CONCLUSION

At the final stage of this doctoral research, I am inclined to state that it is possible to view the work of art as autonomous, to set it apart from everything else, to refuse to admit relations between the work and realities external to it, to limit one's attention to the relations that obtain between elements within the work and to enjoy these relations, to appreciate the qualities of the elements that make up the work, as well as the qualities that come into being through the interaction of these elements, and finally, to enjoy the overall form of a work of art. This is the formalist way of seeing the work of art.

It is a viewpoint rather than a quality of the work of art. We can look at some things as autonomous. This viewpoint is related to the one in which we decide some things to be aesthetic and some, non-aesthetic. These are categories that depend on our drawing the boundaries somewhere, as all categories do. But one cannot deny that some things are made in such a way that they lend themselves to the category of "aesthetic-autonomous".

Adopting the aesthetic attitude, we often give ourselves up to the work of art, and are enriched by an experience we call the aesthetic experience. This usually happens on a first encounter with a work of art, and it can happen repeatedly with powerful and very beautiful works. We give ourselves up to a piece of music, to a breathtaking painting, to a well-choreographed,
graceful dance. During this experience we do not even think who wrote the musical score, which period of history it belongs to, who was the painter, who choreographed the dance and who was the dancer's guru. Far less do we think of the presuppositions which must be guiding our own responses.

Therefore, even after studying the numerous theories that have been formulated in the twentieth century, and being fascinated by the many dimensions of thought about art that these theories have opened up and even after going through a phase of exasperation with the limitations and old-fashionedness that Langer's theory seemed to display, I am, at the final stage of this research, inclined to the conclusion that the aesthetic as the basis of the autonomy of the work of art, is a dimension of human experience that cannot be obliterated. It cannot be deconstructed away.

But perhaps, the work of art is not entirely autonomous. There are some moments when it is. At other moments, we see the work of art as related. We see a penumbra of relations around the work of art.

The aesthetic can also be seen to permeate all life, as Tagore saw, and Coomaraswamy hoped the world would see. This becomes an all-encompassing autonomy of art, while it obliterates the autonomy of the particular work of art and makes it, rather, a part of life. Thus, the autonomy of the aesthetic works against the autonomy of the particular work of art.
Perhaps what we find aesthetic or beautiful, and I am not going to enter into a discussion of what we mean by beauty, as it is not the major concern of this thesis, is something not confined to art. But having discovered, in the course of history, that we do see the aesthetic as a special characteristic of some things in life, and having found that we can set aside some things solely for the enjoyment of their aesthetic qualities, I do not think we can ever unlearn these experiences.

Perhaps the division "aesthetic" and "non-aesthetic" exists only in our conceptualization but having once conceived of it, we cannot obliterate this knowledge.

I have found all the theories which show that the work of art is related rather than autonomous highly instructive, in that they all lead to insights about what I call the penumbra of the work of art, and certainly deepen our experience of art and enrich it. Only in some cases, I have been unable to go along with a thinker's views, for instance, Freud's reductionism and tendency to relate art to neurosis, and Derrida's extreme position.

I certainly agree with F. Jameson that the autonomy of art must not mean the autonomy of a modernist, Western way of looking at art and such a hegemonistic attitude needs to be deconstructed.

But I cannot agree with a reductionist attitude to art which insists that all art must be political. Rather, it is my view that without being explicitly political, art is intrinsically an ally of the political. This is the view I had expressed in my M.Phil. dissertation, and after further research, I am inclined
only to confirm this view. What makes the work of art intrinsically an ally of the political is the creative function of the imagination through which it comes into being. This is an affirmation of the capacity of human beings to create new forms, to articulate a tradition as well as, and simultaneously, to articulate new insights, and to be free to take a critical view of the existing states of affairs and to go beyond them.

For this reason, I do not hold that the autonomous work of art is a threat to, or a betrayal of, the political consciousness, but on the contrary. This view of mine has been strengthened by my research of the more hopeful sections of Theodore Adorno's "Aesthetic Theory".

Even the autonomous work of art comes into being within a cultural whole. One may speak here of a discourse of which it is a part. In a discourse, ideas and streams of thought do not develop individually or autonomously but through interaction between participants, so that the credit for an ideational construct is most often the work of several individuals. Even so, the role of intelligent individuals engaged in discourse cannot be denied. In this sense, I tend to support the autonomy of a work of art, and to acknowledge the creative work of an individual artist.

Again, the individual work of art may be said to be the site at which a number of discourses intersect. It is not something entirely original that an artist or writer has created. She has inherited discourses, which speak in her work, according to where
she is situated in a cultural whole. Even so, something creative happens at this site. The artist's sensitivity is engaged in receiving discourses as well as formulating something out of these discourses, making choices, creating a form, and expressing his or her own insights.

