# THE OBJECT OF LITERARY CRITICISM

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Richard Shusterman

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# THE OBJECT OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Richard Shusterman, St. John's College, Oxford University.

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## ABSTRACT

The intentionally ambiguous title of my thesis suggests both the notion of the object at which literary criticism is directed and also the notion of the objective toward which it is directed. The first involves the problems of the identity and ontological status of the literary work, while the second involves the two primary aims of literary criticism: interpretation and evaluation. These four issues are individually analyzed in separate chapters, and my positions on them are presented and defended, while rival positions are critically examined. Moreover, I demonstrate that all four issues are conceptually very closely related and that positions on one inevitably influence positions on the others.

I begin, however, by treating three problems of methodological importance for my study: justification for concentrating on literature, literature's relation to the other arts, and analysis of the concept of literature. Justification is largely by appeal to the distortions of general aesthetics; literature is related to the other arts by showing its anomalous position in the performing/non-performing arts classification; the concept of literature reveals seven logical characteristics and its scope is indicated.

Chapter two introduces the four major issues and traces the complex network of conceptual interrelations which link them. Chapter three shows that the literary work is ontologically complex in at least three different ways, while chapter four reveals three different concepts of work-identity current in criticism and portrays the complexity of our practices of identifying and individuating literary works. The final chapters argue that interpretation and evaluation exhibit not only a plurality of methods and standards, but also logical plurality. Interpretative and evaluative logic each have at least three different aspects, and with respect to each of these aspects, we find a variety of 'logics' fruitfully practiced by qualified critics.

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# INTRODUCTION

The title of my thesis is intentionally ambiguous and is meant to convey both the notion of the entity which is the object or focus of literary criticism, that which criticism is directed at, and also the notion of the objective or purpose of literary criticism, that which criticism is directed towards. The first notion involves the problems of the identity and ontological status of the literary work of art, and the second involves what are generally considered the two primary aims of literary criticism: interpretation and evaluation of the literary work of art. These four controversial issues will be considered and analyzed in turn with the aim of presenting cogent and consistent positions on all of them, while critically examining some rival positions that have been propounded by philosophers and critics.

I hope not only to treat these issues independently but also to show that there are close relations between them. The two different pairs of problems which my title ambiguously suggests - identity and ontological status, interpretation and evaluation - are typically treated separately and independently by philosophers of art. I shall try to show, however, that all four issues are conceptually very closely related and that answers or positions on one inevitably tend to influence positions on the others.

Since any dissertation in the philosophy of literary criticism may be expected to deal with the nature and concept of literature, I shall begin with an introductory chapter which discusses these matters and also tries both to justify my concentration on literature and to relate literature to the other arts. This is followed by a chapter introducing the problems of the identity, ontological status, interpretation, and evaluation of the literary work and tracing their intimate interrelations. Individual chapters are then devoted to detailed treatment of each of these four issues, and a brief conclusion completes the thesis.

One final introductory remark is in order. As a study in analytic aesthetics or meta-criticism, my thesis attempts to account for actual critical practice, not to legislate or speculate how criticism should or might be practiced. This calls for considerable empirical evidence drawn from the writings of qualified critics. Though I set great store by the empirical orientation of my thesis, I regret the extra length it necessitates.

# CHAPTER ONE

## AESTHETICS AND LITERATURE

Philosophy is often thought to deal primarily with the most general features or principles of any area of inquiry, and thus it may be expected of a philosopher in the field of aesthetics to provide general statements or theories about the arts. Since my philosophical efforts in this dissertation are confined on the whole to the single art of literature, it seems advisable to begin by trying to justify my parochial concentration on literature and show how this art stands in regard to other arts, thereby relating my specific inquiry to the general field of aesthetics. Further, it would seem prudent to begin a dissertation on literature with some discussion of the scope and logic of the concept of literature and some consequent indication of what literature will be taken to be or include. These introductory tasks constitute my program for the present chapter.

### I

1. The justificatory question of why a student of aesthetics should focus on the single art of literature contains in fact at least two questions: why focus on a single art? and why on literature? Let us take them one at a time. There is, I think, very good reason for the aesthetician to concentrate on a single art form, since the

questionable unity of the arts and their unquestionable diversity would seem to doom much general aesthetic theory either to ignoring or distorting important facts or to all-accomodating emptiness. For the past three decades the unity of the arts and the consequent viability and value of aesthetic theory have been ruthlessly questioned. It has been argued by Gallie,[1] Weitz,[2] and Kennick[3] that the arts have no significant common denominator or essence and that consequently traditional general aesthetic theories which try to define this common essence rest on a mistake and are logically incapable of truth. When we look at "the bewildering variety of objects and activities that have been prized as art",[4] we find at most "different relations of likeness"[5] or "strands of similarities"[6] or family resemblances. The unity of the arts has also been questioned historically, Kristeller[7] having shown that it

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1. W. B. Gallie, "The Function of Philosophical Aesthetics", in F. J. Coleman (ed.), Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics, New York, 1968.

2. M. Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", in Coleman, op. cit.

3. W. E. Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?", in Coleman, op.cit.

4. Gallie, op. cit., p. 396.

5. Ibid.

6. Weitz, op.cit., p. 89.

7. P. O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics", Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 12 and 13, 1951 and 1952.

was only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the grouping together of the fine arts was effected to form our modern concept of art.

This anti-essentialist attitude, this questioning of the unity of the arts, has sometimes reached a degree where the very validity of the concept of art and the possibility of aesthetics have been doubted. V. Turner seems to challenge the former:

> "What is art that there should be a pure essence of it, of whatever kind? There is no such thing as art. Art is nothing but a general word, of quite modern coinage, to designate the activities of epic poets and lyric poets, of writers of tragedy and comedy, some historians and philosophers and novelists, of painters ... - but I will not continue the list... And ... the longer and harder we look the more diverse do these activities come to appear to be."[8]

J. A. Passmore similarly challenges aesthetics, suggesting:

> "that the dullness of aesthetics arises from the attempt to construct a subject where there isn't one" ... [and] perhaps the truth is that there is no aesthetics and yet there are principles of literary criticism, principles of music criticism, etc."[9]

One feels that in these last remarks the anti-essentialists do protest too much; for surely there is such

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8. V. Turner, "The Desolation of Aesthetics", in J. M. Todd (ed.), The Arts, Artists, and Thinkers, London, 1958, pp. 281-82.

9. J. A. Passmore, The Dreariness of Aesthetics", in Coleman, op. cit., p. 439.

a thing as art even if it does not contain a common essence or uniform range of activities; and surely there is such a thing as aesthetics even if it does not contain any wholly satisfactory general theories. But their lack of novelty and frequent overstatement should not blind us to the validity of these anti-essentialist admonitions. To appreciate properly their vehemence and value we must remember the stifling background of essentialist aesthetic theory against which they were made: Croce-Collingwood Idealism and Bell-Fry 'Significant Formalism'. Having long been freed from the spell of these theories, we may find assertions of the irreducible plurality of the arts tiresomely trivial. Moreover, new theories of art have recently been proposed which claim to find the unity of the arts in their role in society. Proponents of such institutional theories of art have even challenged the view that a general definition of art is logically impossible and have indeed provided definitions.[10]

Whether or not we can find a basic unity or satisfactory definition of art is not an issue which I feel compelled to resolve here. For my purposes it is enough that the issue exists. Since once we grant that the unity of the arts is highly questionable and that the arts are extremely diverse, we should realize that generalizations about all the arts are likely to be either inaccurate or uselessly vague, and that therefore it may be advisable to concentrate our aesthetic theorizing on individual arts and not on art as a whole. Passmore thus complains of the wooly dreariness of aesthetics "as arising out of the attempt to impose a spurious unity on things, the spuriousness being reflected in the emptiness of the formulae in which that unity is described."[11] But even defenders of aesthetic unity, such as Sparshott, confess that aesthetic generalizations can be very dangerous and that "much that is said about 'art' is really applicable to one art or group of arts only."[12] Art, for example, has been said to be the representation of reality, but while such representation may be essential to much painting, sculpture, and literature, this hardly seems a central element in the non-representational arts of music and architecture; that is, unless we stretch the notion of representation to all-accomodating and equivocal vagueness or rather misrepresent the central features of these arts.[13] Thus, if the arts are so diverse and if generalizations about art as a whole are consequently dangerous, it seems a prudent policy to concentrate one's philosophical inquiries on one art at a time. A general aesthetic theory may even be the ultimate goal, but a piecemeal approach such as that undertaken here

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[10] See G. Dickie's institutional definition of art in his Aesthetics, New York, 1971, pp. 98-108.

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11. Passmore, op. cit., p. 434.

12. F. C. Sparshott, The Structure of Aesthetics, London, 1963, p. 114.

13. C. L. Stevenson shows this problem in his "Symbolism in the Nonrepresentational Arts" in J. Hospers (ed.), Introductory Readings in Aesthetics, London, 1969; see also M. Macdonald, "Art and Imagination", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 53, 1952-3, pp. 205-07.

would seem to safeguard us from some of the distortive or wooly generalizing which has plagued much of traditional aesthetics.

It will not, of course, safeguard us from all wooliness and distortive generalization, for these problems may also plague theorizing about a single art. Certainly the unity of literature or of any other art may also be questioned. Yet any particular art will be more uniform and homogeneous than art as a whole. Thus diverse as literature may be (and later discussion will reveal the extent of its diversity), it still obviously presents a far more unified domain than that of art in general. As a result, theorizing and generalization about literature or indeed any other art should be much less dangerous than about art as a whole.

This piecemeal approach of taking one art at a time has been suggested by several aestheticians. Not surprisingly, Passmore advocates "an intensive special study of the separate arts",[14] but there are other aestheticians far less sceptical of the validity of general aesthetic theory who nevertheless seem to recommend the piecemeal study of the separate arts as perhaps the safest and most thorough method of reaching an adequate general theory. Beardsley, for example, who provides general theories of aesthetic evaluation, aesthetic experience, and the ontological status of the aesthetic object, nonetheless complains of the dangers involved in treating the arts as a uniform whole and suggests a piecemeal or pluralistic approach.

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[14] Passmore, op. cit., p. 443

> "There is a monistic approach to the arts that is committed from the start to the axiom that they are completely parallel...This generally leads to confusion. It forces the evidence as far as it can, and when that fails it achieves apparent symmetry at the cost of equivocation. We shall do well to start out as pluralists, though prepared to note parallelisms where they can be established".[15]

Beardsley thus recommends a piecemeal approach where first we separately consider "the various arts in some detail and with some care";[16] and this done,

> "we can then group together disjunctively the class of musical compositions, visual designs, literary works, and all other separately defined classes of objects, and give the name 'aesthetic object' to them all. Then an aesthetic object is anything that is either a musical composition, a literary work, and so forth".[17]

Aestheticians, then, have often recommended detailed inquiry into the separate arts as a prudent procedure. Yet more often than not they have devoted most of their efforts to the formulation of general aesthetic theories, perhaps because ambition and impatience have overcome prudence. But for me the detailed study of some central problems of a single art is ambitious enough, and I must appeal for patience in the hope that such limited studies may someday result in general aesthetic conclusions. Moreover, if the essentialists are right, and there is a basic uniformity of the arts, our conclusions about literature should be highly relevant and applicable to the other arts. They could well be reflections of general aesthetic truths, and we might indeed infer the general from the specific.

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[15] M. C. Beardsley, Aesthetics, New York, 1958, p. 65.

[16] Ibid., p. 63.

[17] Ibid., p. 64; P. Ziff ("The Task of Defining a Work of Art", in Coleman, op. cit.) and R. Wollheim (Art and its Objects, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1970, pp. 17-19) also suggest such a piecemeal approach to defining a work of art, though the latter decides to reject it as impractically long.

Thus Croce, an essentialist and vehement denouncer of the pluralistic approach to art, admits that results of general validity and value have been achieved by "persons engaged in constructing theories of particular arts", since "it was inevitable that the ideas presented by such thinkers should be (as indeed they are) nothing more than general aesthetic conclusions".[18] Croce, for example, praises Hanslick's observations on music which "denote acute penetration of the nature of art" though "Hanslick thought he was dealing with the peculiarities of music instead of with the universal and constitutive character of every form of art".[19]

Moreover, another defender of the unity of aesthetics, Sparshott, argues that "the real justification of the use of the concept of art and attempts to construct general theories of art would be the existence of general problems occurring with each of the arts and with nothing else."[20] If this is

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18. B. Croce, Aesthetic, D. Ainslie (trans.), New York, 1970, p. 412.

19 Ibid., p. 414.

20. Sparshott, op. cit., p. 108.

so, by taking one art and analyzing in detail some of the major problems connected with it, problems which also arise with other arts, we are likely to obtain results that have some relevance for more than the single art studied. The problems I shall discuss in connection with literature - the identity, ontological status, interpretation, and evaluation of works of art - are surely central to other arts as well. Thus, our piecemeal procedure also seems prudential in that by narrowing our scope to a single art we are not necessarily confining ourselves to what is peculiar to that art and not precluding the possibility of reaching conclusions of general relevance and value.

Finally, even if one rejects the detailed study of a single art as a method or contribution toward general aesthetic theory, one can in the end appeal to the fact that the detailed analysis of these central problems in literature or in another art has its own interest and value, irrespective of its role in forwarding general aesthetic theory.

