasoning is endowed with epistemic value. On the other side, the kind of imagination entailed by making believe — i.e. during literary experiences — and by children's games seems to be endowed with *heuristic* value: it enables us to disclose new dimensions of reality. The term "heuristic" is used following Ricoeur's proposal: «force heuristique, c'est-à-dire leur capacité d'ouvrir et de déployer de nouvelles dimensions de réalité» (Ricoeur, 1986: 221). So, the kind of imagination entailed by children's games and by making believe is endowed with *heuristic* value, whereas the kind of imagination entailed by instances of hypothetical reasoning is endowed with *epistemic* value. Literary experiences call for imagination as making believe and this token of imagination mutually includes cases of children's games and hypothetical reasoning.

2.2. The Possibilities Phantasy Yields: Phantasy as Freie Phantasie

Moving on to phantasy, we can now lean on two Husserlian issues that turn out to be helpful in comprehending its role in literary experiences. In *Phänomenologie und Erkenntnistheorie* (Husserl, 1987) — one of the two essays focused on his Inaugural Lecture held at University of Freiburg — Husserl distinguishes *träumende Phantasie*, we avail ourselves of when daydreaming, from *freie Phantasie*, we avail ourselves of when appealing to eidetic variation[5] (cf. Husserl, 1901: 454-458; Husserl, 1980).

When I fantasize about a centaur, I experience a quasi-perception of this centaur. While I am experiencing this, I do not mingle the world of centaurs with the actual world I now inhabit. I do not make believe that the centaur leaps into the road I am now crossing. So, what am I doing while fantasizing about a centaur? To this purpose Husserl distinguishes "freie Phantasie" from "träumende Phantasie" (or "reine Phantasie"). How do they differ? According to Husserl, I rely on *freie Phantasie* when I appeal to eidetic variation, while I rely on *träumende Phantasie* when I daydream about something. Daydreaming implies that the sphere of reality and the sphere of phantasy definitively overlap. I am not confined to quasi-perceive the centaur: *träumende Phantasie* makes me quasi-experience the fantasized events, I quasi-judge them and I take position on them through pleasure or displeasure. So, the kind of phantasy we often refer to is, in Husserlian terms, *träumende Phantasie*.

Freie Phantasie makes eidetic variation possible: when appealing to eidetic variation, we are not lost in distant phantasy scenarios, indeed we are tremendously absorbed in the world we inhabit and we try to grasp the essence of what concerns us by varying it. In his research, geometer appeals to *freie Phantasie*: «in der Phantasie muß er sich freilich um klare Anschauungen bemühen, dessen ihn die Zeichnung und das Modell enthebt. Aber in wirklichem Zeichnen und Modellieren ist er gebunden, in der Phantasie hat er die unvergleichliche Freiheit in der willkürlichen Umgestaltung der fingierten Figuren» (Husserl, 1913: 131). So, when Husserl talks about *Phantasie* in relation

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[5] Phenomenologically, the expression "eidetic variation" refers to a method we can follow in order to identify the traits that constitute the essence of the phenomenon we are investigating. This method consists in mentally varying the phenomenon at issue in its essential traits (Husserl, 1913: §4, §70).

with eidetic variation, he is referring to *freie Phantasie*. This correlation is broadly misunderstood and overshadowed by Italian translations that often make readership mistake phantasy for imagination.

By appeal to *träumende Phantasie*, we can ride centaurs; by appeal to *freie Phantasie*, we fantasize about centaurs in order to understand what they are, just as geometers avail themselves of phantasy in their investigative thinking (Husserl, 1913: §7). The dichotomy between *freie* and *träumende Phantasie* roots in a common feature: as Husserl says, phantasy yields (*ergibt*) possibilities (Husserl, 1987). Following Husserl, *freie* and *träumende Phantasie* yield possibilities. Now, if we focus on this phantasy's hallmark, we could describe the possibilities phantasy yields as constrained and unconstrained possibilities: *Phantasie* yields possibilities devoid of constraints (we flee reality) and governed by constraints (we cannot completely put reality into brackets since reality itself overlaps fantasized objects). For example, when fantasizing about centaurs, we do not care about centaurs' actual nonexistence since we "put into brackets" real world along with its constraints: we are no longer hedged in by reality's constraints. Nonetheless, we are constrained by the fantasized object's identity: we are hedged in by the traits that constitute the identity of the centaur. The essential traits that define centaurs act as boundaries of fantasizing: if, while fantasizing about centaurs, I exceeded such boundaries, then I am no longer fantasizing about centaurs.

Moreover, if we focus on our experiences of fantasizing, we could draw a further conclusion: *freie Phantasie* is endowed with *cognitive* value, whereas *träumende Phantasie* is endowed with *heuristic* rather than cognitive value. The former enables us to gain knowledge about reality, whereas the latter enables us to disclose new dimensions of reality. This simply means that the appeal to *freie Phantasie* enables us to gain knowledge whereas the appeal to *träumende Phantasie* enables us to freely disclose new dimensions of reality, regardless of the knowledge we would gain from this disclosure. The term "heuristic" is used following Ricoeur's proposal: «force heuristique, c'est-à-dire leur capacité d'ouvrir et de déployer de nouvelles dimensions de réalité» (Ricoeur, 1986: 221).