Again, I am unable to submit the work of art entirely to readers' responses, for the work of art has a basic structure which was given to it by the writer or artist, and this limits the arbitrariness of the readers' or the viewer's responses. But, it would be a more accurate picture if we see the work of art as a site where the artist's intention as expressed in the work interacts with the viewer's or the reader's subjectivity. It would be fairly correct, then, to say that the work of art retains a degree of autonomy but not an absolute one, and is a fulcrum of intersecting discourses, as well as the interaction between author or artist and reader or viewer.

Following is a summary of the research undertaken for this thesis. I shall avoid repeating the historical developments discussed in the introduction of this thesis.

The art-object being exalted in New Criticism meant that it was held to be autonomous. Taking into account author's intentions and readers' responses are two swings on either side of the work of art which compromise the autonomy of the work of art, and for an "objective" analysis of a work, these must be avoided. But further readings which do discuss author's intention and reader's subjectivities can also be undertaken. These, to my understanding, can prove enriching.
When criticism began to take reader's responses into account, it was seen that plural interpretations are possible, each claiming to be as valid as the other. This dissolved the fixity of meaning, in a work of art. Meaning became nebulous.

Northrop Fyre presented a theory which facilitated a movement of critical thought from the formalist, New Critic's position to structuralism. Fyre studied particular literary works within a historical setting, to reveal certain ideal types, or 'archetypes' which they exemplified.

To my understanding, Fyre put forward an autonomy of tradition, for the archetypes reappeared, according to his theory, through all ages. This theory was also idealistic.

But, he also held the specific historical instance to be important. My view is that the historical instance in which a type is realized, if such types do exist, is a moment of creativity, for every rendering of the type is in some way different from others.

We see a struggle here between the ideal and the historical, specific, particular: a struggle for autonomy.

Furthermore, in Fyre's theory, "narrative" becomes a very wide category. History, he shows, is a construct, just as an imaginary story is. In fact, since we ourselves supply the fundamental categories by which we formulate all our knowledge, all our knowledge is our own construction and therefore, narrative.
Frank Kermode argued for symbolism in art as well as the unity of the work of art, and connected it with the human mind seeking a unified world-view.

My own understanding is that the human mind is inclined to make connections, and the strategy of constantly disrupting connections in art is questionable. However, disruptive strategies may be negative or positive. Disrupting connections in art may be worthwhile when it leads to new insights, or to the uncovering of some truth, that is, some given state of affairs.

It must be admitted that Kermode is right in holding that the author of a work cannot be allowed autonomous control of a text. In my view, it is impossible to deny him or her the credit of creating something, of giving form to an idea or a complex of ideas, opinions, experiences and feelings. She creates a form even if she expresses the collective consciousness of her society, or a section of it, in her historical period. But once she has done this, she becomes one of the viewers, or readers. Once created, the art-work can be known only through reader's response and the artist or writer is one of these readers. Her interpretation is no more and no less valid than that of any other reader or viewer.

Hartman did not accept the division between literature and criticism. Here, the autonomy of criticism is dissolved.

New criticism held that the intention of the author or artist must be sought in the work itself, and I tend to agree with this view.
But, phenomenological criticism was interested in the creative consciousness which produces works of art. Phenomenological-existentialist theories explored the subjective and inter-subjective states that the work of art refers to. They also recognized the creative role of criticism.

In this criticism, the author's subjective experience passes into the objectivity of the work of art. The critic understands the work on the basis of her own subjectivity, but again generalizes or makes her understanding objective.

Some critics of consciousness, as phenomenological theorists have been referred to, were interested in the whole body of an artist or writer's work, as revealing the development of a worldview. This interest in an individual psyche, it is easily seen, was related to romanticism.

Reader-response theories were called Reception Theories by the Germans. One exponent of such theories, Roman Ingarden, held that works of art contain indeterminate areas, which the reader fills in her own way. My assertion here is that the indeterminacy may never be filled.

Indeterminate areas in a work of art constitute a highly interesting problem. They lend themselves to interpretation, loosen the structure of a work and compromise its autonomy. Some works are intentionally made to allow indeterminacy.

Gadamer's theory, though tending towards universal statements about art, acknowledged the historical nature of artworks. He held that a viewer understands a work according to her presuppositions, which are rooted in a particular time and place,
and are not to be and cannot be sifted away. Gadamer’s view about the importance of historical presuppositions tended to shift the autonomy of an art-work to the historical conditions in which it is understood.

The importance given to presuppositions in constituting works of art, leads to the link of art and political positions, for the latter are part of a reader's presuppositions. Though this dimension is vitally interesting, I am inclined to the view that it is not, as has been asserted by Marxist critics and some others, the whole of the art-experience, but only one aspect of it.

Heidegger and Gadamer opposed Husserl’s concept of a timeless, atemporal subject. Thus, the former had a historicist concept of man as well as the work of art, holding that both are constituted by historical, cultural notions and practices. I would venture to say that perhaps something of the timeless and something of the historical goes into the constitution of both.

