Magnifying the Mirror and the Lamp: A Critical Reconsideration of the Abramsian Poetical Model and its Contribution to the Research on Modern Dutch Literature

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Abstract

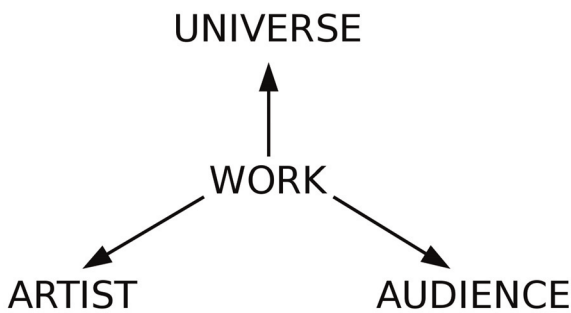
Ever since its publication in 1953, M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* has been one of the most influential studies in the field of literary criticism and theory. The development of Dutch literary studies in particular would be hardly understandable without Abrams's account of critical theory and more specifically without his classification of literary theories into four main classes – that of the mimetic, pragmatic, expressive and objective theories. This article seeks to critically consider both Abrams's theses and their influence on the research in the field of Dutch literature. It will do so by investigating the presuppositions motivating Abrams's classification. The hypothesis will be that both Abrams himself and his followers wrongly emphasized the analytic philosophical neutrality of this poetical model and mistakenly applied this model to post-romantic literature. It will be argued that this application fails because the shift, around 1800, from mimetic to expressive theories highlighted by Abrams is followed by a more remarkable shift from an Aristotelian view of literature – to which the four classes of theories belong – to what one might call a hermeneutic one. In a nutshell, it could be said that the shift from an Aristotelian to a hermeneutic view entailed a shift from 'truth' to 'meaning'. The latter was already taking shape in romanticism but was only fully realized subsequently. It is this shift that complicates or maybe even disqualifies the poetical model for contemporary criticism.

Keywords: M.H. Abrams, Literary Theory, Literary Criticism, Poetics, Romanticism, Metaphysics, Truth, Hermeneutics

Mapping the Field

M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* (Oxford, 1953) is one of those rare books that became a classic as soon as it was published. Reviewers at that time praised Abrams's work on romantic theory and the critical tradition as a book of 'no doubt lasting significance',[2] 'invaluable for students of the romantic movement and indeed of the whole theory of criticism'[3] and promptly ranked it amongst the renowned works of Irving Babbit and Arthur Lovejoy.[4] Hardly five years after its publication, Lewis Leary's *Contemporary Literary Scholarship: A Critical Review* mentions Abrams's book as 'one of the five works published within the last thirty years which in the opinion of representative scholars and critics have contributed to the understanding of literature'.[5] The highly favourable review of Abrams's book by the influential literary critic René Wellek no doubt helped to consolidate its instant status as a classic. Although Wellek was rather critical of Abrams's almost exclusive attention to English literary history, he expresses his admiration in no uncertain terms: 'Mr. Abrams provides the best discussion I know of the theories of poetic diction'.[6]

The classic potential of *The Mirror and the Lamp* is certainly also related to the fact that it provided an appealing model for understanding the whole complex of literary theory and criticism. The author managed to map the field of literary criticism in such a way that it *made sense*. Despite the complex and organic nature of this area, Abrams made a reasonable case for the existence of an underlying grid explaining the differences and similarities of all critical theories. Pointing to what he calls the 'co-ordinates of art criticism',[7] Abrams provided a handy tool for dissecting the intangible research object of literary criticism. In addition, he provided the handiest tool one could wish for, a visual scheme:



This well-known scheme distinguishes four elements that make up 'the total situation of a work of art'[8] and is introduced by Abrams in the following way: 'On this framework [...] I wish to spread out various theories for comparison. To

emphasize the artificiality of the device, and at the same make it easier to visualize the analyses, let us arrange the four coordinates in a pattern.'[9] Although Abrams underlines the artificiality of his scheme, he nevertheless clearly indicates that he believes it to be representative of and validated by reality. This analytic scheme, Abrams argues, 'avoids imposing its own philosophy, by utilizing those key distinctions which are already common to the largest possible number of theories to be compared, and [will be applied] warily, in constant readiness to introduce such further distinctions as seem to be needed for the purpose at hand'.[10] The artificiality of this scheme is thus a mere result of its coarsely-woven grid. Its scientific-theoretical claim, however, lies not so much in giving an idiosyncratic interpretation as a neutral description of the finely woven reality of art and art criticism. In this description, Abrams used the dissection of the four main elements in artistic practice as a basis for discriminating four 'broad classes' of theories of what literature is or should be: the *mimetic*, *pragmatic*, *expressive* and *objective* theories. Although any reasonable theory takes into account all four elements, as Abrams adds, these classes of theories can be distinguished by their emphasis on one of these elements – subsequently on the universe, audience, artist and work. In other words, it is from one of these elements in particular that the distinctive theories derive their main categories for defining and analyzing the work of art.

As is the case with every insightful theoretical model, the general applicability of Abrams's poetic model destined it to assume a life of its own.[11] In the United States, Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* became a standard work in literary studies and his scheme of four poetical theories has been adopted in many anthologies of criticism as well as, for instance, in James Kinneavy's influential *Theory of Discourse*.[12] This canonization of the poetical model in both the educational system and critical practice contributed to the fact that it became something of an unowned *paradigm*, resonating amongst his contemporaries and freely expressed and adopted by later generations. This is not to say that Abrams's ideas did not cause debate. In the Unites States the main stake of these debates was the wish for objectivity and validity. The fact that twentieth-century criticism was a kind of methodological Babel annoyed most critics and prompted them to find basic principles that could be used to tell good from bad literary criticism. Abrams's view on the critical tradition gave rise to the question whether a critical pluralism would be compatible with objectivity.[13] Whereas the New Critics tended to take the view that reading the literary text as an isolated system of norms was the only way to come to a viable theory, others, especially the so-called late Chicago Critics, argued, with Abrams, in favour of a more pluralistic view, stating that different theories can have their own critical validity.