So, what role is up to phantasy in literary experiences? Literary experiences call for phantasy as *träumende* and *freie Phantasie*. The former enables us to regard

literary worlds as springboards for fantasizing (for example, daydreaming); the latter enables us to reflect upon the literary worlds just unfolded. This last case is what matters most: thanks to phantasy readers reflect upon the phenomena literary works exemplify and, by means of eidetic variation, they reflect upon the nature of these phenomena. This means that readers' appeal to free phantasy brings about literature' cognitive value: thanks to free phantasy we can reflect upon literary worlds and, *consequently*, acquire knowledge from them. How exactly does this link between free phantasy and literature's cognitive value take shape during our literary experiences?

3. Free Phantasy and Literature's Cognitive Value: How Literature Gives Rise to Knowledge

The previous section has just allowed us to comprehend the role phantasy and imagination play in literary experiences and identify those abilities through which readers disclose literary worlds and reflect upon them. We are now in a better position for answering the previous questions: is there a specific ability readers avail themselves of in order for them to unfold literary worlds? Is there a specific ability readers avail themselves of in order for them to reflect upon literary worlds? The first faculty is imagination as making believe, the second one is phantasy as free variation.

This third section aims at examining the link between our usual experience of reading literary works — that is to say, unfolding literary worlds — and the alleged knowledge we can acquire from them (i.e. the link between free phantasy and literature's cognitive value). In so doing, phantasy's role in our literary experiences will clearly come to light. Two puzzlements act as wellspring: despite the common and blurred agreement on the matter, can we argue for a thesis that clearly proves the possibility of deriving knowledge from literature? If so, can we account for the kind of knowledge at stake? The current section purports to answer these questions neatly and affirmatively.

3.1. Does Literature's Cognitive Value Depend upon Distance?

When the topic of literature's cognitive value is at stake, the basic puzzle we have to deal with seems to be the following: if literary works turn to fictional

worlds, then we acquire knowledge concerning these fictional worlds; if literary works turn to non-fictional worlds, then we acquire knowledge concerning the world we live in[6]. Taken to the extreme, this paradox sounds like this: according to the first standpoint, when reading Borges' texts, we acquire knowledge that refer only to Borges' fictional worlds and not to our world; according to the second standpoint, when reading Tolstoj's words describing — in *War and Peace* — the struggle between Napoleon and Kutuzov, we acquire knowledge that refers also to our world, where the struggle between Napoleon and Kutuzov actually took place.

Putting the matter in this way, we would examine the issue concerning the cognitive value of literature by means of scanning the fictional *vs* non-fictional divide. This entails that the final thesis we could attain would concern a contigent level of knowledge since the knowledge we achieve from literature would depend upon the degree of distance that detaches fictional worlds from real world: if fictional worlds are thoroughly set apart from reality, then readers learn something about real world in a small extent; contrariwise, if fictional worlds are closer to reality, then readers learn something about real world in a larger extent. According to this approach, the knowledge readers can acquire from literature is related to a contingent level since it counts only contingently. For example, while reading *Moby Dick*, readers unavoidably acquire knowledge regarding whalers in the XIX century, as well as while reading *Anna Karenina*, readers — by means of a reasoning of generalization — acquire knowledge of the fact that what happened to Anna could hypothetically happen to everyone (Pavel, 1986: ch. VI). This kind of knowledge can be deemed as a contingent knowledge since it counts contingently and not universally: the beliefs related to this knowledge could be, potentially, falsified[7]. The whalers described by Melville are different from those of nowadays. Likewise, what happened to

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[6] The expression "fictional world" is used in accordance with Pavel's meaning (1986). More generally, we can say that fictional worlds point out a specific type of literary worlds: literary worlds can be fictional or non-fictional. As long as this divide depends upon literary worlds' distance from real world, this divide is not sharp and does not seem to be a distinction useful for this research's purposes and goals.

[7] This contingent level of knowledge is strongly tethered to the epistemic value typical of the two aforementioned instances of imagination, i.e. hypothetical reasoning and the kind of imagination appealed to during children's games.

Anna Karenina seems to be partly unlikely in XXI century since social and cultural contexts are deeply different from hers.

If we accepted this thesis, we would be accordingly forced to admit two further claims and not to deal with a third topic that seems to deserve more attention indeed: 1) the cognitive value of literature depends upon the kind of literary work we are reading (more or less fictional); 2) the cognitive value of literature is only contingent; 3) the question whether the cognitive value of literature is intertwined with readers' role remains with no answer. Next paragraphs argue against the first claim, show the incompleteness of the second one and argue for readers' pivotal role in grasping literature's cognitive value.

Thomas Pavel's stance could be regarded as a remarkable sample of the approach that takes for granted the first two claims and neglects the third one. His standpoint is useful for realizing that the knowledge we acquire from literature is not confined to a contingent scope, but also embraces a non-contingent one: thanks to phantasy as free variation we can reach a level of knowledge that exceeds the contingent sphere. Nonetheless, Pavel's argument accounts only for the first sort of knowledge and hence it is criticized accordingly. In his masterpiece *Fictional Worlds* (1986), he avails himself of Kendall Walton's and Gareth Evans' accounts of literary worlds' nature in order to argue for two principles that master and forge the relations between fictional worlds and real world: the principle of distance and the principle of relevance. It is not a matter of a sharp distinction, but this proposal relies on a strong conviction: according to Pavel, fiction primarily aims at creating a distance and, only if it aims at making fictional worlds relevant to the real world, then it attempts to shorten this distance. So, if authors comply with these two principles, then the resulting fictional worlds will be apart from reality (principle of distance) as well as influential (principle of relevance). Contrary to Pavel, it seems that literary worlds can affect readers even outside these two principles since — as Calvino pointed out (1988) — it is not possible for humans to adopt a non-human perspective. This means that, no matter how fictional worlds may seem far apart from reality, they cannot avoid the human perspective itself and so they cannot avoid having an impact on real world: «think what it would be to have a work conceived from outside the self, a work that would let us escape

the limited perspective of the individual ego, not only to enter into selves like our own but to give speech to that which has no language, to the bird […] to the tree […], to stone, to cement, to plastic» (Calvino, 1988: ch. V).