Hirsch Jr. presents an interesting theory, in which autonomy moves in a circular locus - it rests first with the author, then in the object of art, then in readers’ responses and finally again with the author, whose intention is again given importance through research.

Hans Robert Jauss tried to reconcile the autonomy of ideal forms or structures in literary criticism with a historicist interest in particular works, and I am inclined to support such an effort.
In response to Wolfgang Iser's position, I suggest that a
text is not so much a skeleton as an ocean of possible meaning,
of which a reader realizes some part. In the reader's response,
the ocean of possibility throws up a pearl, a crystallization of
some meaning.

The question of autonomy is seen to remain pertinent
throughout twentieth century of thought, and theories are
presented in tension with this concept. I had expected that the
question of autonomy may become historically irrelevant, but it
remains pertinent.

Stanley Fish, while maintaining that since a work can be
understood only in a context it cannot be viewed as autonomous
and isolated, also held that meaning in a text cannot be entirely
"debunked" or deconstructed. The text, Fish held, has an
advancing, dynamic meaning and it does not necessarily arrive at
an end. Fish also posited an intersubjectivity acting through an
individual.

My own view is that the tangle of threads that make up the
knot of individuality must be treated as a unique inner world. My
further suggestion is that the writer is aware of the context
into which her text will be released. She speaks much of the
language of her readers. Therefore, she is able to exercise her
intentionality with some degree of success.

Even in defamiliarization devices, when existing meaning
is assailed, a text is created within a meaningful sign-system,
to my understanding. There is a degree of indeterminacy but not
complete free-play of meaning.
Fish said the interpretive community exercises the necessary control on the arbitrariness of meaning in texts. We consider here the problem of texts which belong to different historical periods from our own. A struggle for meaning between historical matrices takes place here, and of autonomy of a particular matrix.

Jakobson, Saussure and Levi-Strauss present a complex analysis of language. I offer the suggestion that words with onomatopoeic significance testify to the possibility that meaning in language is not altogether arbitrary and is connected with reality. For example, "Tremble", "Tharthar kampana" are related to something factual.

Linguistic studies helped the development of structuralism. Within the formalist tradition there developed a linguistic approach which was concerned with surface details of a work, that is, the style, while the structuralist approach was concerned with uncovering deeper, more abstract structures which were common to numerous works. Both, however, supported the individuality of a work of art. The structuralist did so by positing a fairly definite structure, which kept the work standing as autonomous, even if this structure was common to other works.

In my view, the artist somehow functions on both levels, creating a style on the surface, as well as a larger structure, in her work.
The School of Russian Formalism favoured an aesthetic attitude towards works of art, sifted away extrinsic concerns and tended to view a work as autonomous on the basis of its literary or aesthetic qualities. They also tended to ignore the role of the artist, and avoided discussion of the creative process, as romanticists discussed it and later, phenomenologists did.

To my understanding, the artist and the creative process remain a matter of interest to aesthetics. Since this study shows that the autonomy of the work of art is never completely dispersed into other discourses, the artist's role will always remain of consequence.

The closure in art has been compared to closed socio-political systems. But in my view, it is possible to create complete works of art in a fluid socio-political reality, and vice-versa. There need not be a correspondence between the two. One does not entail the other.

With Mukarowsky and Roman Jakobson, we see interest shifting from aesthetic qualities to structuralism, and this was the beginning of the questioning of formalism.

Saussure gave an important definition of the sign in language, as consisting of a sound-image, the signifier, and a concept, the signifie. The referent thus became ideational and not empirical, and language, as well as literature moved further away from reality.

Saussure and Levi-Strauss connected their study of structure, or grammar, in language with structure in overall culture. Levi-Strauss held that there is a universal structure
of human thinking, which persists right up to the present technological age. There is a thoroughgoing autonomy of structure posited here, and a universalism.

On the structuralist view, which denied the autonomy of the individual text, and posited the autonomy of a general structure of language, the text was seen as embedded within a language, or a culture. In Barthes' early poetics too the overall system of signs was favoured over the individuality and autonomy of a work of art. In fact, Barthes was even more radical than other structuralists in denying the mimesis, or reality-representation function of art. An autonomy of art, in the sense of freedom from the representation-of-reality function, is posited here.

The creation of aesthetic form could be related to structuralism and both can be said to posit an autonomy of art, but there are two levels on which form can be created: the individual and unique, or the general and abstract. The two levels, or aspects are perhaps present simultaneously in a work of art.

An important aspect of structuralism is that it posited a sort of inverted creativity - culture shapes human consciousness, and not the other way around. On my part, here also I tend to see a dual, or mutually interacting relationship. In any case, there can be no culture without a creative consciousness, even if developing through history with the origins irretrievably lost.

I suggest that the internal laws of a language or culture that structuralists were concerned with could correspond to
internal laws in an aesthetic form, and to a psychological requirement in human beings. I mean here that the structure in aesthetic form perhaps corresponds to dynamic forms in the psyche.