Although argued on a theoretically less fundamental level, the quest for basic principles of literary criticism also determined twentieth-century debates in the field of Dutch literary theory and criticism. Here the question was not so much whether basic principles could be determined at all, but rather what these basic

principles could be. The introduction of Abrams's poetical model into this debate is particularly due to the efforts of one person: A.L. Sötemann, full professor of Dutch literature at Utrecht University during the 1970s and 1980s. His ideas became remarkably widespread, witness the fact that the vast majority of full professors of modern Dutch literature in the Netherlands during the 1980s and 1990s were former PhD students of his.[14] Although not all his former students subscribed to Sötemann's ideas, one may well say that these ideas formed the evident horizon against which this generation developed its own views. In this horizon, Abrams's distinction of four classes of poetical theories played a pivotal role. This role had gradually taken shape in Sötemann's own writings. Driven by a deep-rooted desire to categorize poetical works without renouncing their singularity and by the academic requirement of objectivity, he spent his career comparing, clustering and re-clustering different kinds of poetics. As for the American critics of the mid-twentieth century, Sötemann saw the main problem of academic research on literature as the lack of clear-cut demarcation lines, both historical and poetical. The fact that theorists could come up with – and indeed did come up with – different demarcations of, for instance, romantic poetry, proved to him the annoying reality of the field's potentially insurmountable subjectivity.[15]

In his quest for indisputable general characteristics, Abrams's distinction of four classes of poetic theories proved to be extremely helpful to Sötemann. After attempting, in his early essays, to make a distinction between two 'traditions' or 'categories' in European poetry – the symbolic and romantic – Abrams's model allowed him to make a further differentiation that accounted for still unexplained similarities and differences. Sötemann, however, did not adopt Abrams's model as such. To begin with, he provided his own terms for the four theories of poetry. Instead of, or actually in addition to, a mimetic, pragmatic, expressive and objective theory, Sötemann refers to realistic, classicistic, romantic and symbolic theories.[16] The fact that he, along with other scholars, quickly adopted the poetical model without further reference to Abrams, contributed to the impression that it reflected a paradigmatic set of ideas rather that the particular view of one person. Sötemann's adoption, however, also implied a fundamental adaptation of this set of ideas. As indicated by Abrams in the first pages of his book, the distinction between the four coordinates – universe, audience, artist and work – serves to outline the historical evolution of art theory. 'The intention of this book', Abrams states, 'is to *chronicle the evolution*'[17] of contemporary art theory. Whereas Abrams intends to sketch the main historical shifts in European thinking about poetry, Sötemann nevertheless argues that 'in principle these four categories *have very little to do with periods in literary history*, but that, at least in more recent times, they *coexist*'.[18] Sötemann thus wishes to adopt Abrams's pattern as an *a-historical* pattern, according to which 'it is no longer necessary to draw *temporal* boundaries', instead of an historical one. Sötemann therefore concludes, not without some relief, that 'Jane Austen may hold her mimetic or realist convictions, next to her

expressive or romantic contemporaries Coleridge and Wordsworth'.[19] In other words: a great number of 'period problems' that had troubled Sötemann throughout his career just happened to 'disappear'[20] when taking an a-historical instead of an historical stance.

In the version of the poetical model that gained following among researchers on Dutch literature within the 1980s and 1990s, Abrams's co-ordinates of the historical landscape of art criticism therefore became a kind of sample sheet, displaying all the possible colours a single poem or artist's poetics could take, and allowing them to be compared both diachronically and with contemporaries. Moreover, by contrast with the reception in the United States – that lingered over the question whether objective demarcation lines could exist within art criticism – the de-historicized version of Abrams's model stimulated more easily the expectation of such an objective demarcation. One of the clearest descriptions of this so-called 'compartmentalized' model is given by Willem Glaudemans, one of Sötemann's former students:

> Following Sötemann one can distinguish in modern literature, that is from around 1850 till today, four 'big' poetics that exist *next to* each other: the symbolic (autonomist), romantic (expressive), realistic (mimetic), and classicist (pragmatic) poetics. He conceives of these poetics as existing diachronically and finds them unsuited as conceptual indication for historical periods. They can, however, be used as an indication for the poetics of individual authors. The four poetical systems are visualized as vertical pillars in relation to which individual poets are located.[21]

Although this distinction of 'four big poetics' was widely adopted, Dutch-speaking scholars did not accept the poetical model without debate. From the outset it was considered somewhat oversimplified and most scholars aimed at refining it. For example, in their article 'Poetics and Literary History', Dorleijn and Van den Akker (two former students of Abrams and newly appointed professors in modern Dutch literature) quite viciously attacked this model, finding it 'too coarsely-woven, too much focused on similarities, too little aware of differences especially concerning the literary texts themselves and hardly useful for an adequate description of prose'.[22] 'But is it useless?' they ask themselves in the end. 'Not at all. This model of poetics can serve very well as an instrument for characterization. It gives us something to hold onto and which can form the point of departure from which we can make the necessary differentiations.'[23] Their answer has proved to be exemplary for a great deal of research into Dutch literature since the 1980s: although practically no researcher fully agreed with it, the poetical model was nevertheless broadly taken as a useful theoretical point of departure. In the research into Dutch literature one can therefore find many studies expressing discomfort with the simplicity of the model – incidentally, often without referring

any longer to Abrams or Sötemann – calling for a less rigid[24] or less normative use of it,[25] for new emphases,[26] or even for further simplification.[27] Nonetheless, the analytic fourfold of, roughly, objective, pragmatic, expressive and mimetic poetics was taken as a starting point for further analysis. And in many cases it still is. Even though in the meantime both Abrams's and Sötemann's influential companions made way to other theories and perspectives, the slumbering presence of the poetical model can still be discerned in a number of more recent publications on modern literature.[28]

Because the poetical model illustrated by Abrams's version has left such an important mark on both international and Dutch theory and criticism, a reading of its primal text is important. Also, the Dutch (i.e. Sötemannian) adaptation of Abrams's view on poetic theories deserves a critical questioning of its basic assumptions, not in the least because its a-historical perspective seems to undermine what I take to be Abrams's central thesis, namely that what is generally called romanticism constitutes a *categorical* break within the critical tradition.[29] That is, although to date all four coordinates can be discerned, Abrams seems to take the view that mimetic and pragmatic theories in the strict sense have been displaced once and for all by romanticism. The basic theses of Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* are not always clear, however, and it is partly due to this lack of clarity that his classic study could give rise to a set of ideas that undermine his central thesis. Almost sixty years after its groundbreaking publication, we can stand back and reconsider the basic assumptions of this poetical model. Such reconsideration seems particularly useful today. Within the current decade, renewed attempts have been made to understand the functioning of literary works within the world. As we will see, it seems however as if the heritage of the poetical model faces contemporary theorists with the pressing difficulty of grasping theoretically literature that is both 'objective' (in Abrams's sense) or 'autonomist' (in Sötemann's sense) and socially relevant. Before jumping to the present, let us revert to *The Mirror and the Lamp*.