3.2. The Multilayer Cognitive Value Typical of Literature

So, a divide between two different kinds of knowledge is at stake: the knowledge readers derive by unfolding literary worlds can be related to a contingent level or to a non-contingent one as well as to both of them. The contingent level of knowledge is acquired by readers involuntarily: when reading *Les Misérables*, readers mechanically acquire knowledge concerning French history (French Revolution, Napoleonic Wars, Bourbon Restoration) and French society (lowest social classes of XVIII-XIX centuries). Contrariwise, the non-contingent level of knowledge is acquired by readers insofar as they aim for this goal on purpose: when reading *Les Misérables*, readers can decide to reflect upon some topics and phenomena that this novel exemplifies and deals with. They could ponder over forgiveness, repentance and bravery: this means that they take the novel as a notable exemplification and as a significant springboard for a reflection upon these phenomena. This reflection consists in what Husserl named "eidetic variation" (i.e. *freie Phantasie*): starting from the literary exemplification, readers can opt to wonder what inherently characterizes those phenomena that the literary work at issue deals with. Doing so, they wonder whether the literary portrait (verbal image) provided by the author seems to them appropriate and useful for understanding the essential nature of the phenomena at issue: the priest forgives Jean Valjean, does forgiveness imply repentance of the forgiven person? Valjean undertakes a path of repentance: is repentance affected by forgiveness? If readers reflect upon phenomena exemplified by literary works, they mentally vary these phenomena: they regard literary works as starting points for examining phenomena and trying to identify their distinguishing features by mentally varying them. Thus, they acquire a specific kind of knowledge that is related to a non-contingent level since it is independent of contexts. My knowledge of what repentance is does not change along with contexts: surely, it can be affected and so revised, but it does not depend on contexts as my knowledge of French Revolution depends on the

historical context of the XVIII century. Husserl's stance turns out to be indispensable to the comprehension of this non-contingent level of knowledge literature provides readers with. According to Husserl, eidetic variation is a "legitimized source of knowledge" («Rechtsquelle der Erkenntnis», 1913: §23, §24): readers can acquire knowledge from literature thanks to free phantasy, i.e. the ability that enables them to carry out eidetic variation.

Hence, we are arguing that literature's cognitive value is inherently double: firstly, it regards a contingent level of knowledge; secondly, it regards a non-contingent level of knowledge. The first one occurs involuntarily, whereas the second one occurs insofar as readers strive to reflect upon phenomena exemplified by literary worlds. Consequently, readers play an active and pivotal role during reading. In fact, if readers intend to acquire a kind of knowledge that is not confined to contexts, then they have to examine the phenomena exemplified: they do it through "eidetic variation" and thanks to *freie Phantasie* (Husserl, 1987).

Let us consider another example. Reading *Die Ungeduld des Herzens* by Zweig, readers could wonder what compassion and pity are, what distinguishes them from love and how responsibility is linked with these feelings. In so doing, they mentally vary these phenomena in their features so as to pinpoint those traits that characterize them inherently, those traits without which the phenomena at issue would not be the same phenomena. For instance, when reflecting upon repentance, one could wonder whether relief characterizes it inherently — and so in every context by necessity — or by chance — and so only in a few contexts. This means that readers wonder what repentance without relief could be and, thanks to this variation, try to reflect upon repentance's essence. *Freie Phantasie* enables readers to vary phenomena in their traits in order to identify those features that characterise them essentially: this kind of reflection leads them to a non-contingent level of knowledge.

3.3. The Bedrock of Literature's Cognitive Value
Once we have understood that literary worlds are endowed with cognitive value, questions and doubts concerning the bedrock of this cognitive value arise: what enables literary works to be sources of knowledge?

When reading literary works, we gain knowledge of other worlds: we immerse ourselves in *Silas Marner*'s world, in Rodion Romanovič Raskol'nikov's world, in *Eugénie Grandet*'s world, and so forth. Authors disclose worlds that readers can access. The means that enables authors to disclose worlds and the means that enables readers to access them is the same: words. Hence, literary worlds are first of all verbal worlds. Literary works represent verbal worlds: this feature distinguishes literature from other sorts of representation. Walton's stance on this matter turns out to be significant. According to him, literary works are "props" that generate "fictional truths" (Walton, 1990: part I) and literature's specific way of representation is *verbal* (Walton, 1990: part IX). "Props" are «real world objects or states of affairs that make propositions true in the make-believe world, i.e. "fictional"» (2013: 1). Literary works act as *props* that generate fictional truths, which are propositions that are true only in the fictional world they are related to. Props make these propositions true and fictional: thus, props generate fictional truths. So, literary worlds represent verbal worlds that consist of fictional truths generated by literary works acting as props. This issue is a necessary step in order to comprehend how it is possible that literary works are sources of knowledge. So, it is possible to acquire knowledge from literary works since they give rise to fictional worlds and, consequently, to fictional truths related to these worlds. We can acquire knowledge from literature since literary works' nature consists in generating truths. Following Walton, these truths are first of all fictional: they are related to a given literary work's fictional world.