Though some partitioning of aesthetic inquiry is usually advisable, if not necessary, one ought not assume that confining oneself to a single art is the only way of dividing aesthetic inquiry into manageable units. The notion of common problems in the various arts suggests another kind of piecemeal approach. Instead of concentrating on a particular art, one could concentrate on a particular problem which arises with various arts and see whether or how the problem differently presents itself in these arts and how it should be resolved in each of them. However, although there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this way of carving aesthetics into more digestible pieces, it still has some of the danger of the essentialist approach. For though the aesthetician may be aware of the variety of the arts generally speaking, when considering a particular problem he is still likely to generalize from one art to another. Impatience to make progress and the inexorable instinct for simplification may lead him to assume that facts and features of the problem which seem clear and unmistakeable with respect to one art are fully and simply transferable to other arts.

This dangerous tendency of hasty generalization is manifested with painful clarity in Collingwood's treatment of the problem of the ontological status of the work of art. After labouring to establish that the work of music is an imaginary object, i.e., neither a spatiotemporal nor perceptual sound pattern, Collingwood simply assumes that this ontological conclusion with respect to music can be immediately transferred to all other arts without further argument, despite the fact that common sense and critical practice seem clearly to the contrary.

> "It is unnecessary to go through the form of applying what has been said about music to the other arts. We must try instead to make in a positive shape the point that has been put negatively. Music does not consist of heard noises, paintings do not consist of seen colours, and so forth. Of what, then, do these things consist?...The work of art proper

> is something not seen or heard but something imagined".[21]

The power of this generalizing or assimilating tendency is so great that even a proponent of the pluralistic approach like Beardsley seems to succumb to it, much as Collingwood does, in treating the same problem of the ontological status of aesthetic objects. Beardsley, like Collingwood, begins by considering the art of music where we seem to distinguish clearly between the object of aesthetic appreciation - heard sound - and its physical base of sound waves, and where it is thus perhaps reasonable to conclude that the aesthetic object is perceptual rather than spatiotemporal. He is then naturally drawn to extend this distinction and its ontological consequences to all other arts, even to the plastic arts where by his own confession the distinction "may seem less clear and important"[22] and only amounts to "not a distinction between two objects, but between two aspects of the same object".[23] Yet despite these admissions of difference and his (albeit subsequent) declaration of the danger of the monistic approach in aesthetics, Beardsley still insists on treating painting like music and thus unconvincingly concludes that the object of aesthetic appreciation in the art of painting or, as Collingwood would say, the work of painting proper, is a mere perceptual

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21. R. G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art, Oxford, 1958, pp. 141-2.
22. Beardsley, op. cit., p. 33.
23. Ibid.

object and not a spatiotemporal one.

Thus, even when we limit ourselves to a particular problem, we find that in taking on all the arts we are still likely to make hasty generalizations, assimilating one art to another, taking a convincing position with respect to one art as paradigmatic and then compelling all other arts to conform to it, even when this involves some distortion. Of course, the fact that this alternative piecemeal procedure has its dangers does not mean that it is not worth pursuing. Every method has its dangers and shortcomings, and no procedure can guarantee that progress be made without any risk of error. However, partly because of these dangers of distortive assimilation, I prefer to carve out my domain of aesthetic inquiry in a different direction and focus on a single art and some of its central problems.

2. Though I hope to have justified my concentration on a single art and a cluster of problems relating to it, I still face the second justificatory question: Why literature? Here I must confess that my main justification is a subjective one. I feel far more confident in speaking about the art (and criticism) of literature than I do about any of the other arts, and this greater confidence derives from greater familiarity. Aesthetic inquiry requires more than mere knowledge of logical principles but also a knowledge of the arts, and the greater the knowledge the better. My knowledge of literature and literary criticism may prove inadequate for satisfactorily dealing with the problems I shall consider, but it is surely far more adequate than my

knowledge of other arts and their criticism. But this subjective justification has a more than narrowly personal appeal, because most of us are most familiar with literature. For we are all to some extent masters of speech - the medium of literature, and unhappily few of us demonstrate comparable mastery of the media of other arts.

Moreover, my choice of literature from among the arts may be approved for reasons other than greater personal or general familiarity with it. As some aestheticians have noted,[24] literature has a special interest for the philosopher since he is by profession a student of language and its uses - and literature is certainly among them. Indeed literature appears to be anomalous among the arts in that it alone seems to have no special characteristic medium or rather that its characteristic medium is none other than ordinary language. However, there is another interesting aspect in which literature seems to differ from the other arts, and it might be worth examining in detail this apparent anomaly in order to compare literature to the other arts and thus help relate our study of literature to the general field of aesthetics from which we will proceed to isolate it.

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[24] See, for example, W. Charlton, Aesthetics, London, 1970

# II

1. Several contemporary philosophers of art have observed this apparent anomaly about literature. They note that the art of literature does not seem to fall securely into place in the rough but relatively clear classification of the major arts which has been generally recognized by contemporary aestheticians. The classification I speak of groups the plastic arts of painting and sculpture on one side and the arts of music, drama, and dance on the other. Literature tends to be grouped with the latter, but this assignation is often regarded as problematic, since literature seems to differ from music, drama, and dance on some of the very same principles which distinguish these arts from the plastic arts in the above classification.

It is interesting, and perhaps typical, that though aestheticians may agree on this classification they often disagree as to the precise principle upon which it is based. Some, e.g., Nelson Goodman,[25] stress that this classification is based on whether or not the given art has a notation which defines the essential elements or "constitutive properties" of a particular work of that art and thus permits fully authentic reproduction of examples of the work through reproduction of these constitutive properties. Goodman calls those arts of our second group which are so notationally defined _allographic_ arts, and he distinguishes them from the autographic plastic arts. Other aestheticians, e.g., J. O. Urmson,[26] try to explain the above classification of arts in terms of the familiar distinction between the performing and non-performing arts.

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[25] N. Goodman, _Languages of Art_, Oxford, 1969.

However, with either approach literature holds an anomalous position. For Goodman, though literature is classified as allographic, it differs from the other allographic arts in that it involves only a notational scheme and not a notational system,[27] in that authenticity may be achieved through mere copying and not complying with the defining notation, and in that it is a one-stage art like painting and requires no performance to exist fully or be properly appreciated. For Urmson, the anomaly of literature is that although it seems that literature should be grouped with the performing arts with which it shares a problematic concept of work-identity, literature certainly does not seem to be nor is in fact generally classified as a performing art and seems to require no performing artist for its proper appreciation. As Urmson puts it:

> "we cannot readily assimilate literature to sculpture and painting. For one thing,

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[26] J. O. Urmson, "Literature", in G. Dickie and R. J. Sclafani (eds.), Aesthetics, New York, 1977.

[27] The definition of and differences between notational schemes and notational systems are discussed by Goodman at great length and technicality in chapter four of Languages of Art.

> the identity of the novel or other literary work seems to be problematic in the same way as that of the musical, balletic or theatrical work. In the case of these other arts we have attempted to explain their problematic status in terms of a recipe or set of instructions for executant artists. But how can the literary work be a set of instructions for executant artists if there are none such?"[28]

Rather than further compare these two approaches, I shall examine the alleged anomaly and attempts to resolve it within the more traditional framework of performing versus non-performing arts as represented in the work of Urmson. There are at least three reasons for imposing this restriction on my study. For one, Goodman's constructionist conceptual apparatus would require a very long and detailed exposition before we could examine how effectively it handles our problem of anomaly. Secondly, behind the differing terminology and temperament, the two approaches are not so vastly different. Goodman's defining allographic notational system is not so very different from Urmson's humbler "recipe or set of performing instructions",[29] and Goodman's one-stage/two-stage art distinction is rather similar though not wholly parallel to the distinction between non-performing and performing art. Finally, and most importantly, I believe that conceptual inflation may be as burdensome as ontological inflation and that we should therefore try to avail ourselves of existent, established conceptual currency (and the performing/non-performing conceptual apparatus surely seems solid and established) before burdening ourselves with the construction and mastery of new conceptual systems.

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[28] Urmson, op. cit., p. 337.

[29] Ibid., p. 335.

2. In turning to Urmson's treatment of the anomaly of literature we are immediately aware of one crucial assumption or underlying tendency: the anomaly is not to be tolerated; it must somehow be explained away. Otherwise, the general theory by which the arts may be divided into the non-performing arts with unproblematic work-identity and the performing arts with problematic work-identity is seen to be gravely threatened. For Urmson believes that "if the theory will not work when applied to literature, that certainly casts doubt upon its acceptability",[30] because "we surely need a theory which will account equally for all cases in which the identity of the work is problematic".[31]

We thus face the problem of finding an executant artist or performance that is essentially involved in the work of literature, so that we may assimilate literary art to the performing arts and thus more securely group it with the arts of music, drama, and dance where Urmson and indeed most of us think it belongs.[32]

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[30] Urmson, op. cit., p. 337.

[31] Ibid.

Now it seems to me, off hand, that this problem may be formulated too harshly. Perhaps it would be enough to point out that literary art admits of performance and may often be performed in order to link it to the performing arts and to distinguish it sharply from arts like painting and sculpture where, at least traditionally, there is no notion of performance whatever. Certainly we have often encountered what might be considered performances (we call them readings) of many poems, and it requires no imagination to conceive of a performance of a work of prose such as a story, for such works are also sometimes so performed. Yet the very notion of a performance of a traditional work of plastic art like the Mona Lisa or the David seems utterly preposterous.

Thus, literature's capacity to be performed and the fact that it is often actually performed seems quite sufficient to link literary art with the performing arts;

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[32] Accomodating literature into his classificatory theory of the arts is not Urmson's only goal and perhaps not even his major one. There is also the aim of determining the identity and ontological status (Urmson seems to identify the two) of the literary work of art, a goal to which we too shall later devote considerable efforts. Urmson indeed begins by asserting that he wishes "to raise and suggest answers to two questions about literature", the first being "the question of the ontological status of a literary work"(ibid., p. 334); and later he argues that even if we reject the second question - literature's apparent anomaly with respect to his classificatory theory, "there will still be the old traditional problem of the identity of the literary work" (ibid., p. 337).

perhaps as a blackish sheep but still definitely part of the herd. Do we also need to assert and argue further that "literature is in logical character a performing art"[33] and thus "is essentially an oral art"[34] in order to group it with the performing arts and not with the non-performing arts? I think this is an important question and that the answer is clearly 'no'. The desired linking is, I think, satisfied by viewing literature as a performable rather than an essentially performing art.

Unfortunately, however, the problem has been formulated as one of strict logical character or essence as the above quotations from Urmson indicate. Thus, for Urmson, the task of linking or assimilation is the very difficult one of showing that literature is essentially a performing and oral art and thus of finding or accounting for performance in literature even when there does not seem to be any involved, for example, when one reads a literary work silently to oneself.

3. Let us start with one attempt to accomplish this task which Urmson considers but wisely rejects. According to this view, when one silently reads a literary work to oneself one is simultaneously performer and audience as when one plays the piano or orally delivers a dramatic speech to

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[33] Urmson, op. cit. p. 339.

[34] Ibid., p. 338.

oneself. Urmson rejects this method of assimilation and the anology on which it is based on the grounds that in these cases of music and drama we can distinguish between the performer's reading of instructions (score or script) and his compliance with them involving technical and interpretative skills, but in the allegedly analogous case of silent reading of literature "we have to collapse into one act his reading of the instructions and his compliance with them".[35]

I find this argument quite comeplling, but one might suggest a way out of it (albeit perhaps a desperate one) as a means of saving the notion of silent reading as performance. One might propose, as indeed Barbara Herrnstein Smith does, that silent reading actually "consists of two theoretically distinct activities".[36]

> "The reader is required to produce, from his correct 'spelling' of a spatial array of marks upon a page, a temporally organized and otherwise defined structure of sounds - or, if you like, pseudo-sounds".[37]

Smith's correct spelling could perhaps serve as Urmson's act of correctly reading the instructions while the production of the structure of pseudo-sounds would constitute compliance with the instructions. Thus literature's analogy with the performing arts might be saved with respect to this distinction between reading and complying with the set of instructions.

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[35] Urmson, op. cit. p. 338.

[36] B.H. Smith, "Literature as Performance, Fiction, and Art", _Journal of Philosophy_ vol. 67, 1970, p. 556.

[37] Ibid.

Mrs. Smith's solution is certainly bold, but, to me, hardly satisfying, and it would no doubt be rejected by Urmson who refuses to construe musical score-reading as reading plus silent or 'hummed-to-oneself' performance. But Urmson's only apparent argument against a position like Smith's seems to be that such silent performances, "would be intolerably bad".[38] This is surely true but hardly decisive, for sadly enough all too many real performances are intolerably bad.

Graver objections, however, can be brought against Smith's theory. First her notion of pseudo-sounds is decidedly unpalatable. I have no idea of what a pseudo-sound is or should be. Is it perhaps a voiceless mouthing or merely a mental mouthing, or perhaps just a cerebral flutter? Smith does indeed reassure us that "the physical or neurophysiological source of the structure generated by the silent reader is of little significance here: it may originate in his musculature or peripheral or central nervous system, or the source may vary from reader to reader".[39] But this is hardly comforting for one who has never come across or located a pseudo-sound, and seems to suggest that essentially it could be anything, which in turn suggests that it is essentially nothing but a fiction introduced to save a theory.