Refreshing Our Memory

Like his contemporaries, Abrams was quite aware of the potentially insurmountable subjectivity of art theory and starts the introduction to his study by saying that the object of art history and art criticism is essentially 'wavering' and even 'phantasmal'. As far as art or literature is concerned, there are, in his view, no 'matters of fact'.[30] His aim is therefore 'not to establish correlations between facts, [...] but to establish principles enabling us to justify, order, and classify our interpretation'. While establishing these principles, one should therefore be as modest as possible, he states. As we have seen, this modesty lies in avoiding any idiosyncratic interpretation that 'impos[es] its own philosophy'.[31] Instead of imposing a certain philosophical vocabulary that unduly distorts the subject matter,

one should apply 'those key distinctions which are already common to the largest possible number of theories'.[32] Those distinctions, Abrams suggests, boil down to the artist-work-audience-universe-framework that served as the basis for the influential distinction between expressive, objective, pragmatic and mimetic poetical theories.

One of the first things one might ask oneself is whether this analytic scheme indeed avoids imposing its own philosophy, as Abrams and his followers claim. Although the scheme is presented by Abrams as a transparent description, as it were, of the principal alternate theories in literary history, it is precisely the claim of transparency and neutrality that reveals a tacit philosophical presupposition of *what art is*. That is, according to this analytical scheme, art is first of all conceived of as a form of communication, following the standard Jakobsonian transmission model of communication including a sender, message, receiver and context. Although Abrams certainly makes a reasonable case for the relevance of this communication model for European poetry from its Greek origins until the romantics, it is highly doubtful whether twentieth- and twenty-first-century thinking about art still fits this model. The fact that he stresses that since the romantic period, art has generally been seen as an end in itself instead of a communicative means to a communicative end does not alter the fact that this conception results from the same communicational model, since Abrams situates this view *within* the very coordinates of this model, in the category of the 'objective' theories.[33]

As we will see, it is in particular the claim of truth implied in this communication model of art that seems to go against many late twentieth- and twenty-first century views on art. One could of course object that it was never Abrams's explicit intention to include post-romantic views within his model. After all, *The Mirror and the Lamp* aims at providing an overview of the critical tradition *up to and including* the romantic period and was published as early as 1953. Several hints at contemporary critical movements like New Criticism make it very likely that Abrams nevertheless sought to construct a model that could incorporate future poetical views. This assumption is verified, for instance, by the lengthy encyclopaedic entry in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1993), in which Abrams uncritically resumes his analysis on 'Western theories of poetry'.[34] Abrams's claim that the four coordinates provided by his model together make up 'the total situation of a work of art'[35] equally suggests that this model was designed to incorporate all possible poetic theories. The widespread tendency to use the poetical model as an instrument to categorize both past and contemporary and even future poetics is therefore instigated by Abrams himself.

It is, however, important to underline that the main concern, not only in *The Mirror and the Lamp* but in Abrams's work in general, is first and foremost historical. No doubt slightly stunned by the overwhelming predominance, amongst contemporaries like René Wellek and Austin Warren, F.R. Leavis and Cleanth Brooks, of the so-called objective view on literature, Abrams set himself the task of de-

monstrating that '[a]s an all-inclusive approach to poetry, the objective orientation was just beginning to emerge in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century'.[36] Abrams wanted to refresh our historical memory, not only to retrace the sources of the objective orientation, but also to reveal its relative contingency. '[I]t is only when we compare one critical analysis with an analysis of the same work by another critic', he states in a 1974 essay, 'that we recognize how much the evocation of particular aesthetic aspects is the result of a critic's deployment of linguistic devices for classifying and cross-classifying things in any number of distinctive, unpredictable, and illuminating ways'.[37] The conspicuous 'objective' tendency to focus on single works or passages for close critical reading, Abrams concludes, 'is in this respect misleading': it does not show a truer or more sincere orientation on literature, but is simply the result of a specific historical constellation of ideas and events.

For these objective theories to arise in their present form, it is one historical constellation in particular that was decisive according to Abrams: the specific cluster of intuitions, ideas and literary practice that is generally known as 'romanticism'.[38] For Abrams, romantic theory marked what one might call *the* paradigm shift in thinking about literature that can be most revealing when investigated in detail. Ten out of the eleven chapters of *The Mirror and the Lamp* are therefore devoted to romantic theory, meticulously unravelling poetic texts, their underlying assumptions and the metaphors used. It is at the level of these metaphors that Abrams finally describes the shift to romanticism as a shift from the view on poetry as a 'mirror' to the view on poetry as a 'lamp': that is, as a shift from the chiefly classical view on poetry as reflecting reality to the idea of poetry as a projector, as a source emitting light and bringing reality to the fore.[39] When reconsidering the value of the poetical model, the exact role of this shift is important, for the extensive attention given by Abrams to this paradigm shift (that marks the shift from 'mimetic' to 'expressive' theories) tends to overrule the quadrilateral pattern presented in his introduction.

As Abrams stated in the introduction to his book, this pattern of four orientations should reveal the historic progression of literary criticism:

> [b]y and large, the historic progression, from the beginning through the early nineteenth century, has been from the mimetic theory of Plato and (in a qualified fashion) of Aristotle, through the pragmatic theory, lasting from the conflation of rhetoric with poetic in the Hellenistic and Roman era almost through the eighteenth century, to the expressive theory of English (and somewhat earlier, German) romantic criticism.[40]

Yet, in the remainder of the book these four historical coordinates seem to appear in a largely bipolar field, marked by the decisive break between classical and romantic thinking. This break marks the shift from the work to the artist as the core

of poetical thinking, as is indeed clearly stated in Abrams's mission statement in the first paragraph of his book: 'The intention of this book is to chronicle the evolution and (in the early nineteenth century) the triumph, in its diverse forms, of this radical shift to the artist in the alignment of aesthetic thinking'.[41] This is no doubt the reason why mimetic and pragmatic theories have been largely absent in research into Dutch literature that developed in the immediate wake of Abrams's study, as his former students Van den Akker and Dorleijn describe in their 1991 'state of the art' of Dutch academic research on literature.[42] Of course Abrams's almost exclusive attention for the 'romantic shift' is partly motivated by didactical reasons. After all, as we saw earlier, in his view it is this shift that enabled contemporary theories to arise. But there is another reason why the quadrilateral pattern seems to collapse as Abrams's analysis unfolds, not only into a bipolar model but, more fundamentally, into a *univocal* one; that is, into a model whose elements all express one single idea. Before examining this idea, let us first recapitulate the differences between the four critical theories distinguished by Abrams.