Now, if we stretch this first degree of knowledge (related to fictional truths), we can unveil a second degree of knowledge (which is contingent) and eventually a third one (which is non-contingent). These three levels of knowledge are overlapping and cannot be loosely clustered or lucidly split up. Literature has a cognitive value since it is a source of knowledge. The knowledge readers can acquire from reading literary works is step-by-step: its contents gradually change as well as the role of readers becomes from passive to active. At the first step, readers acquire knowledge of truths that apply to the literary world at issue: reading *Pride and Prejudice*, they come to know that Elizabeth and Darcy finally get married. At the second step, readers acquire knowledge of

truths that apply to the literary world at issue and to the real world: reading *I Promessi Sposi*, they come to know that in 1630 Milan was caught by an outbreak of plague. At the third step, readers acquire knowledge of truths that apply to the literary world at issue, to the real world and to every possible world: reading *Die Verwandlung*, they come to know what alienation is.

4. Towards Appropriate Literary Experiences

Literary works represent literary worlds that are to be regarded as verbal images. Regardless of any possible visual involvement, literary experiences entail phantasy as free variation and imagination as making believe. Authors provide readers with coordinates, and, mutually, readers lean on such coordinates to unfold literary worlds and build them up. In this respect, a significant question arises: do all of these worlds taking shape through readers' imagination mirror and exemplify an *appropriate* literary experience? While reading literary works, should readers comply with a sort of standard of appropriateness? Does an appropriate way of unfolding literary worlds exist? Subsequently, do *appropriate* literary experiences exist?

The current section tries to answer these questions and to find out the link that ties philosophy of literature to aesthetics. In order to achieve this goal, a phenomenological principle devised by Moritz Geiger will turn out to be helpful for identifying a standard of aesthetic appropriateness that could be related to the scope of literary experiences. Such a link between philosophy of literature and phenomenology highlights that phenomenology itself could be a valuable way of approaching literary experiences and literary worlds. For this reason, the possibility of a phenomenology of literature will then be taken into account too.

So, this section poses the question as to whether a standard of appropriateness related to the experience of literary worlds exists. We are wondering whether there is a standard or a parameter readers should comply with and follow in order to experience literary worlds in an *appropriate* way. The more radical issue that underlies this question concerns the meaning of the term "appropriate": we are wondering whether literary experiences could be more or less *adequate* with relation to those literary worlds they are related to. This means that there could be more or less appropriate ways of unfolding literary worlds.

Moritz Geiger's stance plays a pivotal role in such a reflection. He identifies a parameter of appropriateness that enables us to understand which experiences are to be deemed as aesthetic experiences, to comprehend how to have ourselves such experiences and to identify those features that make aesthetic experiences more or less adequate and appropriate. This parameter of appropriateness is Geiger's "das Grundprinzip ästhetischen Erlebens", devised by him in *Vom Dilettantismus im künstlerischen Erleben*:

> nurjenes Erleben ist ästhetisch, das den Werten des Kunstwerkes oder des ästhetischen Gegenstandes seinen Ursprung verdankt […] nur die Außenkonzentration [ist] die spezifisch ästhetische Haltung; nur in ihr wird das Kunstwerk in seinen Werten, in seinen wesentlichen Struktureigentümlichkeiten erfaßt. [...] Nur in Außenkonzentration gibt es überhaupt Sinn, von einem adäquaten ästhetischen Erleben zu reden, einem Erleben, das den Werten des Kunstwerkes gerecht wird. (Geiger, 1928: 5, 15, 17)

External concentration — versus inner concentration — consists in steering the experiences entirely towards the intended object's nature along with its values and traits: «in Außenkonzentration die Werte des Kunstwerkes in uns eindringen und Beglückungen schaffen, prinzipiell verschieden von allen banalen Rausch- und Erregungswirkungen» (Geiger, 1928: 17-18). For example, while staring in wonderment at a beautiful landscape, one chooses whether to focus the attention on the feelings arisen while enjoying the landscape (inner concentration) — that means on his/her innermost sides — or on landscape itself (external concentration) — that means on the external experienced object. In order to grasp the type of concentration at stake, it is enough identifying what we focus on while experiencing the intended object, no matter if it is a portrait or a landscape, a melody or a literary work. If we only focus on the effects [*Wirkungen*] that this object arouses — for example, feelings and emotions — then it is a matter of inner concentration. Contrarily, if we steer our attention primarily towards the values of the object itself (for example, the painting technique of a picture, as Geiger argues), then it is a matter of external concentration. Geiger highlights how sentimentality ("die Sentimentalität"[8]) is the most typical example of inner concentration. And if we let inner concentration prevails, what seems to us significant is the set of feelings we

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[8] Geiger, 1928: 14.

experience rather than "der ästhetische Gegenstand". Geiger draws two main conclusions. Firstly, inner concentration does not make us enjoy art: it merely rests upon enthusiasm [*Begeisterung*]. Secondly, inner concentration lays the foundation for an aesthetics of *effects* [*Wirkungsästhetik*] — instead of an aesthetics of values [*Wertästhetik*][9] — since it rests upon the effects [*Wirkungen*] that the experienced object arouses: «Solcher Wirkungsästhetik stellt sich die Wertästhetik entgegen. Für sie liegt das Zentrum des künstlerischen Prozesses nicht im Aufnehmenden, sondern im Kunstwerk selbst. Das Kunstwerk ist wertvoll in sich, es ist der Träger von Wertmomenten — von Werten der Proportion, der Wiedergabe der Natur usw. — ganz gleichgültig, ob jemand diese Werte aufnimmt oder nicht» (Geiger, 1928: 32).