Todorov was willing to accept the position that meaning is altogether absent from individual works of art, while Genette did not deny meaning altogether. Todorov acknowledged that conceptualization of structure was the application of the scientific method to literary criticism.

Barthes went further away from structuralism when he said readers are free to open and close the signifying function of the text and take what pleasures they wish from it. The idea of "the death of the author" put forward by earlier literary theorists helped him formulate this view. Barthes made a landmark advance in critical theory when he said that some texts conform to the narrative tradition, and some do not, and have open structures, which readers can construct as they wish. Here begins a questioning, or challenge, of the medium itself in which works of art are created.

Since Marxist literary critics were intensely political, they expected the content, and perhaps also the form, of artworks to express both actual and ideal, desired social realities. Hence they avoided the theoretical position of viewing art as self-reflexive and favoured realism in art. But in Lukács' theory, formalism conflicted with realism, which required art to be related to socio-political reality. His
formalism incorporated ideas such as harmony, unity, and holistic structures.

Althusser preferred to speak of social "formations" rather than systems, and to highlight tensions in society and in works of art, rather than harmony. He moved towards a decentralist theoretical position, holding that there is no central meaning in structures. There is an attempt in such theories to relate meaning to power, so that in the attempt to deconstruct a tyrannical power, meaning is also deconstructed. I am not sure whether while deconstructing power it is necessary to deconstruct meaning.

Freud, Adler and Jung analysed art for the repressed, unconscious drives hidden in various works. This was a plainly reductionist analysis, which ignored the many aspects, including aesthetic, of art. In my view, perhaps some works of art reveal the working of the unconscious, but not all. Art must be seen as multi-facetted, or semantically plural. Various theories reveal its many dimensions.

Structuralism had already done away with the author and his intention, holding that a work of art speaks of general structures and reveals the cultural whole. It speaks the language. But, it seems to me that it may do more than speak a language.

Cultures change and grow, which means that the meaning-complexes within them change. New texts then speak these changes. But even in simply speaking a culture, a text is
creative. This creativity, perhaps primordial, implies an autonomy of art.

Structuralism and post-structuralism both compromise the autonomy of art in favour of intersubjective communities. But these cannot be living entities without individual creativity. Therefore, I tend to the view that the author, the individual work of art, and the reader, all have a creative, constitutive role to play in the ontology of the work of art.

Meaning in the arts other than literary may not be as arbitrary as in language.

Foucault was concerned to uncover the unspoken, forbidden constraints or taboos embodied in languages.

Jacques Lacan was concerned to show that the signifier and signified are related arbitrarily and are meaningful only in a cultural context. The ambiguity of meaning, the loosening of its fixity, helps creative use of language. It releases signs, and sign-systems, including works of art, from fixity of meaning, and gives them a kind of autonomy.

It is said by deconstructionists that signs are contaminated by meaning. But I would point out, it is possible to enjoy the rich inheritance of meaning carried by signs.

Works of art may be referred to as floating signifiers, floating across history. They may be said to have no meaning, no essential being of their own. They are constituted anew by every historical, cultural complex. In Derrida's theory, the very foundations of language were shaken. Derrida said meaning is
always slipping away from signs: meaning is elusive, and always deferred.

With Miller the text as produced by an author, and interpretation produced by a reader were merged. Miller said that the author fails to capture meaning, the reader tries subsequently and also fails, so that the creative activity of criticism goes on, endlessly.

Freudian literary theory held that the psychic drama within the subject comes to be portrayed in art. This I am willing to concede, but the question arises here, what is the concern of Freudian analysis if there is no such thing as a subject? This theory therefore implies the human subject or ego. However, in my view, the positing of the subject need not mean positing of rigid psychic structures, and therefore, rigid structures in art. The structure of language must inevitably fail to signify reality fully. The subject must inevitably share this failure. But, by this very reason, endless development is possible.

The freedom of language from representation of reality is analogous to the freedom, or autonomy of art from mimesis, as representation of reality.

With referential function of language being held as ambiguous by several literary critics, the autonomy of a work of art comes to depend on what view one takes of it.

Feminist literary critics find common cause with post-structuralist theories, because the former are also concerned to deconstruct the autonomy of an art-tradition which they see as
oppressive towards women. Feminist critics take a strong stand against the modernist, humanist view as it is expressed in most modern, literary texts. They hold that the creation of a well-defined form has been largely a male concern, with its urge to control and dominate everything in the world. The female aesthetic mode is a free-flowing one, they hold.

Thus, feminist critics tend to accept the post-structuralist view that meaning in language is elusive, and that art gives rise to a free-play of meaning.

Feminist writers and critics desire a discourse which speaks their own worlds, but they resist discrimination on the basis of sex, by men, which posits them as inferior, lacking etc. They posit an autonomy of female art, yet attempt to deconstruct cultural practices which show them as different.

They create a meandering kind of discourse, whether spontaneously or with effort.