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[38] Urmson, op. cit., p. 339. Urmson's arguments here are not directed specifically at silent reading of literature but must be borrowed from what he considers to be the analogous case of score-reading in music. Urmson's other point here, that score readers "need hear no sound" would not apply to Smith's position which insists only on pseudo-sounds.

[39] Smith, op. cit., p. 556.

Secondly, assuming for the moment that a pseudo-sound is either a voiceless mouthing or a conscious recognition or imagining of the sound that would be heard if the work were read aloud, it surely does not seem to be the case that in reading silently to oneself one must always either mouth or imagine the sound of the words read; though in certain cases, e.g., with poor readers or in reading a poem for scansion, either or both activities may be involved. It may be retorted that though we are unaware of it, we always do and in fact must imagine or recognize the likely sounds of the words we read. Urmson himself will indeed assert something like this. But such an assertion would imply that people born deaf could not read or at least not appreciate literature, since they cannot recognize or imagine the sounds that would be heard if the work of literature were read aloud and this defect should likewise prevent them from producing the correct correspondent pseudo-sounds.

However, the most important objection to Smith's defense of literature[40] as an essentially performing art is that it violates and perverts the established notion of performance in the performing arts. In all the traditional performing arts, performance is a public affair, a spatiotemporal event which can serve as the common object of criticism. Even if one performs a piece of music, drama, or dance for no audience, the performance is nevertheless in principle observable and public. But the performance of pseudo-sounds in one's head or nervous system when one reads silently to onself is hardly the same kind of performance for it is private and inaccessible. We cannot prevent Smith from considering or calling this a performance. But we may very justly object that since the notion of performance is so essentially different in the traditional performing arts, Smith's notion of silent literary performance does not warrant the assimilation of literature to these performing arts, and thus to speak of literature as essentially a performing art is extremely misleading. With its questionable notion of pseudo-sound and its perversion of the notion of performance (to include what is at best but pseudo-performance), Mrs. Smith's solution must, I think, be rejected.

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[40] In fairness to Mrs. Smith, it must be pointed out that she explicitly confines her silent reading theory to poetry and not to all literature. Prose seems to be considered essentially different from poetry in that it is neither oral nor performatory but rather 'representation of inscribed discourse'. Thus, in contrast to the poem, the prose work is fully constituted by its text and fully exists when there is such a text (ibid., p. 557).

4. Urmson's means of assimilating literature to the performing arts is far superior, but, as I later argue, not wholly satisfying. Though he explicitly asserts that "literature is in principle a performing art",[41] is in logical character a performing art, and thus "is essentially an oral

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[41] Urmson, op. cit., p. 337.

art",[42] Urmson sensibly admits that in silent readings of literary works there are no counterpart silent performances to guarantee the essentially performing nature of literary art. Instead of positing the far-fetched notion of silent, pseudo-performances of a text, Urmson introduces the notion of imagining or recognizing from a text what an actual oral performance would sound like. Silent reading of literature, according to Urmson, is analogous to score-reading, where the reading of the score (or, by analogy, literary text) is the recognizing of what it would sound like if it were performed, "what musical [or oral] sounds would be heard if the instructions were obeyed".[43]

Thus, though in silent readings there is no performance, the notion of performance is always implied and preserved, and Urmson can therefore maintain that even here literature is essentially performing and oral. This achieved, Urmson can sanguinely concede that the great bulk of modern literature was intended primarily for silent "score-reading" rather than oral performance and that in practice we frequently confine ourselves to such score-reading, i.e., to imagining, recognizing, or being aware of what we would witness if we witnessed a performance. This wide departure of practice from 'essence', 'principle', and 'logical character' does not deter Urmson from firmly stating the solutions to the two very difficult

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42. Urmson, op. cit. p. 338.

43. Ibid.

problems of the ontological status and anomalous character of literary works of art.

> "I resolve the problem of the ontological status of a literary work by saying that for a literary work to exist it is a necessary and sufficient condition that a set of instructions should exist such that any oral performance which complies with that set of instructions is a performance of the work in question. I resolve the problem of the relation of reading a literary work to what we find in other art forms by saying it is analogous to reading the score of a musical work, of a play, or of a ballet. In each of these cases we neither create the work nor perform the work when we read the score, but we become aware of what we would witness if we witnessed a performance."[44]

5. Urmson's views have some appeal, but they are not entirely satisfactory and ultimately convincing. One source of dissatisfaction concerns Urmson's treatment of silent reading. More specifically, I object to his view that when we silently read literature to ourselves what we are essentially doing is recognizing what "would be heard if the instructions [i.e., text] were obeyed" or becoming "aware of what we would witness if we witnessed a performance". I am not here denying that one is able to silently read a literary text and imagine to oneself or recognize what sounds would be uttered in a performance of the text. One may think about, recognize, or make oneself aware of the likely sounds of the words one silently reads; and any or all of these activities may indeed improve or enrich the reading. Moreover, for some difficult texts and/or poor readers they may be practically necessary for a proper understanding of the text. However, what I do deny is that, speaking in Urmson's

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44. Urmson, op. cit., p. 340.

essentialist terms, the silent reading of literature is essentially or in principle the recognition or awareness of what oral effects we would witness in hearing a performance of the literary work. To put the matter more in terms of statistical norms than logical essesces, I deny that our silent reading of literary works of art is invariably or even generally the recognizing or becoming aware of what oral performance of these works would sound like.

My denial is, of course, first based on my own experience as a reader and the testimony of other readers whose silent reading does not seem to consist of oral imaginings or recognitions. If it be argued that we simply are not conscious of this essential reading activity when we read, I must retort that one should surely expect to be conscious of an activity of recognizing or becoming aware of the probable sounds of an oral performance.

Moreover, my rejection of Urmson's view of silent reading also finds support from the fact that statements like "I wasn't aware how mellifluous (alliterative, harsh, etc.) these lines would sound when I read them to myself" do not seem in the slightest sense strange or contradictory. Nor do such statements disqualify the silent reading involved as a genuine or standard reading of the work of literature, though I agree it is likely that the more relevant aspects of the text one is aware of when one reads, the richer and more rewarding is the reading. One might argue that a silent reading of certain poetry that was not aware of the elements of rhyme, alliteration, etc. would be a poor, perhaps even a sub-standard reading of this poetry. Here the oral quality is extremely important, but is it always the essential in literature? Is the case the same in prose? Many novels and essays have been read, appreciated, and even admirably criticized with apparently little or no regard to the sound qualities these works would have in performance, and indeed, as Urmson concedes, such works were not intended to be orally performed and rarely are performed. Of course, such works may often be profitably criticized by oral criteria, and indeed Urmson's last-ditch defense of his theory is firmly based on the use of such criteria in the criticism of literary style. This defense will soon be tested. But even if we merely concede, and I think we must, that the importance of sound varies greatly in different types of literary art, we shall be led to my second criticism of Urmson's position.

This criticism is directed at what might be called the essentialism of Urmson's approach. Urmson undertakes to show not merely that literature is performable and capable of oral presentation, but that it is _essentially_ a performing and oral art; and this seems to suggest that literature is essentially unified with respect to the matter of oral performance. But is literature so unified here that we may speak of an 'essence' or 'logical character' with respect to this matter? I hardly think so, and traditionally, it has often been held that literature is not really _one_ art form but that poetry is essentially different from prose literature. Urmson himself cannot help but confess that long novels and histories differ from poetry with respect to the demand for and occurence of actual oral performance. It is perhaps plausible to say that poetry is essentially a performing and oral art; but surely literature like the novel, essay, or biography is not, and therefore to insist on viewing all literature as essentially performing and oral is to compel us to deny or ignore very great and important differences in order to salvage a general classificatory theory. Surely the field of aesthetics has suffered enough distortion through inaccurate essentialist generalizations made to support general theories of art.

This criticism of Urmson is not a mere anti-essentialist complaint. Essentialist generalizations in aesthetics are no doubt risky, but whether or not essentialist statements about literature are invalid per se and ab initio is not the issue here. My criticism is not that Urmson's view claims something to be of the essence of literature, there being no such essence, but rather that his particular claim that oral performance is essential is clearly incorrect whether or not such an essence exists. Urmson seems to base his claim on the oral origin of literature and the importance of oral performance in poetry, together with the assumption that all works of literature should be essentially the same with respect to basic issues such as the role of oral performance. This assumption is obviously unwarranted for it assumes a common essence or uniformity far beyond what critical practice and common sense can grant to be found in literature. It might be plausibly argued that there are characteristics essential or necessary to literary works;

being a human (or at least an intentional) artifact and being a linguistic entity would appear to be likely candidates. But whether or not we decide to regard such (or any) properties as essential to literature, they are so far more important than oral performance as to expose the inadequacy of Urmson's claim that literature is essentially an art of oral performance. Clearly works of literary art require creation and language in a way they do not require oral performance.

Urmson, however, has one last argument to support his view that literature is essentially an oral art. The argument is based on the fact that literary style is commonly criticized in terms of how it would or does sound.

> "Even in the case of works which would not normally be read aloud it is a commonplace to speak of assonance, dissonance, sonority, rhythm; we reject as unstylish conjunctions of consonants which would be awkward to say aloud, though we easily read them. We criticize the writing in terms of how it would sound, if it were spoken."[45]

This argument, I think, establishes that literary style is often profitably criticized in terms of sound and perhaps even that in any literary work criteria of sound are always legitimate and relevant criteria of evaluation. However, the argument certainly does not establish that silent reading is the recognizing or becoming aware of the probable sounds of oral performance. We must distinguish between what we

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45. Urmson, op. cit., pp. 339-340.

always do when we silently read and what we often do when we criticize what we've read.[46]

More importantly, the argument does not establish that literary art is essentially oral, because even if we were to hold that literary style is essentially oral, one might well object that there is far more to literary art than style and that style is far from the essence of literature. I shall not rehash the arguments against literary formalism because the debate is made gratuitous here by the more interesting argument that literary style itself cannot be essentially a mere matter of sound. If it were so, the congenitally deaf, like Helen Keller, could never appreciate any literary style; and if literary art itself is also essentially oral they could never appreciate it or properly understand it. But such people do read, enjoy, and understand literary works of art. Certainly with respect to some works heavily built on oral effects their appreciation lacks an important element, but so does that of the congenitally blind reading a work full of rich visual images.

If we leave the unhappily handicapped and rather confine ourselves to renowned literary critics who, we trust, possess at least five healthy senses and a sharp sensibility, we shall see that even poetic style, where one would expect sound to have the greatest importance, is criticized as

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46. I think one may also draw an important distinction between what one always does when silently reading and what silent reading actually is.

commonly and as effectively in terms of other elements, e.g., metaphor, imagery, argument, paradox, unity of thought association, etc. Samuel Johnson, for example, criticizes Shakespeare's poetic style for clashes of associations, for "the counteraction of the words to the ideas".[47] T.S. Eliot analyzes the style of metaphysical poetry in terms of "the elaboration of a figure of speech to the furthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it" and in terms of "telescoping of images and multiplied associations".[48]

If we turn from critical criteria of poetic style to criteria of literary works as a whole we encounter such popular critical canons as verisimilitude, originality, expression, psychological depth, moral value, etc. I am not here asserting or defending the validity of all these common criteria. Some no doubt are more valid and important than others. But such criteria are involved at least as often and as significantly, if not more so, than the criteria of sound which Urmson stresses; and the prevalent and proven use of these other criteria should make it very difficult to conclude from the use of sound-criteria in criticism that literary style is essentially oral, and even more difficult to conclude that literary art is essentially an oral and performing art.

These considerations should dampen our desire to save the general performing/non-performing classificatory theory

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47. S. Johnson, The Rambler (No. 168), in W. Raleigh (ed.), Johnson on Shakespeare, Oxford, 1957, p. 204.

48. T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets", in F. Kermode (ed.), Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, London, 1975, p. 60.

of art through Urmson's strategy of regarding literature as an essentially oral and hence essentially performing art. If not, let us recall that Urmson's proposed salvage operation also seems to read into a simple silent reading a great deal more than what such a reading usually consists of or requires. Let us further recall that different literary genres hardly seem to be uniform with respect to the demand for oral performance and this makes it highly implausible to regard all literary art as essentially involving oral performance. Finally, we may remember that I have suggested how the classificatory theory may be largely salvaged by the modest means of asserting that literature be grouped with the performing arts in that it may (though need not essentially) be performed.

6. After so much criticism of the views of others, I suppose I should suggest an alternative position of my own on the nature of literary works of art. Of course, it would be premature at this point to determine any definitive position, for any view presented now would have to be tested and perhaps modified by our subsequent analysis of the problems of work-identity and ontological status. However, let me propose the following tentative position. I suggest that literary works may equally exist as either oral or written and that, taking literature as a whole, neither form is primary or more authentic. Literary works are verbal entities and that includes both texts and oral performances. Poems may exist without being inscribed, and novels may exist without being vocalized; and just as we may appreciate

a poem without being aware of how it would look transcribed in lineation on a page, so we can enjoy a novel without thinking about what sounds we should hear if it were read aloud.