The mimetic theories, firstly, focus mainly on the element of the 'universe' and derive their principal categories for defining poetry from the notion of mimesis, i.e. imitation. According to Abrams, these are essentially classical critical theories. He points out that, although the ideas about the kind of objects in the universe that art should imitate vary widely, the very idea of art as imitation of the universe was at that time beyond doubt.[43] However, even amongst classical critics, the idea of art as imitation led to almost opposite outcomes. Whereas for Plato it proved the derivative, misleading and superfluous nature of poetry, Aristotle developed a more refined notion of mimesis, where poetry gained the exclusive power of imitating the essence or truth of the universe. Secondly, the pragmatic theories place the audience at the heart of their view on what art should be. Although still considered as an imitation of the universe, poetry was expected to be an imitation 'instrumental toward producing effects upon an audience'.[44] The great classical example of this point of view is Horace, who in his *Ars Poetica* stressed that poetry had to both please and instruct.[45] With the expressive theories, thirdly, we enter the romantic period, where the emphasis shifted more and more to the artist himself, 'to the poet's natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity'.[46] According to Abrams, in contrast to both the mimetic and pragmatic view, the poetic work, in this approach, 'ceased to be regarded as primarily a reflection of nature, actual or improved; the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the reader insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself'.[47] The objective theories, finally, set themselves apart from the three previous orientations because they consider the work of art not in relation to its constitutive external elements, but 'in isolation from all these external points of reference, [...] as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations'.[48] It is this last type of theories that most scholars in

Dutch literature started to refer to as the 'autonomist' poetics, thereby further underlining the work's independence from the other coordinates.

Although the differences between these four classes of critical theories are insightful and sometimes telling, upon closer examination of Abrams's analyses it is difficult to avoid the impression that the similarities are far more noticeable than the differences. These similarities are mainly due to the fact that all four theories turn out to spring from the same source: Aristotle's *Poetics*. In the case of all four of his theories, Abrams is therefore compelled to refer to Aristotle. 'Such is the flexibility of Aristotle's procedure', he concludes somewhat apologetically: 'after he [Aristotle] has isolated the species "tragedy", and established its relation to the universe as an imitation of a certain kind of action, and to the audience through its observed effect of purging pity and fear, his method becomes centripetal, and assimilates these external elements into attributes of the work proper.'[49] Although Abrams has chosen to categorize Aristotle's theory of art under the sole heading of the mimetic theories (because, he states, the Greek philosopher 'makes frequent reference back to the concept of imitation'[50]), he is quite aware of its wider importance, since he suggests that '[a] history of criticism could be written *solely* on the basis of successive interpretations of salient passages from Aristotle's poetics'.[51] Abrams fails, however, to draw the obvious conclusion, namely that, with *The Mirror and the Lamp*, he *did* indeed write a history of criticism solely on the basis of Aristotle's *Poetics*. To put it more precisely, the successive passages of a variety of authors categorized within the four classes are all interpreted by Abrams against the background of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

And in my opinion rightly so. One can reasonably argue that all four poetic theories of art as explained by Abrams function within an Aristotelian paradigm. The central idea of Aristotelian poetics is the idea of poetry as an expression of truth. On the basis of Abrams's meticulous readings of a large number of poetical and critical texts, one could say that these four poetic theories share the idea that art should transmit a truth, varying of course in their view of the nature of this truth and the way it could best be transmitted. According to the 'mimetic' orientation, it was especially the eternal truth of the cosmos that was supposed to be transmitted by means of a meticulously described set of poetic rules; the 'pragmatic' orientation focused particularly on a moral truth and assumed it would best be transmitted by pleasing and moving poetry; the 'expressive' orientation wanted to confront the sheer mechanical truth of science with the more genuine and animated truth of nature and saw spontaneous creativity as the optimal means of transmission; finally, the 'objective' orientation regarded truth as being something whole and self-sufficient, which could be best transmitted in an equally whole and self-sufficient poetic work. As we shall see, the objective orientation plays a somewhat ambiguous role in this respect. This is due to Abrams's occasional excursions outside the timeframe set in *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Although he intends to chronicle the evolution of poetic theories up to and in-

cluding romanticism – an evolution that progresses on an Aristotelian grid – Abrams occasionally refers to post-romantic contemporary art criticism, no doubt because these critics are his main interlocutors.

For Abrams himself, stepping outside his analytic timeframe caused no real difficulty, because he claims that all four orientations – including the objective one – are part of the general poetic orientation on the transmission of truth. In the end, this Aristotelian paradigm thus appears to be the tacit philosophy underlying the communicational scheme proposed by Abrams, a philosophy that can indeed almost pass as philosophically neutral since it is 'already common to the largest possible number of theories'.[52] Since differences are sometimes more interesting and insightful than similarities, one could say that Abrams has chosen to devote himself to mapping these differences exhaustively, by classifying and explaining them. Given the task he set himself, namely to reveal the historical development of critical theory up to and including romanticism, this choice is perfectly defensible. Yet, when extrapolating this analysis to present criticism, losing sight of the univocal grid underlying these differences becomes problematic. A reading of German romanticism in particular may show that the decisive change prepared in romanticism is maybe not so much the shift from a mimetic to an expressive orientation, as a break with the Aristotelian view on literature.[53] It is this break that places post-romantic 'objective' poetic theory *strictu sensu* outside the Aristotelian truth-model. However, the poetical model has been generally applied to 'objective' contemporary literature and poetics, not only – generally speaking – by Abrams himself but, as a result of Sötemann's mediation, also by most of his followers within the field of Dutch literature. In the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent in Belgium, the poetical model was mainly adopted by scholars of modern and contemporary Dutch literature. One could therefore even say that it is this post-romantic literature and poetics *in particular* that is analyzed by means of the poetical model.