It is worth noticing that leaving aesthetics of effects on the sidelines does not imply that aesthetic experiences should not entail any kind of effect, any kind of reaction from the subject. This simply implies that we should not substitute effects [*Wirkungen*] for object's values [*Werte*]. More specifically, Geiger distinguishes superficial effects from deep ones («Oberflächen- und Tiefenwirkung der Kunst»[10]). He distinguishes those effects that merely affect the surface of our living — like amusement or delight — from those that affect the innermost sides of our living — like the effects that can upset the observer who is before Rembrandt's portraits. These effects should not and cannot be uprooted: they inherently contribute to the nature of aesthetic experiences. A detailed analysis of this divide lies outside the frame of this research's interest. Nonetheless, the point is whether we overshadow or not object's values to put these effects in the foreground.

So, external concentration enables us to experience objects aesthetically by putting their values in the foreground: within this frame, there are no limits

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[9] According to the aesthetics of values, the unit of measurement of aesthetic experiences is the whole of values that marks off the experienced object. Consequently, the aesthetics of values poses the question as to how our experiences could be more or less adequate to the object itself: «von Adäquatheit des Erlebens läßt sich nur vom Standpunkt der Wertästhetik aus sinnvoll reden, denn hier ist der Wert des Kunstwerks der Maßstab, und das Erleben hat diesem Wert adäquat zu werden, sich ihm anzupassen»[9], and again «nur In Außenkonzentration gibt es überhaupt Sinn, von einem adäquaten ästhetischen Erleben zureden, einem Er- leben, das den Werten des Kunstwerkes gerecht wird» (Geiger, 1928: 33).

[10] Geiger, 1928: 43-66.

to our potential aesthetic experiences. Aesthetics experiences could arise while feeling an emotion, gazing at a person, reading a literary work, working with others, talking to a person, etc. The key to the aesthetic degree of such experiences is our endeavour to *mainly* focus on the object's values and the key to aesthetic appropriateness is our endeavour to *mainly* lean on external concentration. Hence, we could surmise that it is all about *attunement*: in order to carry out aesthetic experiences, we are supposed to carry out *an attunement to the object rather than to ourselves*. This feature could be named *aesthetic attunement*. And *aesthetic appropriateness* proceeds straight from it.

So, Geiger's fundamental principle of aesthetic experience is useful for identifying a standard of *literary* appropriateness. What raises valuable interest about Geiger's stance is that he deals with *ästhetische Haltung*, that is, aesthetic approach, aesthetic attitude: trying to relate "das Grundprinzip ästhetischen Erlebens" to literary experiences means trying to give rise to *appropriate* literary experiences. The appeal to external concentration enables readers to unfold literary worlds in an *appropriate* way.

4.1. *Phenomenology of literature*

Phenomenology turned out to be useful for identifying the standard of aesthetic appropriateness towards literary worlds. This remark is the key to argue that a study area concerning phenomenology and literature could be meaningful (cf. Ciocan, 2008). If phenomenology were related to literary scope, then it seems it is possible to achieve *theoretical*, *attitudinal* and *practical* results that will be now briefly explained: phenomenology of literature is a valuable study area and it fosters noteworthy studies.

Theoretical results concern the identification of literary works' essential traits: as the previous section discussed, every literary work represents a literary world as coordinate system, *Umwelt*, *Welt* and verbal image. It is worth noticing that phenomenology of literature does not imply an effort of *defining* literature. Following Guillen (1985), the attempt to define literature implies literature's death. Surely, Guillen is right. In fact, phenomenology of literature does not aim at defining literature. It aims at identifying "constraints of variance" of literary works: which features make a text a literary work? Which features

essentially characterize literary works and so literary worlds? Trying to answer these questions does not entail an effort of defining literature. Indeed, it entails the effort of identifying the essential traits literature consists of: the difference between these two perspectives is subtle, but deep. This research is deeply examining the topic of literary experience and, in so doing, it is gradually recognizing the essential traits literary works and corresponding literary worlds consist of.

Attitudinal results concern the identification of a general way of experiencing literary works appropriately: as Geiger suggests, this way coincides with *Außenkonzentration*. Additionally, phenomenology provides us with another meaningful remark regarding *attitudinal* suitability. In fact, there is another phenomenological element that is essentially related to an appropriate literary attitude, i.e. phenomenological "epochè". According to Husserl, "epochè" is necessary in order to grasp the essential traits of every phenomenon. Consequently, phenomenological "epochè" is necessary to re-unfold literary worlds in an appropriate way. Husserl employs the term "einklammern" to explain what "epochè" consists in (1913: §32). "Einklammern" means "to, temporarily, put into brackets" what we already know about a phenomenon without deriving it directly from the phenomenon itself. For example, readers of *Pride and Prejudice* could know something about this work thanks to its related movie or a literary textbook. All these data distort and warp readers' experiences since they concern the phenomenon (that is, the literary work) without being directly derived from an experience of it (that is, from reading it). This simply means that such data should be temporarily put into brackets and then, after reading the literary work at issue, taken into account. In literary scope, the application of "epochè" enables readers to have a direct approach towards literary works they are reading. Thanks to phenomenological "epochè" we can discover "new sides of things". Let us imagine to approach a famous picture by putting into brackets all we know about this picture without deriving it from experiencing the picture itself (for example, information derived from art handbooks): thanks to "epochè", we will be able to discover "new sides of the picture" (see new details, pinpointing new aspects, and so on).