Before considering both objections to and advantages of my position, I would like to present my views in a historical context, for as Urmson rightly remarks, the nature of the various arts and their works are matters of history and not conceptual or logical necessity. Theorizing is so difficult in the arts because they are of their very nature innovative and thus constantly evolve through time. Not only new techniques but new technologies play a part in the evolution of art concepts. Urmson has shown that through the invention of recording devices the concept of a performance has radically changed.[49] One can now witness the same performance several times, whereas once the very notion of twice witnessing the same performance would have been absurd.

I suggest that the concept of the work of literary art has likewise evolved, first through the invention of writing but more importantly for our present issue through the invention of the printing press. Originally, I think, literature was an essentially oral art and that written texts performed primarily a score function. However, the printing press provided the literary artist with a medium through which he could reach a larger audience and in which he could adequately convey a far longer and more complex message which could not be adequately vocalized or conveyed in a standard oral performance. The literary artist began to write to be read and not to be heard; the written text supplanted the oral performance and we begin to find asides to 'the reader of this story' or 'the reader of these lines' as opposed to 'the hearer of this tale'. Older forms of literary art, e.g., lyric poetry, which evolved when literature was essentially oral and in which the oral effects are especially important, retain more of this oral character and are perhaps better appreciated in performance and more profitably criticized in terms of sound qualities. Newer forms of literary art, like the novel, are, it seems, more typically and authentically presented and better appreciated as texts, though they may be performed and such performances would seem to qualify as authentic instances or examples of such works.

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[49] See J.O. Urmson, "The Performing Arts", in H.D. Lewis (ed.), Contemporary British Philosophy, Fourth Series, London, 1970, pp. 249-50.

This sketch I hope will nullify the likely objection that in rejecting the view that literature is essentially an oral art I am denying the importance of the oral tradition and oral criteria of literature. To cite Goodman, who shares the view of utterance/text egalitarianism but does so for very different, characteristically semantic, reasons, the rejection lies "not in downgrading the verbal utterance but in upgrading the verbal inscriptions".[50] In denying that literature is essentially oral and performing, I am asserting that texts like oral performances are perfectly genuine instances of the product of literary art and will satisfy the functions of appreciation that are demanded of such authentic instances. Certainly some works seem best appreciated in oral performances. But, likewise, other literary works seem best appreciated in textual form (where one can pause when tired, or swiftly skim back and forth to refresh the memory or retrace some developing patterns of character, plot, and imagery) and would be insupportably long and tedious if orally performed. If, however, we wish to speak of literature as a whole or indeed speak of it 'essentially', then we would do better to speak of it as essentially a verbal art, and this would equally account for both written texts and oral performances.

One might also object here that though I have succeeded in loosely assimilating literature to the performing arts, I have introduced a new anomalous aspect of literature - that it has two different standard end-products or objects

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50. N. Goodman, "Some Notes On Languages of Art", Journal of Philosophy, vol. 67, 1970, pp. 570-71. Goodman's two reasons for this egalitarianism are that (1) if texts were taken as scores, then confusingly they would have two different sets of compliants (their ordinary referents and their oral compliants) and (2) "inscriptions and utterances perform the same functions of telling stories, describing scenes, etc." (ibid., p. 570).

of appreciation, text and performance.[51] If the charge is that I have not succeeded in making literature perfectly parallel to the traditional performing arts, I plead guilty. There are certain facts in the art world, certain untidy differences between the arts, which cannot be explained away or erased by general theories, though they can, of course, be ignored or distorted by them.

It might further be objected that my view that the literary work of art is a verbal entity and thus may properly be and be appreciated either as oral or inscribed is platitudinous and irrelevant to aesthetics. As to the former charge, I would rather be right than original, and I remind the reader that the utterance/text egalitariansim I have been advocating has hardly seemed obvious to the many aestheticians who like Urmson have stressed the oral as the prime and essential in literature in general and in poetry in particular.

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51. But is literature really so sharply anomalous here? One might perhaps see a kind of continuum of degree from literature to drama to music to dance with respect to the acceptability of the written object (text, script, score, or dance notation) as a legitmate end-product or object of the art, i.e., as a genuine instance of the work of art by which the work may be properly appreciated and evaluated. Perhaps there is a similar continuum of degree in these arts with respect to the importance of silent reading versus that of executant artists and performance. Surely there is nothing odd in the view that the performing arts, especially if we include literature among them, vary significantly in the degree to which they demand actual performance or rather encourage silent reading. But if we accept such a continuum of degree, it is perhaps almost as misleading to assert that literature is clearly unlike music, drama, and dance with respect to performance and silent reading as it is to assert that it is like these arts with respect to such matters.

Moreover, I think that a case might be made for the aesthetic relevance of my position. For the view that written texts are, like oral performances, proper end-products of literary art and proper objects of literary appreciation may encourage the critic to pay more attention to the visual aspects of inscribed poetry which by views like Urmson's should be regarded as inessential. Such attention may well be aesthetically profitable for much poetry, particularly modern poetry, makes aesthetic use of the inscribed text; nor can this use be reduced, as Urmson tries to suggest, to puns, jests, or hints to correct oral performance.[52] Similarly, my position of egalitarianism might encourage the critic to examine the oral properties of some long works of prose which were surely not intended for oral performance. It may lead him, for example, to notice the heroic rhythms of the prose of Moby Dick and thus help him to apprehend part of the epic nature of this great novel. By so encouraging the critic to scrutinize both oral and inscribed aspects of literary works my position may lead to the apprehension of added aesthetic aspects of these works, and this would suggest that my theory is aesthetically relevant, even by H. Osborne's strict standard, where a theory "has strong relevance if it is necessary or conducive, directly or indirectly, to apprehension of the aesthetic aspects of something that falls within the scope of aesthetic appraisal."[53] Thus, even if some find it obvious, the view of literature I am suggesting is not irrelevant.

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[52] Urmson, "Literature", p. 340. For discussion of the aesthetic importance of the visual properties of inscribed literature, see R. Wellek and A. Warren, Theory of Literature, London, 1970, pp. 143-44.

Let me conclude the present discussion by suggesting two more advantages of accepting written copies as well as oral performances as genuine instances, objects, or end-products of literary art. First, this view has the advantage of granting both full ontological status and aesthetic completeness both to oral works which have never been inscribed and also to the many written works which have never been and most likely never will be orally performed. Secondly, such a view saves us from the awkward gap between theory and practice which Urmson is forced to concede when he argues that in theory literature is essentially a performing and oral art, though in practice it is most frequently unperformed and silent; "that literature is in logical character a performing art, but one in which in practice we frequently, though far from invariably, confine ourselves to score-reading."[54]

I am aware that in the untidy field of aesthetics some such gaps between theory and practice are inevitable. I am also aware that some philosophers of art, and surely Goodman

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53. H. Osborne, "Aesthetic Relevance", British Journal of Aesthetics, vol. 17, 1977, p. 293.

54. Urmson, "Literature", p. 339.

is one of them, take distinct pride and satisfaction in creating such gaps, which are often huge gulfs. I am convinced, however, that these gaps should be minimized, and I have tried to achieve this while attending to the problem of the anomalous nature of literature.

## III

1. Thus far I have attempted to justify my concentration of aesthetic inquiry on the single art of literature and have tried to examine how this art may be related to the other arts in terms of the general and generally accepted classification of performing versus non-performing arts. Consequently I have already written and argued about literature at some length, yet it may be objected that I have done all this without first having properly addressed myself to the question of what literature is. I have assumed that we all know fairly well what literature is, at least well enough to follow my discussion; and this assumption is not in any way refuted by the fact that perhaps none of us can give a satisfactory definition of literature. We must remember Moore's lesson that there is a difference between understanding a concept and knowing its analysis;[55] and this seems to indicate that we can intelligently discuss and investigate problems concerning literature without starting or even concluding with a formal definition of it,

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[55] See G.E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense", in M. Weitz (ed.), Twentieth Century Philosophy: The Analytic Tradition, New York, 1956.

i.e., a real, non-stipulative definition such as those that have traditionally been given in terms of genus and differentia or other necessary and sufficient conditions. Indeed doubts have been expressed as to whether such definitions of literature are even logically possible.[56]

For these reasons, then, though the question, what is literature, is worthy of attention, I do not feel compelled by methodological considerations to give it the same kind of attention that I shall devote to the four problems I have chosen for detailed analysis. However, because I shall offer no formal definition of 'literature' or 'literary work of art', let me at least define or explain ostensively what I take literature to include.

Taking a wide or inclusive view of literature, I shall mean by "literary work" such things as the Iliad, The Divine Comedy, Emma, The Pit and the Pendulum, "Lycidas", Hamlet, Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals", Rousseau's Confessions, Boswell's Life of Johnson, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, Cicero's speech "Against Antony", Donne's sermon "Death's Duell", Burke's "Letter To a Noble Lord", and Gibbon's The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. To speak more generally, I include in literature such things as poems, stories, novels, dramatic texts, and also certain essays, biographies, autobiographies, diaries, speeches, sermons, letters, and histories; while I exclude such things as telephone books, textbooks in biochemistry and formal logic, income tax forms, car manuals, and computer programs, which is not thereby to say that such things are devoid of aesthetic appeal. Poems, stories, and novels are, of course, most central and paradigmatic, dramatic texts perhaps somewhat less since they are fundamentally linked to the art of drama which is neither identical to nor a sub-category of literature. Essays, including some of literary criticism, seem still less central and paradigmatic, while biographies, memoirs, diaries, speeches, sermons, letters, and historical works are progressively even more peripheral. I do not pretend that these lists of inclusion and exclusion are exhaustive or unamendable, but I think they are adequately explanatory for my purpose of roughly indicating how I see the scope of literature.

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[56] Weitz (in "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics") would seem to hold such a view, for he suggests that, like 'art', all its sub-concepts are open and thus indefinable.

There are no doubt many borderline cases of literature, and indeed many of the kinds of works I have included under the concept of literature have been excluded by literary theorists and philosophers. The numerous borderline cases and the long-standing debate as to whether certain works or entire genres fall under the concept of literature suggests that the borders of this concept are neither clearly nor firmly fixed. The fact, if it is a fact, that literature is a concept with blurred edges or boundaries would seem to explain the evident fact that literature has proven so resistant to clear and adequate definition. Some might further argue that the concept is so intrinsically vague and unbounded that it is logically impossible to give an adequate and decisive definition of it or a final answer to the question what is literature. Therefore, some aestheticians seem to think that the primary task of the philosopher of literature is not to provide a theory or definition of literature but rather to elucidate the logic of the concept of literature and determine what kind of concept it is.[57] Definitions and theories would be left, as it were, to literary theorists, while the philosopher's job would be to elucidate which type of theory or definition, if any, the logic of the concept would allow.

However, though the task of elucidating the logic of the concept of literature seems more worthy of philosophical attention than the job of providing a definition of literature, I shall not be able to examine it as closely as the four problems I have chosen, problems which are also central to the philosophy of literature and literary criticism but which seem to arise also with respect to other arts and their criticism. Any inquiry has its limits, and the limits of a dissertation are particularly strict and restrictive; here, too restrictive to allow me to give the logic of the concept of literature the kind of detailed examination it demands and deserves. Nevertheless, as I thought it wise to indicate at least roughly what I take literature to include,

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57. Weitz seems committed to such a view which might be inferred from his general position on aesthetic theory and indeed on philosophy itself. See "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", p. 88.

it also seems advisable to make some basic points about the logic of the concept of literature and cognate concepts such as 'work of literature' and 'literary art'.[58] The reader is warned, however, that all these points may be contested and may require more justification and elucidation than I shall be able to give.

(i) The first and perhaps least disputable point about the concept of literature is that it is an ambiguous concept. Like the concept of art, it has at least two distinguishable uses or senses, one descriptive or classificatory and the other evaluative or honorific. The term "literature" is frequently applied to an object to classify it, e.g., to distinguish it from such things as tables, chairs, telephone books, etc.; but it is also often applied to an object to evaluate or praise it, e.g., to distinguish it from literature of inferior value which may somehow fall under the classificatory concept of literature. Thus, it is not in the slightest perplexing or paradoxical to say of, e.g., a shallow pornographic novel that it is clearly literature in the one sense but clearly not literature in the other. Certainly not all that we classify as literature we also praise as literature; moreover, some might suggest that certain texts are generally praised as literature, yet are not properly

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58. For brevity of presentation these points will generally be expressed only in terms of the concept of literature. But it should be clear from my discussion of these points that they are equally valid for the cognate concepts.

classified as literature.

This fundamental classificatory/evaluative ambiguity of the concept of literature makes the definition of literature very difficult, particularly if both uses of the concept are to be embraced in the single definition. Most contemporary theorists seem to confine their attempts at definition to the classificatory use, but some have rather tried to embrace both the descriptive and appraisive in their definition of literature, with the result that 'literature' comes to be construed as literature that has won critical acceptance or approval.[59] Though I think some distinction must be maintained between literature and good or accepted literature, I shall not pause to weigh the merits of strictly classificatory versus evaluative definitions. Instead I shall go on to consider a second and relatively undisputed point about the concept of literature - its vagueness.