Barthes distinguished between "works" and "texts" in art and literature. The text is not concerned about truth (empirical reality, I understand) and content in art, but is a play of signifiers. It is a site of production of signifying. It is a new kind of art itself, and so gives rise to a new kind of literary theory. This new kind of criticism recognizes the play of signification within itself also. Thus, theory as a meta-language, as autonomous, is questioned here.

Both a literary and a critical text turn back on themselves, to examine their own being and express its nature. There is the
dissolution of the boundary between the two kinds of texts, and a self-reflexivity in both, posited here.

Barthes explains that through history, the written work was seen as stable and fixed, and its stability came to be attributed to language and all cultural institutions. This was an erroneous conceptualization. Post-structuralist texts deconstruct their own stability to reflect the inherent instability of language and cultural institutions.

Riffaterre presents a formalist view of the work of art. His theory is related to Suzanne Langer's, but he also draws on Roman Jakobson. He distinguishes between the ordinary use of language and the poetic one. In the former, he says there is some sort of reference to reality but in the poetic use the reference is to the artistic work's own message. This, to my understanding is an ideational, or self-reflexive, use.

In his first reading, the reader encounters the poem in an ordinary way, but here, Riffaterre says, the reader encounters difficulties, or ungrammaticalities, which prompt him towards the special meaning or message of the work.

In Riffaterre's theory, a work of art emerges autonomous through differentiation between ordinary and poetic language. He also speaks of unity characterizing a work of art as it does not ordinary or empirical reality. But art is neither mimesis, says Riffaterre. It does not represent reality. It is, rather, self-reflexive, in the sense that it refers to a significance within itself. Mimetic elements do form the body of the work, but they are reworked and reorganized into a special significance in the
work. So also, fragments of the culture, fragments of other
texts form part of the body of the work. But whereas post-
structuralist critics hold that these fragments simply inhabit
the text and form an intertextuality, Riffaterre holds that they
are woven into a unity in the text or work of art.

Unlike Langer who consistently speaks of the work in
objective terms, ignoring the subjectivity of both author and
audience, Riffaterre takes into account the reader who actualizes
the work of art. It is in the reader's imagination that the unity
and significance of a work are realized. Thus, Riffaterre
differs with, and goes beyond, Langer's formalism even as he
concurs with it in several important ways, and he sharply differs
with post-structuralists. He does not see language as a largely
undifferentiated discourse, but rather shows the differences
between ordinary, mimetic or representational language, poetic
language and criticism.

Jacques Lacan takes Freudian psychoanalysis further,
clarifying many of Freud's ideas through his own insights,
ispite of his rather abstruse style of writing. The reason why
we include Lacan, primarily a psychoanalyst, in this study is
that he drew connections between language, literature and the
psyche. One of his most important insights was that the psyche
is structured like language, and to my understanding he meant
that it is structured like poetic language. He said further that
the unconscious informs all discourse. This theory is quite
clearly a universalizing one. It not only posits that the
unconscious underlies all discourse, but makes general statements about the unconscious, language, and literature, about signs and eventually about reality and our knowledge about it or the impossibility of formulating knowledge. Lacan also held that the signifier 'I' is empty and migrates from site to site in a discourse. It has serious implications for all, in the relations established through discourse, but its contents are either nil or remain unknown.

Theories about difference, about cultural specificity, which take a stand against universalism, on the other hand, imply a guarded, or limited epistemology, which is relative but positive. These theories state, implicitly or explicitly, that knowledge of reality does come to be formulated within cultures, in modes peculiar to each culture, and according to each culture's basic presuppositions.

Lacan held that the unconscious resists the grasp of the conscious mind which aims at formulating knowledge. It engages in endless wordplay. In this play, signs and meanings are constantly shifting. Signs become sites of interconnections and displacements of meaning. This play of the unconscious is a plenitude of structuration, reflected in literature and the arts.

The unconscious delights in detours. Meaning is promised but never given. The philosophical position here is that reality as well as the unconscious are ambivalent, and no definite truth can be formulated. Only the play, the discourse of art is possible, which is a sort of trembling of signifiers between bipolarities or even multi-polarities of meaning.
One criticism of such a position is that saying anything, even implicitly about reality, the unconscious human mind, and art is itself a formulation of knowledge.

In a sense, art in general becomes omnipotent and omnipresent in Lacan's theory. It is the nature of the unconscious, and fills the gap when epistemology is seen to be impossible. It pervades human being and all discourse. Lacan perhaps put forward a most thoroughgoing autonomy of art.

Lacan explains further that the conscious mind of an individual longs for the elusive unconscious, and in the gap between the two realms of the self, all discourse is born.