Practical results concern the identification of literature's trait of "reality without existence": such a striking feature enables readers to understand that literature can really hold sway over the so-called "real world". This implies that literary works can truly contribute to a transformation of real world: if readers comprehend this potential value of literature, then they will concretely demonstrate that literary worlds can become existing thanks to readers' effort of relating them to "real world". Reading literary works make readers be aware that the so-called "real world" can be actually modified. Next and last section aims at clarifying and explaining this striking trait of literary worlds: reality without existence.

5. Literary Worlds and Real World: Literary Reality and Literary Existence

Literary experience consists in disclosing literary worlds. Imagination as making believe enables readers to unfold these worlds, phantasy as eidetic variation enables readers to acquire knowledge from them. Now, is literature's bearing on real world confined to its cognitive value? That is to say, do literary worlds affect real world only to the extent that readers can derive knowledge from unfolding literary worlds? It does not seem so: by reading *Pride and Prejudice*, thanks to imagination we unfold Elizabeth's and Darcy's literary world, thanks to free phantasy we gain knowledge about pride's and prejudice's essence. Now, a third element seems to be missing. In fact, it seems that literary influence over real world broadly exceeds the levels of knowledge we can acquire from literary worlds. Specifically, it seems that literary worlds affect readers' *way of inhabiting* real world, regardless of the knowledge readers can derive by unfolding them. Hence, this section aims at combing trough and reflecting upon such a striking impression: beyond heuristic and cognitive value, literary worlds seem to be endowed with a deeper and radical value that directly affects real world and readers' way of inhabiting it.

If literary worlds can actually affect readers' position in real world, then they should be endowed with a trademark that makes this influence possible. This trademark seems to be their "reality without existence": literary worlds are per se real and potentially existing. This means that literary works display worlds that, regardless of every possible act of reading, are *real*; nevertheless, they can

become *existing* only through reader's efforts. What does literary worlds' reality consist in? What does literary worlds' existence consist in? How are they linked together? This section argues for a thesis concerning literary reality - existence and tries to answer these questions accordingly.

Now, if we focus on literary worlds' nature, then we can describe literary worlds as *real* worlds: while unfolding literary worlds, readers feel like they are facing something strongly real, although it does not exist. It is a reality that fascinates without subjugating as reality itself does (Ingarden, 1972: §63; cf. Voltolini, 2010: 142-143). It is not a matter of quantitative differences, that is to say, of acknowledging that literary worlds are less real then real world. It's a matter of qualitative differences: literary worlds are somehow real, but this reality seems to be different from real world's reality. "Real" seems to be a quality typical of what readers turn their attention to while reading, i.e. literary worlds. Which traits does literary reality rely on? It seems it rests on three features: human perspective's role, verbal independence of readers and literary worlds' link with real word. These traits will be now examined, but it is worth noticing that the third one explains what literary works' existence consists in and, in so doing, the link between literary worlds' existence and literary worlds' reality comes to light.

Firstly, no matter how literary worlds could be or seem far from real world, they inevitably mirror a human perspective: they arise from a human perspective, the author's one. It is not possible for humans to adopt a non-human perspective towards the so-called "real world". This feature pick up on by Pavel (2006) and Calvino (1998) makes literary worlds *real*, although they do not exist: this means that these worlds do not exist in *Lebenswelt*[11], but they are real since each of them is *Lebenswelt* too and by necessity. While reading a literary work, we do not expect to encounter their characters or their described circumstances in real world: surely, literary characters, along with their feelings, emotions, descriptions, events, circumstances, situations, do not exist in *Lebenswelt*, but, at the same time, characters', feelings', emotions', descriptions', events', circumstances', situations' world is *Lebenswelt* too: this is literary worlds'

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[11] The term "Lebenswelt" is used following Husserl's standpoint (Husserl, 1913: §27).

reality. The world we live in is *Lebenswelt*: similarly, literary worlds are themselves instances of *Lebenswelt*.

Secondly, reality of literary worlds is closely related to their verbal independence. Literary worlds' verbal independence relies on the non-identity between visual and verbal images: authors' visual images and readers' verbal images do not coincide. This entails that readers device verbal images that are different from those of authors and other readers. Once a literary work is written, it exists as an independent verbal entity, i.e. as a set of words that represents a literary world: it consists of those words the author chose in order to translate her visual image into words. Regardless of any possible act of reading, it seems that this set of words represents a literary world anyway: if this world were unfolded by readers, then verbal images would arise, but the literary world at issue seems to be endowed with a verbal independence of readers. Consequently, the verbal independence's issue is not confined to the non-identity between visual and verbal images: literary works' verbal independence also relies on literary worlds' independence of every subjective act.