(ii) It seems to me clear that the concept of literature and cognate concepts are characteristically vague, though I realize that the concept of vagueness itself is unclear, and that vagueness has been denied of 'work of art' if not 'work of literature'.[60] If we take vagueness as unclarity or indeterminacy of application irrespective of

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59. See, for example, J.M. Ellis, The Theory of Literary Criticism, London, 1974, pp. 50-51.

60. H. Khatchadourian, "Vagueness", Philosphical Quarterly, vol. 12, 1962, p. 142.

state of knowledge and as demonstrated by a plenitude of boundary cases, then 'literature' and its cognates surely are vague. Gibbon's The Decline and Fall is a much discussed borderline case, included as literature by some literary scholars and aestheticians, yet excluded by Wellek and Warren[61] and Passmore.[62] But not only do individual works pose problems for the borders of literature, so do entire genres. Wellek and Warren, who take "fictionality" as "the distinguishing trait of literature" seem to place non-fictional prose beyond literature's borders, "relegating it to rhetoric, to philosophy, to political pamphleteering",[63] etc. Beardsley, on the other hand, gives the concept of literature more extensive borders which include the essay but which apparently do not encompass other non-fictional prose genres, such as the biography, diary, or letter; for Beardsley asserts that "all literary works fall into three main classes: poems, essays, and prose fiction".[64] Yet other theorists, like Ellis, seem to give the concept still wider boundaries by including Gibbon's The Decline and Fall or indeed any non-fictional text that the literary community treats or analyzes in a certain manner.[65]

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[61] Wellek and Warren, op. cit., p. 21.

[62] Passmore, op. cit., p. 435.

[63] Wellek and Warren, op. cit., p. 26.

[64] Beardsley, op. cit., p. 126.

[65] Ellis, op. cit., p. 48.

Thus, at least among critics and aestheticians, the concept of literature seems to have no clear or fixed boundaries but instead is vague and fluctuating in application. Rather than a single or single set of necessary and sufficient conditions, we seem to find a cluster of paradigm cases and a complex network of criteria of application which seem loosely to direct our use of the concept. These criteria include organization, personal expression, importance of implicit or secondary meaning, attention to sound qualities, use of imagery, fictionality, and relative irrelevance of immediate context of origin. Though there may be general agreement that all these criteria are relevant to the concept of literature, it is undeniable that critics and aestheticians grant different criteria different degrees of weight or importance. Wellek and Warren stress fictionality while Beardsley implicit meaning; Urmson we remember, emphasizes the sound, while Ellis stresses the irrelevance of the text's original context. It is therefore far from clear which combinations of criteria are sufficinet for literature and which are not. This condition or source of vagueness has been called combinatory vagueness.[66]

But the concept of literature also exhibits another sort of vagueness, sometimes called degree vagueness, since with respect to each of the criteria of application there is a vagueness as to what degree constitutes satisfying the particular criterion. Wellek and Warren, for example, speak

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66. See W.P. Alston, "Vagueness", in P. Edwards (ed.), Encyclopedia of Philosophy, London, 1967, vol. 8, p. 220.

of Plato's Republic as a 'boundary case' with respect to satisfying their crucial criterion of fictionality.[67] Thus, the concept of literature and its cognates appear to be vague in two fundamental ways, and we should note that C.L. Stevenson has convincingly argued that even poetry, an apparent subtype of literature, also exhibits both degree and combinatory vagueness.[68]

(iii) Having suggested that the concept of literature is ambiguous and vague, I shall further characterize it as open or open textured. Though I think this characterization is just and not particularly controversial, it is still somewhat problematic since the notion of open texture, like that of vagueness, is far from clear or undisputed. This notion which derives from Wittgenstein and Waismann (the latter having coined the term "open texture") has been widely used in recent work in aesthetics and perhaps consequently has come to be understood differently by different philosophers of art. Weitz, who uses it to argue the undefinability of art, says "a concept is open if its conditions of application are emendable and corrigible",[69] or, negatively, if we cannot give necessary and sufficient conditions for its application.[70] G. Dickie, arguing for a definition of art, holds a stricter view of open texture, regarding an open concept as "a concept for which there is no necessary condition" for application.[71] By Weitz's standard the concept of literature clearly seems open, while by Dickie's the matter is problematic, since artifactuality and 'linguisticity' are perhaps arguably necessary conditions for literature.

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[67] Wellek and Warren, op. cit., p. 26.

[68] C.L. Stevenson, "On 'What is a Poem?'", Philosophical Review, vol. 66, 1957.

[69] Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", p. 89.

[70] Ibid.

R.J. Sclafani, who attempts a more objective and historical elucidation of the notion of open texture, finds that for Wittgenstein:

> "a concept can be open in texture in at least three ways: If it is possible for cases to arise for which we have no rules to determine the applicability of a concept and these cases are (1) possible to anticipate and (2) not possible to anticipate; and (3) of a borderline sort".[72]

I think the concept of literature and its cognates are open in all these three ways. We have already seen that literature exhibits the openness of borderline cases which require decisions and not the mere application of rules or criteria. Moreover, it is not difficult to anticipate cases where we have no rules for decisively determining application. Would a rhythmic shopping list mistakenly declaimed by a performing poet and then published be a work of literature? If we could master and translate the language of porpoises (or Martians), would their mating songs qualify as literary works? The relative ease with which we can bring anticipated cases of indeterminancy by rules suggests that there are also likely to be cases we cannot anticipate. Therefore, I think that with regard to several important senses of "open texture" (and at least the three Sclafani delineates) it is relatively safe to conclude that the concept of literature is an open-textured concept.

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[71] Dickie, op. cit., p. 95.

[72] R.J. Sclafani, "'Art', Wittgenstein, and Open-Textured Concepts", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 30, 1971, p. 338.

(iv) Ambiguous, vague, and open, the concept of literature might also be characterized as essentially complex; first and most simply in the sense that it subsumes a number of complicated sub-concepts such as poetry and the novel, but also and perhaps more importantly in the sense described by Gallie with respect to the concepts of art and painting.[73] Like these other aesthetic categories, literature admits in different circumstances of a number of different but genuinely helpful and illuminating descriptions. Literature is a sequence of words; it is a representation of reality, a work of invention or imagination, a personal expression, a tool of instruction, a source of aesthetic enjoyment. Thus, to echo Gallie's remarks on painting, literature "has a number of aspects and the relative importance of any of those aspects will be differently assessed according to the beliefs" of any writer or critic as to the best way in which the

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73. W.B. Gallie, "Art as an Essentially Contested Concept", Philosophical Quarterly, vol. 6, 1956.

traditional values of literature can be sustained and developed.[74] This complexity of differently weighted aspects was already reflected in the different criteria of application stressed by Wellek and Warren, Beardsley, etc.

Gallie helps exhibit the essential complexity of the concept of painting by tracing the historical development of this art and its concept. The same might be done for literature, for it too has greatly developed, gaining entire new genres, like the novel, and moving from an essentially oral art to one where silent reading is as prevalent as oral performance. Moreover, the concept of literature has often differed significantly from one period to another through emphasis on different aspects. Take, for but one example, the change from the Neo-classical stress on true representation of general nature to the modern emphasis on the imaginative expression of the individual and peculiar.

(v) This notion of essentially complex concepts is closely linked with another important notion of Gallie's, that of essentially contested concepts - "concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper use on the part of their users".[75] Such disputes naturally arise with regard to a concept where "there is no clearly definable use which can be set up as the correct or standard use."[76] Gallie sometimes seems to argue that the concepts of art and painting are essentially contested chiefly because they are essentially complex.[77] However, another major reason for these (as well as other) concepts being essentially contested would seem to be their honorific character. The application of such concepts are surely worth contesting for and thus inspire competition and debate. Now we have seen that one central use of the concept of literature is distinctly honorific, such that even when used descriptively the concept seems to maintain a positive evaluative colouring; and we have further seen that the concept of literature is essentially complex. We should therefore expect to find it essentially contested, and this is in fact what we find. Various conceptions of literature emphasizing various aspects of literature's complex nature and long tradition contend, as it were, over which better reflects the proper use of the concept of literature and better preserves and develops literature's illustrious tradition.

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[74] W.B. Gallie, "Art as an Essentially Contested Concept", Philosophical Quarterly, vol. 6, 1956, p. 108.

[75] W.B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 56, 1956, p. 169.

The notion of essentially contested concepts is clarified and elaborated quite fully by Gallie, who presents seven

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76. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts", p. 168.

77. Gallie, "Art as an Essentially Contested Concept", p. 107.

conditions which together seem necessary and sufficient for a concept's being essentially contested.[78] The concept must be (1) "appraisive", indicating some "valued achievement" which is (2) of an "internally complex character" and which is (3) "various describable". (4) "Any essentially contested concept is persistently vague",[79] the concept of achievement being open in character. The concept must be (5) one whose users know that its differing uses or criteria are contested and therefore use it both aggressively and defensively; a concept which (6) derives "from an original exemplar [e.g., a tradition] whose authority is acknowledged by all the contestant users"[80] and where (7) the continuous competition among contestant users is likely to help sustain and/or develop the original exemplar's achievement.

The concept of literature would seem to meet all these conditions. Satisfaction of the first four might be shown by our discussion of the honorific use, vagueness, open texture, and complexity of the concept of literature; and by the obvious fact that a literary work, like the concept of literary achievement, is internally complex and variously describable. It is moreover evident that there is a continuous debate among writers, critics, and theorists as to

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78. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts", pp. 171-80.

79. Ibid., p. 172.

80. Ibid., p. 180. For a tradition as an exemplar see ibid., p. 168.

what true literature or literary achievement is (condition five) and that in such disputes there is a tradition (e.g., Homer, Virgil, Dante, etc.) which is recognized and appealed to by the contestant users (condition six). Finally, it is indeed likely that the continuous contest as to what constitutes true literary achievement has helped sustain and develop the achievement of this authoritative tradition (condition seven). There is thus considerable justification for regarding the concept of literature as an essentially contested concept.

I have thus far attributed five characteristics to the concept of literature, and though these attributions are all somewhat problematic, I still feel confident about them. This cannot be said for the two final points I shall suggest with respect to the concept of literature - its non-observational and non-functional aspects. The issues involved here seem worth raising, even if no definite answers will be forthcoming from my discussion.

(vi) Philosophers have often drawn a sharp distinction between what they have called observational and theoretical concepts. The application of the former (e.g., brown, hard, table) are sometimes said to be determinable by direct observation or sensory perception, while that of the latter (e.g., quark, id) are not. However, like vagueness and open texture, the notions of observationality and theoreticality have been differently interpreted; and, moreover, the very validity of this distinction has been called into question.[81] This is surely not the place to scrutinize this distinction and its questionable value and validity, particularly since the distinction was made and discussed explicitly with regard to empirical sciences, not aesthetics.

However, some aestheticians have recently suggested that the concept of art is a theoretical concept whose application requires more than the direct observation of our senses and intelligence, but rather demands a certain degree of knowledge of art theory and art history. Danto has argued that "what in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo box is a certain theory of art",[82] that "to see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry - an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."[83] Wollheim has also stressed the historicality and theoreticality of the concept of art, arguing that "in any age this concept will probably belong to a theory".[84] But other aestheticians seem to hold that the concept of art is a distinctly observational one. Beardsley, for example, sharply distinguishes the aesthetic object, whose properties are directly perceived, from its physical base, historical genesis, or theoretical background.[85] Bell suggests that we can immediately recognize a work of art as such by the direct perception of an aesthetic emotion.[86]

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[81] M. Spector, "Theory and Observation", British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, vol. 17, 1966-67.

[82] A. Danto, "The Artworld", Journal of Philosophy, vol. 61, 1964, p. 581.

[83] Ibid., p. 580. See also R.J. Sclafani ("Artworks, Art Theory and The Artworld", Theoria, vol. 39, 1973) who finds difficulties in Danto's loose notion of 'theory' but does not challenge the non-observationality of the concept of art.

[84] Wollheim, op. cit., p. 162.

When it concerns the arts of painting and sculpture, recently so revolutionary, from which Danto and Wollheim chiefly draw their examples, the non-observational dimension of the concept of art can, I think be granted. But literature could prove different and instead be wholly observational and recognizable by direct perception. A.E. Housman certainly appears to think so, since he seems to equate recognizing poetry with 'possessing the organ by which we perceive it'.[87] Yet though much poetry seems to be immediately recognizable as poetry, surely some poetry (even good poetry) cannot be recognized as such without a knowledge of the tradition in or against it was written. The critical organ of a Hellenistic man of taste would hardly seem to enable him to recognize some modern verse as poetry, let alone good poetry. Moreover, the question of whether or not certain non-fictional prose works of recognized stylistic excellence qualify as literary art seems clearly in part a matter of theory or antecedent trends of classification and not of mere perception. Thus, though the concept of literature is not clearly positioned with respect to the observational/ theoretical distinction, which itself is far from clear and unquestionable, I would rather support those who recognize a theoretical or at least non-observational aspect to the concept of literature.[88]

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[85] Beardsley, op. cit., chapter one.

[86] C. Bell, Art, London, 1913, chapter one.

[87] A.E. Housman, The Name and Nature of Poetry, Cambridge, 1933, p. 31.