From One Shift to Another

The reason why Abrams himself produced a somewhat ambiguous picture lies, as said, in the fact that his historical overview extends only to the romantic period. Given his ambition to reveal the differences between critical theories in European history, he is keen to situate a decisive shift within the model set up for this timeframe. From a more distant point of view, however, the most decisive shift seems to be not that from a mimetic to an expressive orientation – that is to say, from the 'mirror' to the 'lamp' – but the shift from an Aristotelian view to a post-Aristotelian view. One might call this view, for lack of a better word, a *hermeneutic* view on art. Although of course the 'hermeneutike' also has Greek origins, it could be argued that hermeneutics as a theory of literary criticism came into fashion in the nineteenth century. It was only from this time onward that *interpretation* became

the key element, not to say the key *problem*, of literary criticism. In the Aristotelian view, debates revolved around the question of which truth would have to be transmitted and by what means, but the idea that there was a 'truth' to be derived and understood by the 'audience' was an unquestioned assumption, based on the general belief in a transcendental reason. Within literary criticism, Schleiermacher was one of the prominent figures challenging this view, not only by investigating the limits of human understanding but especially by reconsidering the understanding of texts. This hermeneutical twist within literary criticism consisted of the idea that texts do not have a true, fixed meaning that could be extracted from them, but that their meaning depends on the unique historical conditions of both their construction and their reading. Simply put, one could say that the shift from an Aristotelian to a hermeneutic view implied a shift from 'truth' to 'meaning'. In this new view 'truth' is nonetheless still an important notion for literature and literary criticism, but never as a given; it has become something ungraspable, paradoxical, momentary or perspectival. Although the global 'situation of a work of art' may have largely remained the same, its tenor has thus decisively changed because its underlying grid has been replaced.

This shift to a hermeneutic grid was only fully realized after the romantic period, although it was certainly prepared by romanticism and therefore partly coincides with the mimetic-expressive shift. Yet Abrams overlooked or misinterpreted the indications hinting at this break with the Aristotelian paradigm by extending his theory to contemporary literature and criticism. I will argue, however, that the shift from a mimetic to an expressive orientation – as, for that matter, to a pragmatic and objective one – is only a relatively minor shift *within* the framework of Aristotelian poetics, whereas the shift towards a non-Aristotelian, hermeneutic view of art is categorical in nature in the sense that it prevents future poetry and poetics to be reinserted within an Aristotelian framework. But what can be said then of the decisive shift discerned by Abrams in the expressive romantic theory? How decisive was it? He believes it was part of a more general movement that could be seen in various areas of life, such as the sciences and philosophy: 'The change from imitation to expression, and from the mirror to the fountain, the lamp, and related analogues', Abrams states, 'was not an isolated phenomenon.'[54] One of Abrams's central references, Wordsworth, managed to capture the important changes of his time within a new view of poetry. As Abrams has it,

> his [Wordsworth's] key formulation, twice uttered, is that poetry is 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. The metaphor 'overflow', like the equivalent terms in the definitions of Wordsworth's contemporaries – 'expression', 'uttering forth', 'projection' – faces in an opposite direction from 'imitation', and indicates that the source of the poem is no longer the external world but the poet himself: and elements which, externalized, become the subject matter of the poem are, expressly, the poet's 'feelings'. The word 'overflow'

> also exemplifies the water-language in which feelings are usually discussed. [...] The poetic process, therefore, as Wordsworth says, is not calculated but 'spontaneous'.[55]

The 'Copernican revolution in the theory of art'[56] noted by Abrams is thus a turn inward, a turning away from the external world that could be generalized and calculated, towards the utterly subjective, individual feelings of the poet.

This inward move indeed corresponds to what might be seen as one of the most important shifts in Western history. This could be described as a shift from a transcendent or theocentric to an immanent or anthropocentric worldview. Whereas, in former times, things were generally explained with reference to transcendental deities, starting from what is commonly referred to as modernity, man has explained things from an immanent and solely human perspective that leaves no room for the supernatural or the divine (or only for that of man, e.g. the romantic genius).[57] This metaphysical transition towards immanence obviously had major consequences for the notion of truth. Whereas truth was previously sought in the external world or cosmos, and was consequently considered eternal, transcendent and objective, the quest moved to the human being itself and became embedded and subjective. Despite this radical shift from one worldview to another, the idea of what art *is* nevertheless seems largely unchanged up to and including the romantic period. Truth was now believed to lie in the human being itself, forming its most interior core, and therefore a different technique was needed to transmit this truth: not a mirror reflecting the world outside, but a lamp bringing forth the light that is shining inside or a fountain irrupting from the most hidden sources. But the very idea that art should transmit truth was not questioned. What romantic poetry expressed, in the end, is therefore not so much the idiosyncrasy of a single poet's feelings, as Abrams seems to say, but the shared truth of nature at play in his free and organic creative activity.[58] Since the underlying idea of what art should be remained the same, the shift from imitation to expression is thus to a large extent, as Abrams suggests almost despite himself, only a matter of changing metaphors. At times, he is very close to expressing this continuity of the mimetic and expressive theory, especially when citing the romanticists themselves (like Novalis, who said that 'poetry is representation of the spirit, of the inner world in its totality'[59]), but it is no doubt his almost exclusive attention to English romantics that prevented him from establishing a more fundamental connection. A more extensive reading of German romanticists, such as Novalis or the Schlegels, would no doubt have pushed him further in that direction, since these romanticists present their poetic view explicitly in accordance with Antiquity.[60]

Notwithstanding its continuation of the Aristotelian paradigm, romantic theory marks the pivoting point to the hermeneutic view and indeed 'it would have simplified the task of the historian', as Abrams states, 'if romantic theorists had

ceded the word "truth" to science, and adopted a different term to characterize poetry'.[61] The fact that they did not shows their ambiguous relation towards Aristotelian poetics. Indications of a break with this poetics are given by Abrams himself, and even most literally so. In one of his last paragraphs, called 'Poetry as neither True nor False', Abrams observes that some writers suggest poetry 'is neither true nor false, because, as the expression of feeling, it proffers no assertions about reality, and is therefore outside the jurisdiction of the criterion of truth'.[62] Coleridge, for instance, insisted on the fact that poetry demands a 'willing suspension of disbelief' that would enable the work to convince the reader by its own force.[63] As we know, it is this notion, or 'doctrine' as Abrams calls it, of the willing suspension of disbelief that began to play a key role in twentieth-century art theory because it takes into account a specific understanding of fiction – not as something formed (*fingere*) but as an acting *as if*. Abrams indeed portrays Coleridge as a precursor of his future colleagues, associating their position with that of the later *l'art pour l'art* movement and with the New Criticism of his own time.[64] In the very last pages of his study, he draws a very confusing and in my view erroneous conclusion from the previous indications in an obvious attempt to incorporate them into his analytical framework.