Such a verbal independence characterises literary works and the worlds they represent, although in every literary work there are "undetermined points" that can be filled only by subjective acts. The existence of these "undetermined points" has been clearly highlighted by Roman Ingarden (1972). According to him, in every literary work there are "undetermined points" — he named them "Unbestimmtheitsstellen" — that need to be filled by subjective acts: firstly by the author, secondly by readers (Ingarden, 1972: §38). For example, if the author describes a person as an old and skilled man, then the author herself and every hypothetical reader will have to fill some undetermined points, that is to say, will have to think of this man as a person with two arms, two legs, one head, and so on. This completion is as inevitable as unaware: if we do not recognize it, we would not faithfully describe the experience of reading literary works. However, this unquestionable issue is not the reason why this paragraph deals with undetermined points: in fact, literary worlds' verbal independence is at stake. According to Ingarden, the existence of "undetermined points" leads us to claim that literary works are per se incomplete and so, if they were not filled by subjective acts, then they would be like an incomplete skeleton

(Bertoni, 2010: 81), like a human body lacking flesh. Ingarden's thesis seems to be weak: surely, the existence of "undetermined points" is undeniable, removable only through subjective acts and necessary (if the author specified each of these points, her act of writing would be endless as well as the literary work would be unreadable). However, once a literary world is unfolded by the author through her writing, then all the "undetermined points" of this literary work are already filled by the author: from authors' viewpoint, their own literary worlds are devoid of "undetermined points". So, even before every possible act of reading, literary work's "Unbestimmtheitsstellen" are already filled by the author. When someone reads this literary work, then its "Unbestimmtheitsstellen" will be filled also by the reader at issue. So, it seems that the existence of undetermined points is not enough to argue for literary works' dependence on subjective acts: if there were a literary work anyone has not read yet, then it would carry on being a literary work and representing a literary world: it would not be an incomplete skeleton. Surely, a huge difference lasts between literary works never read and literary works that are or were read. The point is that no literary work could loose its status of "literary work" since the world it unfolds is independent of every possible act of reading. Surely, literary worlds call for readers' re-unfolding, but readers give rise to verbal images different from authors' visual images and, furthermore, in order for a literary work to represent a literary world, authors' act of unfolding the literary world at issue is enough.

Thirdly, literary reality relies on the impact literary worlds can have on real world. Literary worlds enable readers to conceive real world as a changeable and variable world: literature affects reality insofar as literary worlds make readers aware of this changeability. Thus, literary works can actually contribute to a transformation of real world, but only if readers aim for this. If they understand this potential value of literature, then their actions will concretely demonstrate that literary worlds can become *existing* thanks to readers' efforts of relating them to reality. Literary worlds become existing insofar as they bear on readers' way of inhabiting real world: readers are able to relate literary worlds — already *real* — to the world they inhabit and such a nexus transforms these literary worlds into *existing* worlds. Literary existence rests on literary worlds'

possible influence over real world: such an influence takes place if and only if readers relate literary worlds to real world. It seems that readers can relate literary worlds to real world in two and interwoven ways: on the one hand, they can reflect upon literary worlds and so reach different levels of knowledge — as the section concerning phantasy has already pointed out — on the other hand, they can let their own ways of inhabiting real world be influenced by literary worlds and, in so doing, they become aware that real world can be actually changed and modified. This second way needs to be better explained.

Every literary work can affect and influence readers' position in real world since every literary world *represents* a different — but human — perspective towards real world. Literary worlds are not self-referential, they always display *new ways of inhabiting real world* and so reading a literary work can influence our own way of inhabiting real world and acting in it. This newness we discover every time we read a literary work points out a remarkable issue: every literary work shows and displays a different perspective towards real world. Nonetheless, this perspective is human by necessity and so it shows how the world we live in is deeply changeable: literary worlds enable readers to consider real world from perspectives different from every readers' own perspective. This multiplicity of perspectives — which are, at the same time, different from one another but human by necessity — discloses newness and so allows readers to discover new ways of inhabiting real world. The awareness that there are different ways of inhabiting real world, different ways of acting in it, different ways of facing life, etc., leads readers to realize that real world is inherently changeable: the awareness of an endless multiplicity of different, but human, perspectives towards real world helps us to realize real world's changeability. As long as literary worlds cannot avoid mirroring a human perspective, readers can be deeply influenced by them: literary works represent literary worlds as verbal images, that is to say, coordinate systems that ensue from a human perspective by necessity. As Calvino pointed out, this last feature is an impassable frontier:

> Think what it would be to have a work conceived from outside the *self*, a work that would let us escape the limited perspective of the individual ego, not only to enter into selves like our own but to give speech to that which has no language, to the bird

perching on the edge of the gutter, to the three in spring and the three in fall, to stone, to cement, to plastic… (Calvino, 1988: 124).