(vii) The seventh and final point which I shall raise with respect to the concept of literature is also extremely problematic, but it is exceedingly important, particularly for the definition of literature. This point concerns the question of whether or not the concept of literature is a functional concept, like the concepts of knife, soldier, chair, which one might reasonably define chiefly in terms of the particular function that objects falling under it characteristically perform. Again, as with theoreticality and indeed all of the logical characteristics so far suggested, the issue of functionality has been discussed mainly with respect to the concept of art as a whole rather than the narrower concept of literature. Wollheim, for example, who lists 'knife' and 'soldier' as functional concepts, seems to renounce the view that 'art' is a functional concept and complains that "some philosophers, perhaps implausibly, have tried to define art functionally, e.g., as an instrument to arouse certain emotions, or to play a certain social role".[89]

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[88] See, for example, J. Culler (Structuralist Poetics, London, 1977) who stresses the non-observational conventional and institutional nature of literature.

[89] Wollheim, op. cit., p. 109.

Beardsley appears to be one of these functionalists. For him, works of art constitute a 'function-class', i.e., they belong "to the same class because of some internal characteristic that they all share",[90] where "there is something that the members of this class can do that the members of similarly defined classes cannot do or cannot do as well",[91] and where "they must differ among themselves in the degree to which they perform that function",[92] which itself "must be worth doing".[93] The characteristic function of works of art is, for Beardsley, the inducing of aesthetic experience, and he regards the functionality of the concept of art as depending on the existence of such an experience,[94] which has often been questioned and denied. But it must be remembered that different defining functions might be suggested (e.g., revelation of transcendental truth, catharsis, etc.) and that works of art may have many different functions in addition to their defining one. Indeed, works of art may exhibit various functions without having any defining function. Thus, as Wollheim points out, in asserting that art has no peculiar function, the non-functionalist is not committed to the implausible view that art is useless and no work of art has a function, but only to the more acceptable view "that no work of art has a function as such, i.e. in virtue of being a work of art."[95]

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[90] Beardsley, op. cit., p. 525.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., p. 526.

[94] See ibid: "the question, 'Is aesthetic object a function-class?' is only a somewhat pedantic way of asking an old and familiar question, which we have long postponed: 'Is there such a thing as aesthetic experience?'"

The issue of functionality is basically the same when we turn from art to the narrower concept of literature. Here the question is whether works of literature constitute a function-class. Given the obvious fact that literature is far from useless and has a wide variety of functions, does literature have a characteristic or defining function, a function that the literary work has solely in virtue of its being a literary work and which literary works all perform in varying degrees? Following Beardsley we could suggest that this function might be the inducing of a 'literary experience'. But again, the existence of a special literary experience induced solely or best by literary works is perhaps as questionable as that of a general aesthetic experience. Is there a particular experience evoked by all works of literature (e.g., Herbert's religious lyrics, Swift's caustic prose satires, folk ballads and psychological dramas, fairy tales and novels of social realism, nonsense verse and well-reasoned essays) but which is not evoked by well written texts that are not considered literature nor by the works of other arts? Though the question warrants further examination, I tend to doubt the existence of such an

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95. Wollheim, op. cit., p. 109.

experience.

Yet perhaps there is another function which literary works characteristically and best perform. Wellek and Warren propose a functional definition of literary art in terms of its inducing pleasure with utility (e.g., instruction),[96] yet literature hardly seems unique in this. Though they recognize that literature has served and still serves a wide variety of functions and that some astute critics (e.g., Eliot) regard this variety of uses as more significant than any alleged defining function, Wellek and Warren still feel logically compelled to find a defining function for literature. For "to take art or literature seriously is, ordinarily at least, to attribute to it some use proper to itself".[97] But such reasoning is hardly persuasive, since the value or 'seriousness' of literature might well derive from the many different functions that different works of literature perform at different times. Having no use proper to itself does not imply being useless or valueless. I, at least, am far from convinced that literature has a peculiar function, though I am thoroughly convinced that it has undisputable value and is irreplaceable.

If literary works seem so varied in function and nature, perhaps the concept of literature could best be explicated or defined in terms of a characteristic manner of regarding

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96. Wellek and Warren, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

97. Ibid., p. 31.

or treating verbal discourse. 'Literature', 'literary work', etc., could be seen as derivative concepts, defined chiefly in terms of literary treatment; and thus the notion of literary treatment or behaviour becomes the primary task in the explication or definition of literature. Ellis has recently proposed and defended such a behavioural definition of literature:[98]

> "literary texts are defined as those that are used by the society in such a way that the text is not taken as specifically relevant to the immediate context of its origin ... And here 'being treated as literature' means not just 'used as literature is used', but actually 'established as a literary text': the class of literary texts is the class of those to which we respond in this way."[99]

What makes Gibbon's history literature while other well written history books not is the sort of treatment it has received from the community of literary critics and scholars.

Of course, there are problems with Ellis's definition; its identification of literary art with what is regarded by the community as such is surely questionable, as indeed are some of the consequences Ellis derives from it, e.g., that literary works cease to be such when they are discarded or forgotten by the community.[100] However, Ellis is right, I think, in pointing to the strongly institutional aspect of literature and suggesting that the content of this concept is formed in part by the community of critics (which, of course, includes literary artists as well) and consequently may to some extent be elucidated by examing critical behaviour or treatment. The nature and logic of the critic's treatment of literary works, his interpretation and evaluation of them, will be discussed in great detail later in this dissertation.

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[98] Ellis, op. cit., pp. 24-53. Ellis, however, confusingly speaks of his definition as 'functional', though he is aware that he is using the notion of function in an extended, perhaps less appropriate sense (ibid., p. 52).

[99] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[100] Ibid., p. 47.

3. The thought of these impending tasks of analysis compels me to abandon at this point my introductory remarks on the nature of literature and the logic of its concept. Perhaps my discussion of these matters has raised as many questions as it answered, yet I hope to have indicated their complexity and provided enough clarification of them as to render intelligible my ensuing discussion of literature and literary criticism. I also hope to have justified in this introductory chapter my concentration on the single art of literature and a cluster of problems relating to its criticism, but still to have initially linked my specific inquiry to general aesthetics by examining how literature may be related to the other arts in terms of the performing/non-performing arts classification. It is now time to take up the analysis of the four major problems this work will be devoted to: the identity and ontological status of literary works of art and their interpretation and evaluation. These problems, we shall see, are very closely connected, and before considering each individually in detail, it might be best to introduce them first together and show their intimate interrelations.

# CHAPTER TWO

# IDENTITY, ONTOLOGICAL STATUS, INTERPRETATION, AND EVALUATION

## I

Traditionally, the critic's role was conceived primarily as that of judging artistic merit, and this perhaps explains why most meta-critical discussion of the literary work of art seems to relate to the problem of evaluation. However, in recent work in aesthetics, considerable attention has been given to three other problems about the literary work of art: the problems of its identity, ontological status, and interpretation. In this chapter I shall argue that these four problems are conceptually very closely related, perhaps even interdependent, and that certain answers to or positions on one inevitably tend to influence positions on the others.

However, as I have already mentioned, the meta-critical problems of identity, ontological status, interpretation, and evaluation arise not only with respect to works of literature but with respect to works of other arts as well. Thus, though wary of the dangers of aesthetic generalizations, I would hazard the view that with regard to the presence and interrelations of these four major problems the arts are at least roughly analogous; and though I asked leave to concentrate on literature, it would seem puritanical narrowness to suggest that my points regarding the interrelations of these problems have no validity for other arts as well. One way of suggesting this might be to formulate all points and arguments in specifically or exclusively literary terms, such as "literary work of art" or "work of literature", rather than with the more general and inclusive term, "work of art". I shall therefore in this chapter frequently use the term "work of art" where this term should be understood as referring always and primarily to the literary work of art but not thereby suggesting the exclusion of works of other arts as does specifically literary terminology.[1]

My method of arguing the thesis of the close conceptual connections between the problems of the identity, ontological status, interpretation, and evaluation of the work of art will be to present some of these intimate interrelations, and two different methods of presentation suggest themselves. First, historically it may be shown that certain philosophers of art were compelled by their positions with respect to one of these issues to maintain correlative positions with respect to the others. One might point, for example, to Croce[2] and show that his view that the work of art is to be identified as a particular and unique idea or intuition-expression in the artist's mind results in his ontological position that

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1. The expression "(literary) work of art" might perhaps similarly convey my present concentration on literature without the suggested exclusion of works of other arts.

2. B. Croce, Aesthetic, D. Ainslie (trans.), New York, 1970.

the work exists as an ideal or mental entity. One could then show that it likewise results in the view that the only valid interpretation of the work is the revelation of the artist's idea or meaning and that the only criterion of value is whether the artist succeeded in expressing what he wanted to express.

Similarly, we might take a contemporary philosopher of art like Beardsley[3] and start with his view that the value of a work of art is its instrumentality in creating aesthetic experience when we perceive the work. This evaluative preoccupation with the perceiving consumer (as opposed to the creating artist) can, in part, account for his interpretative doctrine that all that is relevant to the description and interpretation (as well as the resulting evaluation) of the work concerns the work's directly perceptible properties, a doctrine which underlies the famous theses of the intentional and genetic fallacies. These positions on interpretation and evaluation together explain, or alternatively are explained by (the influence always seems reciprocal in these issues), Beardsley's view that the work's identity is totally constituted by directly perceptible properties and that its ontological status is purely perceptual or phenomenal. For if all that can be said about the work of art proper concerns its perceptual properties, Beardsley can plausibly conclude that the work's identity and ontological status is perceptual.

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[3] M.C. Beardsley, Aesthetics, New York, 1958.

Likewise, if the work of art is phenomenal, it seems natural that it should be interpreted and evaluated as such.

This type of historical approach would reveal the sort of interrelations I have asserted and would be illuminating in itself. But I shall not pursue this method here. Instead, my method will be to show independently the various ways in which the four issues are related by pointing to where and how the resolution of one problem depends in part on resolutions or decisions with respect to the others. My objective suggests the following program. First, I shall consider the interrelations between work-identity and ontological status, then the relations between these two issues and the problem of interpretation, and finally the relations between these three and evaluation.

One final methodological point. Since my main concern is literature, and since I am aware that my employing the term "work of art" could conceal considerable equivocation (allowing me to appeal to different arts to demonstrate different interrelations), I shall take pains to establish all my points concerning the alleged interrelations through the evidence of literature and literary criticism and shall only bring in other arts to strengthen or expand points already made on a wholly 'literary' basis.

## II

The close connection between the identity and ontological status of a work of art should not be surprising, since it seems that most, if not all, entities exhibit such links. It requires little argument or insight to see that what something is (its identity) determines how it exists (its ontological status) and that correspondingly its mode of existence places some sort of limits on the kind of properties that can be ascribed to it or be included in its identity. That my table is identified as round, brown, solid, and of dimensions x, y, z clearly seems to imply that my table is a material object. Conversely, my belief in its mere material status seems to preclude my attributing to it, literally, the property of maliciousness no matter how often and painfully I bump into it; and thus I cannot regard such a property as one which helps constitute the table's identity and by which the table can be identified among other objects, including similar tables.

Such close relations between identity and ontological status surely seem to hold also with respect to works of art. Indeed, it may rather be necessary to distinguish these two problems which some philosophers of art, e.g., Urmson, seem to identify or lump together.[4] Though detailed clarification of these problems will have to wait till the chapters devoted to their individual analysis, let me tentatively distinguish them now as follows. I see the identity of the work of art as basically involving the question of which properties are constitutive or essential to the work and determine what the particular work is and distinguish it from other works, i.e., constitutive properties of the work by which we may identify it and individuate it from other works of either the same or a different art, or indeed from objects that are not works of art at all. The ontological status of the work instead raises the question of the mode of existence of the work so identified: what type of object it is and under what conditions can it be said to exist or cease to exist. That these two issues are not identical can be seen from the fact that while we surely expect different poems to have different identities, we would not expect them to have different ontological status.[5]

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[4] J.O. Urmson, "Literature", in G. Dickie and R.J. Sclafani (eds.) Aesthetics, New York, 1977, pp. 334, 337. See note 35 of my preceding chapter.

But though distinct, ontological status and identity are hardly unrelated. If we were clear about the identity of the work, i.e., the properties or elements that constitute it as such, we would have a good clue as to its ontological status. For instance, if we were sure that being written in a particular period or by a particular author is a constitutive property of a given literary work (take Borges' example of Menard's Don Quixote), then since this constitutive property is not directly perceptual, we can draw the conclusion that the work is not a purely perceptual entity. Thus the properties we ascribe to the identity of the work seem to some extent to determine our views on its ontological status; if the former are not purely perceptual, neither can the latter be. In the art of painting this influence of criteria of identity on ontological status is quite manifest. The central role that the material medium and indeed the very physical dimensions of the canvas have in determining work-identity makes it clear that the work of painting is a material object. But if, like Croce and Collingwood, we reject the relevance of these material properties to work-identity, the way is open to regard the work of painting as ideal or imaginary. Perhaps if we knew that all the literary work's constitutive properties were perceptual, we could be confident that the literary work is, as Beardsley claims, a perceptual entity. For the work could then be said to be fully constituted or exist when these properties are realized, irrespective of the lack of other properties, e.g., material or historical, which frequently are associated with or ascribed to it. This ontological inference is, of course, highly hypothetical, because and as long as we are unsure what properties essentially constitute or at least help constitute or contribute to the identity of the literary work.