Lacan explains that the signifier as well as the conscious self are marked by a lack, an absence of meaning, a gap, while, as I understand his theory, the unconscious, which he refers to as the "other", is a site of plenitude. It is a bliss for the conscious ego to unite with the unconscious, and it is always in search of this happiness. Language too aims at this "jouissance". Thus, as I understand Lacan, the work of art may be the expression of the lack in the conscious subject, and of its search for meaning and "jouissance", or it may be the expression of the plenitude of the unconscious, and of bliss. This ambiguity is not resolved in Lacan's theory. Another possibility is that some works of art represent lack and some, plenitude. In any case, Lacan is not concerned to defend the autonomy of the work of art. But there is an all-pervading autonomy of art implied in his theory.
While Lacan held that all art speaks the unconscious, Michel Foucault held that all art can be analysed or deconstructed to show the workings of political systems or conventions. Holding, as Lacan does, that all knowledge is transient and nothing eternal and certain can be articulated, Foucault shows that all texts can be deconstructed. This looks to me like a "do and die" philosophy.

Foucault sees the quest for certainty in discourse as a quest for power, and the site of social oppression. To my understanding, Foucault adopts the voice of the victim of oppression. This links with Lacan's unconscious other, which is also oppressed by the conscious ego and social formations, and logical languages. Foucault's voice is designed to resist and escape.

His discourse is deliberately a surface-level discourse, because he does not wish to maintain a distinction between surface and depth meanings. According to him, there is no hidden meaning, no essence that a work of art may reveal. Nor is there an essence of the subject, to be discovered. Neither is there an origin of the self to be recollected. If there was, it is irretrievably lost. Thus, there is no possibility of going back to naivete and innocence, through art.

Autonomy clearly comes to mean, for Foucault, the exercise of oppressive power, which must be deconstructed. Yet Foucault advocates a kind of discourse - or works of art - which do exercise a peculiar autonomy: they resist the grasp of powerful
social agencies by presenting meanings which cannot be appropriated. Their weapons in the face of oppression are obscurity and cunning. Foucault's idea of the art-work which escapes through its wily character is akin to Lacan's concept of the elusive unconscious. Lacan is concerned with the individual, while Foucault addresses the problem of oppression at the socio-political level. The link between Lacan and Foucault is the continuation of the orientation towards emancipation of earlier psychoanalytic and Marxist criticism, and their coming together on this basis.

The rhetorical theory of tropes helps to understand Foucault's discourse. "Tropes" are the turns in language which make it poetic. Foucault held that all language is characterised by tropes. In Foucault's writing, political discourse becomes poetry, through tropes.

Foucault shows how the concepts of the autonomy of man, of an author and a text are set up, and used by a society to validate its own professed values, and to exercise power. According to his view, autonomy is not really what it seems to be, but a deceptive construction by existing powers in society. "Autonomy" is used to draw boundaries between the privileged and the not-to-be privileged, the acceptable and not-acceptable, the one and the other. His essay "What is an author?" traces the historical development of such autonomy. The author, he holds, is not even a unity but an aggregate of at least three selves. He advocates a free-flow of discourse, which would not allow
centres of power to come into being, but would release all creativity.

Derrida is a prolific writer and he hopes that his thought will not be systematized into a theory. We can, however, work out its central concepts, concerns and implications, particularly his method of analysing, or deconstructing texts. He uses concepts which are marginalized within a text to deconstruct its central ones.

Derrida holds that writing, with its impersonality, made universalization possible. But, as a student of philosophy, I see universal forms as conceptions of the mind, only medicated by material signs. The material sign is used to refer to the empirical datum as well as the concept, which is ideational and universal.

Derrida questions the differentiation on the basis of which all Western civilization has been built. Western thought has been built on differentiation and oppositions such as speech and writing, self and other, art and non-art. He holds also that this was unavoidable because it was part of the development of history.

If we tamper with this privileging, Derrida holds, the whole edifice of Western thought gets threatened. The differentiation of art and non-art, and the autonomy of the work of art in particular, are seen to be untenable, on this view. Derrida holds that the real position is that there are no simple presences as a concept of autonomy of a work of art would assert,
but one presence is inhabited by traces of others, past and present.

Derrida holds that conflicting elements leading to deconstruction are present in all texts, in fact in language itself, which grows out of differentiation. We can never go beyond language. But we should at least be aware of its inherent contradiction and limitation.

Frederic Jameson, like Foucault, links art with politics. Jameson views the autonomy of art as pathological in several senses, which in my view sometimes conflict in his theorizing. He holds that there is a pathological autonomy to be seen when signifiers, including art-works travel across cultures, as happens in the contemporary global situation. There is a pathological autonomy of art when we cannot relate to great works of art, but only to best-sellers.

The fragmentation of society, with several groups of people trying to assert their identities, is seen as pathological autonomy by Jameson. This is a characteristic Marxist reaction to anti-universalism. The marxist view has been traditionally humanist and universalist, and has been challenged by post-modern, post-structuralist thought. It is understandable that Jameson is in disagreement with this later development of literary and art criticism.

Simultaneously, Jameson takes a critical view of the process of differentiation into self and the other, and of one culture appropriating for itself a dominant position in relation to others. Thus, he speaks for the liberation of cultures from any
dominant one, contradicting the earlier stand. He speaks against the formalist view of art, which disengages it from its historical situation, and looks for certain universal aesthetic qualities.