This inevitability is the sole literary feature that enables readers to become aware of *new ways of inhabiting real world*. This means that literature's bearing on real world broadly *rests on* knowledge readers can acquire from them and, at the same time, *exceeds* it. It is a matter of letting one's own way of inhabiting real world be influenced by literary works and corresponding literary worlds. Influence's ways are endless, but each of them relies on imagination's heuristic value and phantasy's cognitive value: imagination enables readers to disclose new dimensions of reality as well as phantasy enables readers to acquire from literary worlds a kind of knowledge that is related to real world too. This means that novels, poems, tales and other literary genre[12] are means by which readers discover newness: the link between literary worlds and real world always reveals something new. Kids usually lose their enthusiasm for things when the sense of newness wears off: literary worlds cannot bore readers indeed. Writer's style or plot can bore readers, but literary worlds themselves always unveil something new about real world and especially *new ways of inhabiting real world*: new ways of turning to reality, of comprehending feelings' and emotions' nature, of figuring problems out, of facing events, of understanding others' behaviour, of reflecting upon a topic that is exemplified in the text, and so forth. All these different ways are disclosed by imagination's heuristic value that enables us to discover new dimensions of reality and to act accordingly. Thanks to phantasy these new dimensions of reality are then related to real world: a link between literary worlds and real world takes shape and is nourished by readers.

Literary worlds' *reality without existence* has led us to grasp the nexus between literary works and readers' position in real world. Literary worlds can influence readers' way of inhabiting real world: this means that there is a deep linkage between text and readers' acting. Hence, Ricoeur's analysis in *Du texte a l'action* turns out to be very interesting since he links together these two items. Specifically, he maintains that text is a «bon paradigme» for human action and

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[12] «The abandonment of distinctions of species in the face of demands for universally desired qualities is one of the most interesting events in modern literary history […] Objectivity, subjectivity, sincerity, insincerity, inspiration, imagination – these can be looked for and praised or blamed whether an author is writing comedy, tragedy, epic, satire or lyric» (Booth, 1983: 35, 36).

action is a «bon référent» for texts (Ricoeur, 1986: 175): his argument is relevant to the current thesis since he provides us with more means of understanding the link between literary worlds and real world. Firstly, he claims that «agir signifie avant tout opérer un changement dans le monde» (1986: 172). Secondly, he claims that actions are quasi-texts. In fact, just like texts, actions gradually become something else from their author until they end up being entirely set apart: «[l'action humaine] est extériorisée d'une manière comparable à la fixation caractéristique de l'écriture» (Ricoeur, 1986: 175). Furthermore, actions and texts leave observable traces that become independent of their authors and so actions and texts themselves become autonomous. Ultimately, actions' and texts' influence is not confined to the original context where they were originated: «l'action, comme un texte, est une œuvre ouverte, addressee à une suite indefinite de "lecteurs" possibles» (Ricoeur, 1986: 175).

Literary worlds are per se *real* and potentially *existing*: when reading literary works, we re-unfold worlds that were originally unfolded by authors. Literary worlds are strongly *real*, potentially *existing* and *possible* to be imagined: they demand to be turned to appropriately, provide readers with coordinates that enable them to imagine and are closely related to real world since they refer to and represent *Lebenswelt* by necessity. We have now all the means by which we can realize that literature can really affect real world: the link between literary worlds and real world needs readers to be carried out. If this link were not carried out, literary worlds would carry on being real, without being existing. Imagination enables us to unfold literary worlds and so to discover literary reality, whereas phantasy enables us to relate literary worlds to real world and so to transform this reality into existence.

Concluding Remarks

The distinction between literary reality and literary existence is the key to comprehension of this research's subtitle: *Imagination's Bearing on Literary Reality and Phantasy's Bearing on Literary Existence*. By appeal to imagination as making believe we can explore literary worlds — i.e. re-unfolding them — whereas by appeal to phantasy as *freie Phantasie* we can reflect upon literary worlds, acquire knowledge from them and so tether literary worlds to the world we inhabit: this

nexus transforms literary reality into literary existence. Literary worlds' reality is related to their verbal independence, to their potential influence over readers' position in real world and to their unavoidable link with a human perspective. Literary worlds are real independently of readers, whereas they can become existing thanks to readers who relate them to real world: literary worlds disclose new ways of inhabiting real word and such a newness can have a great impact on readers' position in real world. Literary worlds are per se real and potentially existing: this thesis was the peak of a research that aimed at describing literary experience and, so, literary worlds. Such a purpose turned out to be so knotty and awkward that only an extended analysis managed to unscramble and disentangle it.

This research's core as well as its starting point was literary experience itself. While reading literary works, we imagine literary worlds and, possibly, we spontaneously give rise to visual sketches related to these worlds, which literary works represent. Our ordinary and common literary experiences are inherently related to experiencing literary worlds. A reflection upon literary worlds' nature enabled us to understand the roles that visualization, phantasy and imagination play in literary experiences. Literature's cognitive and heuristic values came so to light as well as the dynamic between visual and verbal images: authors translate their visual images into words and every reader that reads these words will deceive different verbal images. Every discussed thesis and every theoretical proposal turned to a thick nexus and a reciprocal influence between literary worlds and real world: literary worlds are per se real and potentially existing. Literary worlds deeply affect our lives in the real world: we acquire knowledge from them, we discover new worlds through them, we feel emotions while unfolding them, we are affected by them. The more we try to unfold them in an *appropriate* way, the more we explore them deeply and, in so doing, strengthen the link between them and the world we are suck into. We can transform literary worlds into existing worlds if and only if we primarily grasp their reality: firstly, imagination enables us to disclose and unfold literary worlds; secondly, phantasy enables us to acquire knowledge from them; thirdly, we lean on both imagination's and phantasy's values in order to relate literary worlds to real world. Literary worlds are amazing real worlds that readers can transform into

existing worlds thanks to imagination's heuristic value and phantasy's cognitive value.

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