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[5] The difference between the two issues can be readily shown also in terms of Urmson's own views. For even accepting his ontological position that the literary work is a recipe for oral performance, we still have the problem of work-identity: what constitutes a particular recipe and distinguishes it from another, what constitutes compliance with the recipe, etc.?

I add this weaker notion of contributory rather than essential constitutive properties because some aestheticians may deny the distinction between essential and non-essential properties, holding either that all the work's properties are essential to its identity or that none is. But in the latter case, some properties will nevertheless be regarded as contributing significantly to work-identity and thus require accomodation in any adequate ontological position, while in the former case it would seem that ontological status, as a property of the work,[6] could be strictly deduced from complete knowledge of the work's identity. In both cases, however, the distinction between being ascribed to the work and being included in its identity becomes problematic, and the concept of work-identity becomes consequently much wider and more vague than when work-identity is conceived in terms of a set of essential constitutive properties which are a subset of the properties ascribable to the work. However, whether narrowly or loosely conceived, work-identity has been shown to have logical bearing on ontological status.[7]

The interrelation of work-identity and ontological status is just as striking and significant with respect to ontological status as a factor limiting the categories of properties which can be ascribed to a work of art and thus perhaps be included in its identity. Here our inference runs from ontological status to identity, and we infer from the work's ontological status that certain kinds of properties or elements cannot form part of the work because they are incompatible with that ontological status. Just as we cannot properly speak of a ghost (assuming ghosts exist) as weighing fourteen stone, so the idealist like Croce, for whom the work exists as a wholly mental entity, cannot ascribe to it physical properties such as sound, weight, or spatiotemporal extension. He cannot describe a poem as sibilant or speak of a painting as a 2' x 2' watercolour. These cannot be properties of ideal entities, hence they cannot be properties of works of art.

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[6] Regarding ontological status as a property here does not involve the view that existence is a predicate, but merely that being material (or phenomenal or ideal, etc.) is one.

[7] The different conceptions of work-identity will be more fully discussed in chapter four.

Likewise, the phenomenalist in asserting that the work of art exists as a purely perceptual object, i.e., an object whose properties are all phenomenal and "open to direct sensory awareness",[8] is thus excluding from the work's identity all properties which do not meet this phenomenalistic standard. Consequently, material, historical, and intentional elements are excluded from the work and not, strictly speaking, ascribable to it. Nor can one always find perceptual counterparts for these excluded elements, since many material and intentional properties often ascribed to a work are not directly perceptible in standard aesthetic situations and cannot thus be translated into phenomenal counterparts of direct sensory awareness. Such properties can in no way be ascribed to the work and hence can form no part of its identity. Aspects of a poem that are not fully exposed to direct perception (e.g., period, author, intention) do not truly belong to the work. The argument is much the same though its conclusions perhaps less convincing in other arts. Elements of a work of sculpture, painting, or architecture that are not fully exposed to direct sensory awareness cannot be regarded as part of the work. For the phenomenalist, if it "looks the same", it is irrelevant whether a statue is made of white marble or shaving cream,[9] or whether a love sonnet is to one's wife or dog. They are in either case the very same statue or sonnet, since such material or intentional aspects are not ascribable to the work proper and thus incapable of functioning as criteria of identification and individuation.[10]

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[8] Beardsley, op. cit., p. 31.

Thus, for the phenomenalist, material and intentional elements are incompatible with the work's purely perceptual ontological status, and therefore must be excluded from its identity. Material properties commonly attributed to the work of art are attributed instead to "the vehicle" of the work of art so that the work of art or "asthetic object" remains of purely phenomenal ontological status.[11] As for authorial intentions or historical elements, these alleged irrelevancies are more pejoratively labelled as fallacies, and our obvious interest in them is explained away as biographical or historical and not aesthetic or critical.

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[9] See Beardsley, op. cit., p. 52, where the examples are bronze and cheese.

[10] It appears that some phenomenalists are led to their ontological position by preoccupation with evaluation, where in some arts material properties seem fairly irrelevant. Yet it does not seem to follow that because certain properties or features are not evaluationally relevant to the work of art, they are therefore ontologically absent from it.

The notions of the intentional and genetic fallacies are, of course, central to the issues of interpretation and evaluation. This again suggests how questions of work-identity and ontological status are involved in interpretation and evaluation. But before I go on to consider the latter, I would like to note another way in which the close conceptual connection between work-identity and ontological status has been particularly important in contemporary aesthetics.

Though traditionally philosophers have held monistic theories on the ontological status of works of art, recently several aestheticians have maintained that the works of different arts are fundamentally different in ontological status, e.g., that works of painting and sculpture are material objects while works of music, drama, and literature are not. The principal argument for this view is that while works of the former arts are typically identifiable with unique, particular material objects, works of the latter arts enjoy a more distributive identity where the same work may be manifest in different objects or events and thus may be identified in different places at the same time. This distributive identity is held to be incompatible with the ontological status of material objects and events, hence it is concluded that such works of art (literary works included) are not material objects or events. Considerations of work-identity and individuation thus seem to force us toward an ontological conclusion.

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[11] The phenomenalist, S. Pepper (The Work of Art, Bloomington, Ind., 1955), uses the notion of the work of art's material vehicle, while Beardsley, op. cit., speaks of the work of art itself as the vehicle for what he regards as the true object of criticism - the purely perceptual aesthetic object.

Let us examine this point more closely, comparing the work of literature to that of painting. In the latter, the particular spatiotemporal history of the object with which the work is identified, i.e., the work's particular provenance, is generally regarded as a constitutive property of the work and a criterion of identity by which it may be distinguished from mere reproductions or fakes. We would not identify the work with another object, which no matter how similar must be spatiotemporally different and thus lack the requisite provenance. Being a different object means, strictly speaking, not being the same work of art. However, such spatiotemporal criteria of identity are absent in the literary work, where the work may be properly identified in any correct copy or performance just as well as in the original manuscript or first performance. Because the literary work is properly identified in different material objects and events, it apparently exists simultaneously at different locations, and therefore it cannot be a material particular. Here we have the rejection of an ontological position because of its incompatability with the way we identify and individuate works of literature, and the same type of argument is made and conclusion drawn with respect to works of music, drama, and dance.[12]

The cogency of the above argument reinforces in yet another way the view I have been trying to maintain in this section, that work-identity and ontological status are interrelated and in some respects interdependent. This view would suggest that at least one major reason we have difficulty in deciding the ontological status of works of art is that we are undecided as to their identity. I believe that part of our indecision would seem to derive from the fluctuation of our concept of the work's identity and the apparent open texture of this concept. Difficulties are found in clearly and decisively drawing the ontological borders of the work of art because there are no clear decisive borders to be drawn. This ontological fuzziness is both a contributory part and a product of the general fuzziness of the concept of the identity of the work of art. If my thesis regarding the interdependence of identity, ontology, interpretation, and evaluation is correct, we should expect to find a corresponding fuzziness, fluctuation, and indecision with respect to the correct principles of interpretation and evaluation.

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[12] It is worth noting that the incompatibility asserted relates not to the alleged material nature of such works but to their status as material _particulars_. See R. Wollheim, _Art and its Objects_, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1970, pp. 21-24, 50-51, 98.

## III

There are many ways in which considerations of ontological status and identity enter into the interpretation of works of art. But before considering some of them, we should distinguish between two clearly different though perhaps somewhat analogous kinds of interpretation of works of art. The first type arises in the performing arts and refers to what the executant artist does in performing the work. We speak, for example, of Olivier's interpretation of _Hamlet_ or Rubinstein's interpretation of Beethoven's _Moonlight Sonata_. Such interpretations are or at least require performances, and surely work-identity is intimately connected with the acceptability or authenticity of such performed interpretations. But Leonardo's _Mona Lisa_ has also been interpreted by generations of art critics. Yet it has never been and cannot be performed by any of them, for works of painting typically allow no performance distinct from that involved in their very creation.

This second type of interpretation, not of the performing variety, might be called "critical interpretation", and such interpretation is directed at the works of both performing and non-performing arts and forms a large part of art criticism. Literature, our main concern, can, in principle, be performed and hence 'performatively' interpreted. We could and perhaps sometimes do speak of some actor's interpretation (i.e., interpretative recitation) of a literary work. But we are all undoubtedly so far more interested in critical interpretations of literature, that interpretative performance, though not inadmissible, is still largely marginal to our concept of literary interpretation. In the light of this and the fact that my dissertation is, after all, concerned with literary criticism rather than performance, I shall henceforth confine my study of interpretation to critical interpretation, and the term "interpretation" should be understood accordingly.

Even having whittled down the concept of interpretation, I can still maintain that there are many ways in which considerations of ontological status and identity enter into the interpretation of works of art. First, interpretation involves description of the work, i.e., description or analysis of its elements and structure. Even those aestheticians who have tried to distinguish between description and interpretation admit that interpretation always involves description and is based on it.[13] Indeed, it might be argued that the very fact that description is selective makes it merge into interpretation. Now it seems clear from our preceding discussion that the categories of elements which the work may possess and hence which can be described in and support an interpretation of it depend on its ontological status. Thus, for the phenomenalist, no valid interpretation will be based on descriptions of the work's alleged material or intentional elements, since such descriptions cannot be descriptions of the work of art itself, but only of the "vehicle" or the author.

However, as I already suggested, the influences in these interrelated issues run in both directions, and a critic's or philosopher's views on interpretation may just as often determine his ontological position. For commitment to certain types of elements as central to the description and interpretation of a work of art will result in one's rejecting an ontological position where these elements are incompatible with the work's alleged ontological status and are thus incapable of being accepted as part of the work. Many aestheticians thus reject the phenomenalist position that the work of art is a purely perceptual object because they are convinced that certain material, intentional, or historical elements are also integral to the work and central to its description or interpretation.[14] This effect of interpretative decisions on ontological status seems inescapable and is even attested to by one philosopher who tries, unsuccessfully, to free interpretation from ontological issues. Thus, J. Margolis, who argues that we can and should settle matters of identity and interpretation in total independence of ontological status, "without invoking the problem of the mode of existence of a work of art",[15] is forced to admit that our interpretative decisions "might very well be read back, if we wished, into a statement of the kind of entity a work of art is."[16] Ontological decisions, thus, both yield and are embedded in and implied by interpretative decisions.

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[13] See, for example, J. Margolis, "The Logic of Interpretation", in J. Margolis (ed.), Philosophy Looks at the Arts, New York, 1962, pp. 115-17; V. Aldrich, Philosophy of Art, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963, pp. 88-89; M. Weitz, Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism, London, 1972, pp. 244, 255. The distinction between description and interpretation has proven extremely problematic and has been very differently drawn by different aestheticians. Some philosophers of art seem to deny the very validity of it (e.g., Wollehim, op. cit., pp. 104-107, and M. Macdonald, "Some Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts", in W. Elton (ed.), Aesthetics and Language, Oxford, 1954, p. 126). Beardsley, who has made such a distinction, reviews some of the different ways it has been drawn (M.C. Beardsley, "The Limits of Critical Interpretation", in S. Hook (ed.), Art and Philosophy, New York, 1966, pp. 61-62), but later treats interpretation as including the notion of description (M.C. Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, Detroit, 1973, p. 38). I, too, for the sake of simplicity, shall avoid making much of this problematic distinction and shall regard description as part of interpretation.

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14. Wollheim (op. cit., pp. 82-90) is one example.

15. J. Margolis, "On Disputes about the Ontological Status of a Work of Art", British Journal of Aesthetics, vol. 8, 1968, p. 150.

16. Ibid., p. 152.

As the work of art's ontological status limits the categories of elements that can enter into the decription and interpretation of the work, so the work's identity limits the actual elements to be described, analyzed, and interpreted. Even if we restrict the work's elements to mere perceptual properties, the question remains which perceptual properties actually belong to it or help constitute it.[17] For surely not all perceptual properties, nor even all the properties perceived in the work of art, really belong to it, since often we admit that we have not seen or understood the work properly. Critics often chide one another either for not perceiving enough or for seeing things in the work that are not really there but are "read into it". Similarly, they often condemn interpretations for being based or centered around allegedly irrelevant aspects of the work and thus misrepresenting the work's real meaning. It would seem that such interpretative issues could only be settled by knowing what actually is or is not (constitutive) in the work and by measuring such interpretative statements about the work against the work's identity. But when we look to the work's identity, we find no clear boundaries as to what is in the work as opposed to what is read into it, or what is central as opposed to marginal. And, paradoxically, if in order to polish our tool for testing true interpretations, we try to

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17. Let us remember that in one wide conception of work-identity, all that truly belongs to the work is constitutive of its identity.

fix or clarify the identity of the work, i.e., determine what is in the work or constitutive of it, we are already engaged in the process of interpretation itself.