In the last pages the quadrilateral model has been reconfigured in such a way that the mimetic, pragmatic and expressive orientations are placed on one side, and the objective orientation on the other. The demarcation line distinguishing the first three orientations from the latter seems to lie, in the end, in the possibility of some form of generalization. 'Let us', Abrams proposes after having dealt with the question of poetry as being neither true nor false, 'divide theories of poetic value into two broadly distinguishable classes':

1. Poetry has intrinsic value, and as poetry, only intrinsic value. It is to be estimated by the literary critic solely as poetry, and as an end in itself, without reference to its possible effects on thought, feeling, or conduct of its readers.
2. Poetry has intrinsic value, but also extrinsic value, as a means to moral and social effects beyond itself. The two cannot (or at least, should not) be separated by the critic in estimating its poetic worth.[65]

Many of us will be familiar with this distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value, since it has strongly influenced contemporary research on literature. Nevertheless we should be aware that Abrams's analysis takes a rather peculiar turn here. By superimposing this dichotomy on the earlier pattern of four classes, he both affirms the univocal Aristotelian nature of this pattern discussed above by expulsing class (1) as alien to it, while at the same time locating this class within the pattern. This internal friction is perfectly illustrated by the way Abrams later introduces his model of four theories of poetry in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*:

> Commonly a critic takes one of these elements or relations [universe, artist, audience, or work] as cardinal and refers the poem either to the external world or to the audience or to the poet as preponderantly 'the source, and end, and test of art'; *or alternatively*, she or he considers the poem as a self-sufficient entity best analyzed in theoretical isolation. [...] These varied orientations give us, in a preliminary way, four broad types of poetic theory, which may be labeled mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective.[66]

In fact, Abrams's analysis of critical theories in *The Mirror and the Lamp* offers no reason for fundamentally distinguishing between the objective orientation and the other three orientations. As Abrams stated, Aristotle already conceived of the poetic work as a self-determining whole, thereby laying the foundations of later objective theories.[67] Abrams could thus have stuck to the historical evolution he sketched, as we saw, 'from the mimetic theory of Plato and of Aristotle, through the pragmatic theory, lasting from the conflation of rhetoric with poetic in the Hellenistic and Roman era almost through the eighteenth century, to the expressive theory of English (and somewhat earlier, German) romantic criticism',[68] extending it to the objective theory of, for instance, New Criticism. And in a way he does.

At the same time however, Abrams seems to be aware that present manifestations of what he calls the 'objective orientation' mark a fundamental shift in thinking about literature, i.e. what I have called the shift to a hermeneutic view. However, the fact that he believed to have deduced a philosophically neutral model does not permit him to abandon it altogether. Abrams is therefore forced to locate this shift *within* his model, by superimposing a second analytical grid that isolates the objective orientation from the rest. In order to substantiate the match between this second grid and his quadrilateral model, Abrams has to locate the demarcation line alongside the lines he set in this model. A shift that is categorical in nature in the sense that it opens a new perspective on literature as such – that is to say on 'the total situation of a work of art',[69] as Abrams would put it, therefore including its relation to reality, the reader and the artist – is thereby reduced to a position within a model alien to it. Thus, an orientation that encompasses an unprecedented view on literature is reinserted within the old paradigm. This decision has left an indelible mark on contemporary research on literature, and, because of Sötemann's ahistorical adaptation, especially on Dutch literature.

The only way, then, for contemporary researchers who adopt the poetical model to do justice to this new view on literature is to understand it first of all in a *negative* way: that is, as a refusal of the other views. This is the solution offered by Abrams and iterated by many theorists – with or without direct reference to Abrams. Abrams's encyclopaedic description of the 'alternative' possibility is exemplary here: for him, the objective theory 'considers the poem as a self-sufficient entity best analyzed *in theoretical isolation* from the causal factors in the universe

from which the poem derives its materials, or the tastes, convictions, and responses of the audience to which it appeals, or the character, intentions, thoughts, and feelings of the poet who brings it into being.'[70] Since, in this poetical model, the non-Aristotelian view on literature can *only* be located within this 'objective' – or in its Dutch derivative 'autonomistic' – orientation, it is hardly surprising that according to literary scholars this orientation seems to have dominated literature since the twentieth century.[71] In the same vein, it does not come as a surprise that poststructuralist theories – which undermine truth as a useful notion for understanding literature – did not really find acceptance among Dutch scholars. The supposed predominance of the objective orientation as well as the supposed incongruity of poststructuralist theory with the poetical model are, however, the result of an internally inconsistent model. The fact is, from a hermeneutic point of view, that mimetic, pragmatic or expressive elements should not be abandoned or theoretically isolated *at all*; they are only to be taken into account differently.

It is however with the negative approach of 'objective' poetry and poetics as *un*-related to the poet, audience or reality that Abrams's poetical model set the coordinates of a view on contemporary literature that has, to this day, characterized the work of many theorists. Not only has Abrams's dichotomy between the 'intrinsic' and an 'extrinsic' view been the source of a large number of theoretical distinctions, like the one between 'language-oriented' and 'world-oriented' literature, between 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' literature, or between 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' but, as a result, it has also determined the vast majority of academic literary criticism debates since the second half of the twentieth century – from the aftermath of the influential Dutch debate in the 1930s and 1940s that opposed 'form' (*vorm*) and 'fellow' (*vent*) in answering the question whether poetic value had to be sought in the intrinsic form of the work or in the personality of its author,[72] to the attacks on, amongst others, New Critics during the 1970s and 1980s in the *Against Theory* debates[73] claiming that an 'objectivist' stance is untenable and arguing for a new form of pragmatism, as well as more recent attacks on literature's 'autonomy' – understood as a total isolation from society – for instance, by Thomas Vaessens, who as a result called for new forms of commitment.[74] These debates clearly result from a simple discomfort regarding the boundaries set by the poetical model. It seems, however, as if these debates are bound to reach an impasse, as if the supposed objectivity and clarity of the poetical model had prevented it from being questioned on the level of its basic assumptions. It may well be that at times this led to a theoretical deadlock that makes it very difficult to truly conceive of contemporary literature as functioning within the world, that is, within our *contemporary* world. By showing that the poetical model is not only far from philosophically neutral and at times rather opaque, but also inextricably linked to a historically well-determined worldview, I hope to have made a start with fundamentally criticizing this doctrine and open-

ing up the possibility of a new approach to poetical work and its interrelation with its constitutive environment. I believe that a transition into a post-Abramsian era in literary criticism is imperative because it will provide a more fruitful paradigm for the invigorating research on Dutch literature of the last decades.