Jameson traces the roots of the autonomy of art to a time in history when forms were first created in association with magical practices and allegorical narrative. It was further developed in modern civilization, in association with the scientific outlook, measurement, and chronology, all of which are dominant characteristics of modernism. In modern literature and art, however, this perspective came to be challenged, and post-modern discourse carries the challenge or questioning further.

Jameson's theorizing is marked with contradictory assertions. On the whole he sees the autonomy of art in general, and of the art-work in particular, as pathological. He hopes for a recovery of the collective life of society, for which narrative can play a diagnostic role, but is insufficient. He holds that thoroughgoing change can be effected only through socio-political action.

All the thinkers, except the formalist ones, Langer and Riffaterre, considered in this thesis from Chapter I to Chapter V hold problematic relationships with modern Western civilization. Langer and Riffaterre see art as autonomous, and hold that it should be. They see it as different from ordinary language and ordinary, everyday reality. There is a conflict in their theories only between the work of art and ordinary language, and
the work of art and everyday reality. The requirement of these theories is that the work of art be characterized by special aesthetic qualities such as unity, harmony of its internal parts and so on. Since it is disconnected from reality, and marked by general aesthetic qualities, its content may or may not relate to its historical reality.

All the other thinkers considered in the five chapters of this thesis speak against the autonomy of art as put forward by formalist thinkers such as Langer and Riffaterre. They are in conflict with the basic concepts of modern western civilization, autonomy being one of them. In one way or another, they are concerned to deconstruct boundaries to have a free-flowing discourse, to set free signifiers including art-works, from fixed, unitary meanings and to set societies free of hegemonies.

There are inherent contradictions in the theories of most of these thinkers, even as these are full of sparkling insights. For instance, they are oriented to deconstruct the autonomy of art so that instead of standing isolated it relates to historical reality. But they argue that discourse does not refer to reality at all, is not referential, but self-reflexive, and thus they posit an autonomy of discourse.

In Lacan's theory, literary language gains a thoroughgoing autonomy, through the unconscious. With Foucault, literary language gains autonomy as informing all political discourse. With Barthes, all discourse is autonomous in the sense it is free-flowing, unimpeded by any controlling agency.
However, Derrida acknowledges the paradoxical nature of discourse, for while attempting to deconstruct a thought system, discourse remains caught in the dialectic or contradictory nature of language. Jameson's theory is marked by several contradictions as he tries to maintain his modernist Marxist orientation but leans also towards the post-structuralist dismantling of modern, Western thought.

The last chapter of this thesis has been devoted to the thought of Indian thinkers, namely, Rabindranath Tagore and Ananda Coomaraswamy, as well as an Indian artist, namely, K.K. Hebbar. The study of the historical situation in which their thought came to be formulated, and in which the artist Hebbar worked, shows that they inherited much of the ideational content of their theories from earlier, and contemporary thinkers. However, their thought and work is also distinctive.

A reference to the strained cultural relations between a Western colonizing power and colonized subjects cannot be avoided in this study. The question of the autonomy of art in this context included a question of autonomy from Western cultural hegemony. But that was not all. It included a troubled relation to cultural traditions of the home country. Tagore studied the cultural inheritance. He was also open to other cultures of the world. He formulated a universalist philosophy of art, but it was a universalism which made allowance for a great diversity of forms, and great creativity. He was, in fact, explicitly critical towards the repetition of cultural forms which constitute past tradition.
Coomaraswamy, on the other hand, defended the art and the whole cultural complex of what he conceived of as the Indian tradition. He consciously attempted to formulate a universalist philosophy which related Indian spiritual concepts to European medieval ones. He explicitly rejected both the materialistic modern culture of the West, as well as modern art, failing to see that the latter comprised several movements which constituted revolts against the former. The saving grace that marks Coomaraswamy's thought is that it may be understood as a defense of the cultural specificity of Indian traditions against the hegemony of the modern Western ones. Nor can he be said to have held a monolithic view of Indian culture, for he studied its many different strains, and appreciated its mainstream as well as folk forms.

The artist Hebbar's work is notable for the loosening of forms and boundaries which is discernible in it, and thus it represents a post-structuralist-post-colonial creativity. It has traces of various traditions as well as creative resolutions of problems.

All the thinkers considered in this study except the formalist ones, are concerned to dismantle the autonomy of art in favor of cultural relatedness and responsiveness of art, but the autonomy of art creeps back into their theories, in one way or another. They all have some kind of hope that art will act towards the emancipation of men, women, nature and various cultural groups from the oppressive hegemony of modern, Western civilization. But such a creative, critical and emancipatory
role cannot be expected of an art which is not autonomous. The competence of art to enunciate criticism, implicit or explicit, requires that it is not altogether embedded in a cultural context.