Notes

1. The research conducted for this article is part of the NWO-funded research programme 'The Power of Autonomous Literature', started in 2010 at the Research Institute for History and Culture and the Department of Dutch Studies at Utrecht University.
2. H. Bergholz, 'Review of M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*', *The Modern Language Journal* 38 (1954), p. 380.
3. T. Raysor, 'Review of M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*', *Modern Philology* 51 (1954), p. 283.
4. See A.S.P. Woodhouse, 'Review of M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*', *Modern Language Notes* 70 (1955), p. 377: 'I can think of no work on Romanticism, since Babbit and Lovejoy blazed their new trails, which surpasses it in originality and interest.'
5. L. Leary, *Contemporary Literary Scholarship: A Critical Review* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958), p. 463.
6. R. Wellek, 'Review of M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*', *Comparative Literature* 6 (1954), p. 178. See. also the opening lines of his review: 'Mr. Abrams has written a remarkable booklet on the history of criticism, the most distinguished contribution of American scholarship in that field since the work of J.E. Spingarn.'
7. M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 6.
8. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 6.
9. Ibidem.
10. Ibidem.
11. Abrams himself was well aware of this risk. In his 1974 essay 'A Note on Wittgenstein and Literary Criticism', he reflects on the use of theory – including his own – in understanding literature. Drawing upon the views of Wittgenstein, Abrams warns us against a bias in our thinking, namely 'the tendency in describing something, and in setting up norms for dealing with it, to replace the complex facts and their variable circumstances by a simplified and invariable picture or model. The use of such picture or model can be servant of understanding, so long as we remain aware that we are using it and for what purpose; but if its presence and its influence on our thinking are hidden, it readily gets out of hand and becomes, in Wittgenstein's metaphor, a picture that holds us captive.' M.H. Abrams, 'A Note on Wittgenstein and Literary Criticism', *ELH* 41 (1974), p. 546. Abrams refers to Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953).
12. See also the entry on M.H. Abrams in the *Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*, ed. by Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth and Imre Szeman (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
13. See W. Booth, 'M.H. Abrams: Historian as Critic, Critic as Pluralist', *Critical Inquiry* 2 (1976), pp. 411-45; M.H. Abrams, 'What's the Use of Theorizing about the Arts?', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 25 (1972), pp. 11-25; 'A Note on Wittgen-

stein and Literary Criticism'; and 'Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History: A Reply to Wayne Booth', *Critical Inquiry* 2 (1976), pp. 447-64.

14. Among his PhD students were Ton Anbeek (doct. in 1978; full professor at Leiden University in 1982); Gilles Dorleijn (doct. in 1984; full professor at University of Groningen in 1985); Wiljan van den Akker (doct. in 1986; full professor at Utrecht University in 1988); Wiel Kusters (doct. 1986; full professor at Maastricht University in 1989); and Marita Mathijsen (doct. in 1987; full professor at the University of Amsterdam in 1999). Notwithstanding the qualities of the individual professors, given the basic criteria for a healthy scientific community this situation is of course highly remarkable.
15. Sötemann expresses this annoyance in several essays. See 'Twee modernistische tradities in de Europese poëzie: Enige suggesties' and 'Poetics and Periods in Literary History: A First Draft', both in A.L. Sötemann, *Over poëtica en poëzie. Een bundel beschouwingen* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1985).
16. In his first essay mentioning Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 'Poetics and Periods in Literary History', Sötemann uses both sets. In a subsequent essay on 'Vier poetica's', Sötemann provides his own set of terms without even referring to Abrams's original model. In due course, however, it became common practice to refer to the four Sötemannian poetics by means of Abrams's original set of terms. See Sötemann, *Over poëtica en poëzie.*
17. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 3. My emphasis.
18. Sötemann, 'Poetics and periods in literary history', p. 99. My emphasis.
19. Idem, pp. 99-100. My emphasis.
20. Idem, p. 99.
21. W. Glaudemans, '"Een dichter kan steeds alle kanten uit": Over de poëtica en de poëzie van Gerrit Komrij', in *Traditie en vernieuwing. Opstellen aangeboden aan A.L. Sötemann*, ed. by W.J. van den Akker et. al. (Utrecht / Antwerpen: Veen, 1985), p. 273. Translation by Aukje van Rooden.
22. W. van den Akker and G. Dorleijn, 'Poëtica en literatuurgeschiedschrijving', *De nieuwe taalgids*, 84 (1991), p. 523. Translation by Aukje van Rooden.
23. Ibidem.
24. See S. Bax, De taak van de schrijver. Het poëticale debat in de Nederlandse literatuur, 1968-1985 (Den Bosch: Next Academics, 2007).
25. See J. Goedegebuure and O. Heynders, '"Het breekbare ligt open". Een beschouwing over impliciete poeticaliteit en problemen van interpretatie', *De nieuwe taalgids* 84 (1991), pp. 527-38.
26. The most obvious shift of attention was motivated by the so-called 'institutional' or 'sociological' shift in Dutch literary criticism, in the wake of Pierre Bourdieu's analyses. However, as Geert Buelens rightly points out, this shift was not a critique on the dominant view on literature and poetics but rather its affirmation. G. Buelens, 'Poëzie die ernaar streeft oud nieuws te worden: Een herijking van het autonomiebegrip in het licht van topicale gedichten en liederen', *Spiegel der Letteren* 54:1 (2012), note 34.
27. See Van den Akker and Dorleijn, 'Poëtica en literatuurgeschiedschrijving', p. 511. See also note 38.
28. Although quantifications like these by no means speak for themselves, it is significant that the BNTL (Bibliography of Dutch Language and Literary Studies) database, which

contains a large and representative part of the output into research of Dutch literature from the 1940s to the present day, generates over 700 books and articles under the entry 'poetica' (Dutch for 'poetics'), about 200 of which are dated post 1990s; and another 400 results under the Dutch equivalent 'literatuuropvatting'. It is also telling that 'De impact van literatuuropvattingen' was one of the focus areas funded by NWO (The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research) during the 1990s. Equally telling is the fact that one of the most recent and most severe attacks on Sötemann's heritage within the research of Dutch literature, i.e. Thomas Vaessens's 2009 book *De revanche van de roman*, takes the Abramsian-Sötemannian interpretation of the 'autonomist' poetics (as being non-mimetic, non-expressive, and non-pragmatic) for granted.

29. A similar conclusion is drawn by Frans Ruiter and Wilbert Smulders in their introduction to *Alleen blindgeborenen kunnen de schrijver verwijten dat hij liegt. Over het schrijverschap van Willem Frederik Hermans* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2009), p. 19: 'This splendid book [Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*] has been introduced in Dutch literary studies by Sötemann. By some unhappy whim of fate, however, it was introduced in a way that subtly took the sting out of Abrams's argument. [...] By dropping the historical moment of Abrams's argument, Sötemann annuls the dramatic narrative of Abrams's thesis.' Translation by Aukje van Rooden.
30. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 3-4. In several essays following on the publication of *The Mirror and the Lamp*, the lack of objectivity of the humanities in general is even Abrams's main theoretical subject. See 'What's the Use of Theorizing about the Arts?', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 25 (1972), pp. 11-25; 'A Note on Wittgenstein and Literary Criticism'; and 'Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History: A Reply to Wayne Booth', *Critical Inquiry* 2 (1976), pp. 447-64.
31. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 6.
32. Ibidem.
33. See in particular pp. 26-9.
34. M.H. Abrams, 'Theories of (Western) Poetry', in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 639-49.
35. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 7.
36. Idem, p. 27.
37. Abrams, 'A Note on Wittgenstein and Literary Criticism', p. 549.
38. Hence the subtitle of *The Mirror and the Lamp*: 'Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition'.
39. See in particular chapter 2 ('Imitation and the Mirror') and chapter 3 ('Romantic Analogues of Art and Mind'). The book's motto, based on Yeats, is also significant in this respect: 'It must go further still: that soul must become / its own betrayer, its own deliverer, the one / activity, the mirror turn lamp.'
40. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 28.
41. Idem, p. 3.
42. Van den Akker and Dorleijn, 'Poëtica en literatuurgeschiedschrijving', p 511. Van den Akker and Dorleijn go as far as to suggest removing the mimetic and pragmatic coordinates from Abrams's model, since 'the addition of these two new poetics gives the model a wrong and unnecessary twist'. Translation by Aukje van Rooden. See also B.

Robbins, 'Culture and Distance: On the Professionalizing of Literary Criticism', in *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture* (New York: Verso, 1993), pp. 70-2.

43. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 11.
44. Idem, p. 14.
45. Idem, p. 16.
46. Idem, p. 21.
47. Idem, p. 23.
48. Idem, p. 26. See for a more concise overview of the four theories also Abrams, 'Theories of (Western) Poetry', pp. 639-49.
49. Idem, p. 27.
50. Ibidem.
51. Idem, p. 15. My emphasis. See also p. 10: 'This procedure [of Aristotle's *Poetics*] results in a scope and flexibility that makes the treaty resist a ready classification into any one kind of orientation.'
52. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 5-6.
53. See e.g. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. by Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).
54. Idem, p. 57.
55. Abrams, 'Theories of (Western) Poetry', p. 643.
56. M.H. Abrams, 'Art-as-Such: The Sociology of Modern Aesthetics', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 38 (1985), p. 13.
57. This shift is often understood as the secularization of our worldview and has been analyzed by a number of theorists. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007) and Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Déclosion. Déconstruction du christianisme I* (Paris: Galilée, 2005).
58. See Ch. LeBlanc, L. Margentin, and O. Schefer, *La Forme poétique du monde: Anthologie du romantisme allemand* (Paris: José Corti, 2003).
59. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 50. See also Abrams, 'Theories of (Western) Poetry', p. 642.
60. Several reviewers deplore that Abrams only pays scant attention to German romanticism. See R. Wellek, 'Review of M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*', p. 180: 'Though Mr. Abrams frequently refers to Coleridge's German models, he consistently overrates his originality and novelty and thus, to my mind, distorts the general history of romantic criticism in Europe.'
61. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 312.
62. Idem, p. 320.
63. Coleridge, *Biographia* II, 6. Quoted in Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 324.
64. Idem, p. 323.
65. Idem, pp. 326-7.
66. Abrams, 'Theories of (Western) Poetry', p. 639. My emphasis.
67. Cf. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 27: 'The tragic work itself [as described by Aristotle] can now be analyzed formally as a self-determining whole made up of parts, all organized around the controlling part, the tragic plot – itself a unity in which the

component incidents are integrated by the internal relations of "necessity or probability".'

68. Idem, p. 28.
69. Idem, p. 6.
70. Abrams, 'Theories of (Western) Poetry', p. 639. My emphasis.
71. See T. Anbeek, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur tussen 1885 en 1985* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1990), p. 260: '[T]hese days, the autonomist position is so predominant that one can wonder whether it will ever be dethroned.' (translation by Aukje van Rooden); and Van den Akker and Dorleijn, 'Poëtica en literatuurgeschiedschrijving', p. 514: 'From our short and somewhat one-sided poetical investigation we can draw the conclusion that the four orientations within recent poetry distinguished by Van Deel, are in fact but one orientation, the autonomist: autonomism predominates modern Dutch poetry.' Translation by Aukje van Rooden.
72. See J.C. Bloem, *Het onzegbare geheim: Verzamelde essays en kritieken 1911-1963* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 1995); J.J. Oversteegen, *Vorm of vent: Opvattingen over de aard van het literaire werk in de Nederlandse kritiek tussen de twee wereldoorlogen* (Amsterdam: Polak & Van Gennep, 1969); see also G. Franssen, 'Literary Celebrity and the Discourse on Authorship in Dutch Literature', *Journal of Dutch Literature* 1 (2010), pp. 91-113.
73. See W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.) *Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism* (Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985). See also Abrams, 'Theories of (Western) Poetry', p. 648-9.
74. T. Vaessens, *De revanche van de roman. Literatuur, autoriteit en engagement* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2009).

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