On my part, I have certain critical reservations about post-structuralist-post-modernist thought. These are mainly that (a) Post-modernism has some implicit, foundational tenets, which it could easily make explicit, but avoids doing so, (b) that it is doubtful whether anarchist deconstruction as an aesthetic strategy can achieve the desired goals of socio-political transformation, (c) that it is possible that post-modernism will remain as alien and autonomous a stream of thought and aesthetic creativity as the earlier, modernist one in opposition to which it came into existence; for if the modernist intellectual world was abstruse to larger society, post-modern thought may prove even more befuddling, and may be rejected on this account.

One of the contradictions within postmodern thought is that it speaks of the loosening of the boundaries of concepts, including that of the autonomous work of art, while at the same time it aims at deconstructing the hegemony of dominating cultural forms and asserts cultural specificity. The assertion of the specificity of cultures requires definition and the drawing of boundaries.

Again, while postmodern thought asserts the specificity of cultures, as well as emphasizes historicity, it speaks of the inhabiting of forms by traces of other forms, from other cultures and historical periods.
Yet another problem set up by postmodern thought in connection with cultural specificity is the repeated assertion of the self-reflexivity of language. On this view, a work of art can be understood only within the culture in which it comes to be created, and the medium, that is, the language in which it is created refers not to external reality but to itself. Thus, the mimetic function of the work of art, that is, its function of relating to, or representing reality is already closed by the medium or language itself, and in this sense it is autonomous.

My own understanding of this problem is that sign-systems are both ideational and referential. Their ideational function has perhaps been over-emphasized by postmodern thinkers. A culture is not only a complex of interrelated concepts but is at the same time a form of life in which reality is negotiated, and I may add, exploited and even devastated.

With regard to the autonomy of the work of art itself, I am led by this study to the view that the characteristic of autonomy cannot be said to be a general characteristic of art, that is, one which marks every work of art in terms of its content. Through its content a work may be related to society, history etc, or it may be devoid of content, as an abstract work is. In terms of form however, the work of art does exercise some autonomy. This indicates that it is distinct from other objects. I mean to assert this even when the form it exhibits is open-ended, flows into other texts and so on. For, if it did not have
some residual form of its own, there would be no works of art at all, only a completely fluid, undifferentiated discourse.

One may conclude from this research that the concept of art is multi-faceted, or plural in meaning, so that a particular work of art may be found to require a different definition from another particular. For instance, a work may be mimetic of nature, while another may speak of socio-political reality predominantly, in which latter case, Adorno's definition of mimesis as representation of social reality would be valid. One work of art may have a well-defined contour, separating itself from its matrix and standing apart, appropriating autonomy, while another may be open to several other texts, as if it has no demarcation which distinguishes it from these other texts. Here, the former kind of work would show Langer's theory to be valid, and the latter would validate a number of post-structuralist or post-modern theories.

I would point out here that even a well-defined, autonomous work of art may incorporate socio-political concerns, as Adorno holds.

It is interesting to note that while, during the Renaissance, the formulation of autonomy was a source of joy to humans, now its deconstruction is. This joyous loss of definition, of self, or of a work of art, may or may not be a spiritual experience: for thinkers like Barthes, it is not; for Tagore and Coomaraswamy, it is.

Thus, the many theories of art researched here reveal the work of art to be definable in several ways. In Barthes' theory
we find an acknowledgement that the question of the autonomy of a work depends on how the work itself is constructed.

Even if one posits a unitary spiritual principle as a fundamental presupposition in one’s cosmology, this need not entail an essentialism in one’s aesthetics. To my understanding, not all works of art symbolize the Absolute; rather, most express the difference of forms which the Absolute assumes.

But the positing or negating of an Absolute, monistic, spiritual principle is related to the question of meaning. Theories which posit an ultimate Reality tend to affirm meaning, and those which do not tend to posit an absence, or lack of meaning in signifying systems, including art-works. It may be noted that in both cases, an endless signifying process is posited: in the first, because reality being in excess, signification is never complete, and in the second, because the absence of meaning creates either an anxious, endless search for meaning, or an endless playful substitution and inter-connection of signifiers.

To my understanding, reality is always in excess of signification. In this sense, the work of art is always doomed to failure, and its autonomy is compromised. What it posits is always unstable, tentative and dynamic.

It must be noted that this research reveals the paradox that human beings find joy both in the creation and in the dissolution of form. Parallely, with respect to the sense of self, humans were at times concerned to construct a distinct concept of the
self, and sometimes enjoyed losing the self in other realities, or in post-modern parlance, into a borderless intertextuality, and in some cultures, into an expansive spiritual experience that is held to be universal.

Lastly, it is my view that a work of art retains a degree of autonomy on the basis of individual creativity, without which no aesthetic activity, no fresh thinking, no hope of socio-political change is possible. It is true that culture consists of a flowing discourse of interrelated people, and even that the self and the other are constitutive of each other, but if there were no intelligent persons contributing with some degree of autonomy to discourse, there could be no discourse at all.