Thus, paradoxically, though correspondence or fidelity to work-identity is said to be the measure of correct interpretation, work-identity is itself only determined through interpretation. We are here powerfully made aware of the intimate interdependence of work-identity and interpretation; and at the same time we have noted another contributory element to the openness and fundamental vagueness of work-identity and a reason for much controversy in interpretation. For while a critic who identifies the work with the author's intention or intuitive vision will certainly reject an interpretation incongruent with the author's views as invalid and not true to the work, the critic who rather identifies the work with a particular text will be free to accept it. But again the influence operates in both directions, for interpretation which regards intentional and historical elements as irrelevant and inadmissible will construe or formulate the work's identity as totally devoid of these aspects, while different interpretative policy will incorporate them into the work.

The reciprocal influence between work-identity and interpretation is manifested in many ways. Let me just mention the following. Only few would deny that one central element and criterion of the literary work's identity is the text and that the validity of an interpretation is largely determined by how well it fits and explains the text. Yet, conversely, the correctness of a particular text is often only established through interpretation, i.e., whether among the variant texts of the work it best suits accepted interpretations.

Does the interdependence I seem to discern between identity and interpretation involve us in a vicious circle which makes valid interpretation impossible? I think such a conclusion would be premature and inaccurate. First, because particular interpretations may be valid relative to one's antecedent decision as to work-identity or as to admissible criteria in valid interpretation, and the decision itself could be justified pragmatically. Different decisions and their resultant interpretative models may be justified by our different interpretative aims. These interpretative aims and models will be examined in my chapter on interpretation. Secondly, though we have no clear, decisive, fully-determined notion of a work's identity, we do have a vague grasp of its nature and core of meaning to guide our interpretations. Indeed, it appears that for some critics the role of interpretation is not only to describe and clarify this vague and vaguely grasped identity but also to determine it more fully and richly. Here critical interpretation is somewhat analogous to interpretative performance in the performing arts, serving not only to reveal what is in the work, but also to some extent to determine or 'create' what is in it. Validity here might be measured largely in terms of the richness and power of the interpretation.

At this point, it may be illuminating to examine how one literary critic, L. Abercrombie,[18] defends such creative or enriching interpretation on the grounds of the alleged ontological status and identity of the work of art. Abercrombie argues that the work of art "is not material at all, but spiritual"[19] and "does not exist until it is experienced by an individual mind."[20] This ontological conclusion leads him to the view that the recipient's experience of the work is a crucial constituent of the work's identity, along with the author's intentions and technique. This, in turn, implies that the identity of the work is "continually creative" and "continually changing",[21] "for the experiences it creates must always be individual and therefore unique experiences."[22] Yet, for Abercrombie, work-identity is in some sense preserved, since all these experiences can be linked to the author whose creation occasions them.[23] On these grounds of identity and ontological status, Abercrombie rests his case for the liberty of interpretation:

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[18] L. Abercrombie, "A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting", Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 16, 1930.

[19] Ibid., p. 29.

[20] Ibid., p. 28.

[21] Ibid., p. 29.

[22] Ibid.

[23] The technique or medium of a work can also change, so, for Abercrombie, the author is the only constant and unchanging element in the work's identity (ibid., pp. 28-29).

> "Every reader or spectator is at liberty to say what the play means to him. The reason is a simple one: the play, as a work of art, has no other existence. To limit interpretation to what the play may have meant to Elizabethans is, frankly, to exclude the existence of the play as a work of art; for as a work of art it does not exist in what it may have meant to some one else, but in what it means to me: that is the only way it can exist."[24]

Abercrombie's views on work-identity, ontology, and interpretation are surely challengeable, but what seems undeniable is their intimate interrelation.

We have alluded to a wider and narrower conception of work-identity, the latter treating identity not as merely what belongs or contributes to the work, but as the work's central core or constitutive essence. I think we find an interesting parallel in the concept of interpretation. Often interpretation is construed not simply as the analysis of the elements and meaning of a work, but more narrowly as an analysis of the work's central element or core of meaning. The interpreter here is called upon to make decisions not only as to what is or is not in the work, but as to what is central or most important in it, as it were the animating essence which is reflected in and underlies the other, less important elements.

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24. L. Abercrombie, "A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting", Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 16, 1930, p. 29.

Thus, for instance, in the interpretation of Hamlet, critics have argued over which element or elements are central and constitute the essential meaning of the play. Some critics, e.g., Bradley[25] and Jones,[26] interpret Hamlet as a psychological drama; for the former, a portrait of melancholy, for the latter of Oedipal neurosis. They base their interpretations on the view that the character and behaviour of Hamlet are the central, formative elements of the play which contain its essential meaning and through which its other elements (e.g., plot, other characters, etc.) are to be explained. In contrast, other critics, e.g., Knight[27] and Spurgeon,[28] interpret Hamlet as a poetic drama exhibiting through its symbols and imagery not the portrait of an individual but the picture of a world; for the former an essentially healthy world where Hamlet is the discordant element of disease, for the latter a world of total decay and rottenness. These critics reach their interpretations from the position that the symbolic language or imagery of the play is the central element which conveys the core of meaning and which generates and underlies the plot, characters, and other elements of the play.

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[25] A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, London 1924.

[26] E. Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus, New York, 1949.

[27] G.W. Knight, The Wheel of Fire, New York, 1957.

[28] C.F.E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, Cambridge, 1935.

The correct interpretation of the (central) meaning of Hamlet would thus seem to hinge on what are considered to be the central elements of the play, i.e., those which are most primary and formative of its identity. Here again, correctness of interpretation would seem to be measured against the touchstone of identity. But again, one must ask how we are to know what elements form this central-core identity without interpretation. It surely is not given that Hamlet's character is more important than the plot or that imagery is more central than both plot and character. To determine which elements are more central to the work and thus more fruitful in accounting for the meaning of the work requires interpretation. Thus, we again encounter interdependence where work-identity is both the standard and the product of interpretation.

When I considered how the interdependence of identity and interpretation might pose a problem for validity in interpretation, I suggested that there seem to be several different interpretative models or frameworks with different aims and criteria and with fundamentally different notions of the identity of the work of art they interpret. We may note that the interdependence of identity and interpretation is greater in some critical models than in others. For critics who see the work of art as an entity with a fixed, intact identity (e.g., an author's intuition or intention), the dependence of identity on interpretation is only epistemic and not essential. However, in other critical frameworks, the work enjoys no fixed independent identity, but rather its identity is seen as deepening and developing through interpretation. Here, critical interpretation does not only reveal identity, but forms it, enriches it. Again the analogy with interpretative performance is clear, and such criticism is often called "creative".

I trust that by tracing part of the network of interrelations between work-identity, ontological status, and interpretation, I have demonstrated their intimate conceptual connection. Let me conclude by relating these three issues to the problem of evaluation.

## IV

Evaluation has traditionally received more philosophical attention than any of the other three issues we have so far discussed. This is perhaps because the critic's primary role has usually been conceived as that of judging or appraising the value of works of art. Indeed the word "critic" is derived from the Greek word for "judge". However, it seems quite clear that critical evaluation depends upon interpretation. The business of properly appraising a work of art surely involves some knowledge of what we are appraising. If we do not understand the work or know what is in it, we are clearly unable to know whether what is in it has value.

It is thus common critical practice to reject an evaluation because it is based on an inadequate interpretation.

Shakespeare's Measure for Measure has often been lowly valued as unrealistic, inconsistent in characterization, and morbidly pessimistic. However, it may be defended by arguing, as Leavis does,[29] that these criticisms are not valid and dissolve when the play is interpreted on the symbolic-allegorical level, as it should be. Bishop Hurd similarly defends the Faerie Queene against hostile criticism by arguing that such criticism derives from falsely interpreting the work as a classical epic poem, when it should rather be viewed as a "poem constructed on Gothic ideas."[30] This superior interpretation helps in "explaining, perhaps justifying, the general plan and conduct of the Faerie Queene, which to classical readers has appeared indefensible."[31] Such argument is no mere ploy of literary polemicists. Generally, when we are shown through interpretation the symbolic meaning or imagery patterns of an apparently empty and incoherent piece of verse, we tend to change our initially low valuation of the work. And even if we do not, we recognize this interpretation as an argument which is relevant to and challenges our evaluation. How one evaluates a work depends on how one sees it, and how one sees it depends on one's interpretation. It is therefore not surprising that

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29. F.R. Leavis, "Measure for Measure", in The Common Pursuit, Harmonsworth, U.K., 1976.

30. R. Hurd, From Letters On Chivalry, 1762, in E.D. Jones (ed.), English Critical Essays (Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries), Oxford, 1943, p. 379.

31. Ibid., p. 373.

new styles in literature, painting, and music are often initially vilified. They cannot be properly appreciated because they are not properly understood.

We should note, moreover, that in some critical models, interpretation and evaluation are also linked in another way, where the work's difficulty or unclarity of interpretation is a criterion for its evaluation. Interestingly enough, critics who employ this criterion often differ sharply as to whether it has positive or negative valence. Some who prize ambiguity and paradox seem to make difficulty of interpretation a poetic virtue, while others regard it as a defect.[32]

Another way in which interpretation and evaluation are intimately linked is that the language of interpretation often has distinctly evaluative import. Interpretative terms such as "penetrating", "tender", "mature", and "bitingly satirical" usually have distinctly positive colouring, while terms like "insincere", "mechanical", "unrealistic", and "indulgently sentimental" are characteristically negative. The evaluative import of such terms is often so great that they seem to function as evaluative predicates, along with the clearly evaluative "good", "bad", "great", etc. In many contexts, "This

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32. C. Brooks (The Well Wrought Urn, London, 1960) and W. Empson (Seven Tyles of Ambiguity, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1972) appear to be among the former, while H. Gardner (The Business of Criticism, Oxford, 1970) and Y. Winters (In Defense of Reason, Denver, 1947) seem representative of the latter.

work is unrealistic" has the verdictive force of "This work is bad". This might suggest not only a link but almost a continuum between interpretation and evaluation. What is clear, however, is that if a work is interpreted as having several layers of meaning or significance, as portraying an original psychological or social insight, as presenting an intricate but unified development of a basic theme or image, then positive evaluation of the work is strongly implied. For most of us, meaning, insight, and unity in variety are things one values in works of art, and thus the interpreter by discovering more and deeper meanings, insights, and unities is revealing added value in the work. Moreover, if we accept the critical model where the work is not only revealed but is also in a sense constituted by interpretation, the interpreter would seem to contribute value to the work.

In arguing for the dependence of evaluation on interpretation, we have implicitly suggested its consequent dependence on work-identity and ontological status, since the limits of interpretation have been shown to be determined to some extent by the identity and ontological status the work is granted. This implicit suggestion may be more explicitly formulated by arguing that the kind and extent of value a thing has would seem to depend largely on the properties or elements which constitute it; in short, on its identity. Then, since the properties or elements which constitute it depend to some extent on its ontological status (which determines what kind of properties can constitute it), our position on the ontological status of the work of art should also in some way influence our evaluation of it.

These influences may be clarified by some examples of how considerations of work-identity and ontological status actually enter into the task of evaluation. Let us begin with work-identity. First, we may and often do refute a valuation of a work of art by saying that it is based on an inauthentic or distorted version or performance of the work which misrepresents the work and fails to convey its constitutive properties. In such cases, we hear arguments of the form: *W* is not a bad work; for though $\underline{w}_1$ is bad, it is only a corrupt or distorted version (text, performance, presentation, etc.) of *W*, and thus we have no right to infer the value of *W* from the value of $\underline{w}_1$.

Secondly, one's view of work-identity would seem to suggest the relevant criteria of evaluation. Surely we are not to judge a comedy by what some have called the rules of tragedy; and we may recall Hurd's insistence that the *Faerie Queene* be evaluated in terms of what it truly is — a Gothic poem — rather than be judged by the criteria of classical epic poetry. The whole notion of genre criticism rests on identifying the work under its proper genre, so that the proper criteria may be employed in its evaluation. Though some aestheticians have spoken of general evaluative canons such as unity, complexity, and intensity, defenders of genre criticism can reasonably retort that these canons actually amount to very different criteria in different arts and even in the different genres of the same art. The complexity and intensity of a religious lyric are surely very remote from the complexity and intensity of a social satire in prose; and certainly critics do not seem to evaluate these works by the same standards. Hurd, again, has defended the Faerie Queene against charges of lack of unity by arguing that Gothic unity is different and indeed incompatible with classic unity.[33] It would be hard to deny that the unity of a sonnet is different from that of an epic, and also the unity of different sonnets may be very different; there may be unity of tone, of argument, or of imagery.

Many works of art, however, do not seem to be constituted in accordance with any definite genre or style. Indeed, works of art are often said to be fundamentally expressions of unique intuitions or emotions, or resolutions of particular problems. Whether or not this is true, clearly we attribute to particular works of art far more individuality and uniqueness than we do to particular tables or stones or even moral actions. It is fashionable among philosophers to regard works of art as unique, and thinkers as different as Croce[34] and Hampshire[35] not only assert the uniqueness of works of art but argue from their unique identity the invalidity of general critical canons or standards of evaluation, including genre-criteria. For Croce the only evaluative question is whether the work succeeds in expressing its particular intuition; and since each intuition-expression is totally unique, there can be no general laws to judge successful expression, but such success can only be discerned by taste. For Hampshire and Margaret Macdonald,[36] each work presents its own standards of evaluation. Since the work is unique and incomparable, there is no way to evaluate it by reference to general standards.

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[33] Hurd, From Letters On Chivalry, 1762, in Jones (ed.), op. cit., pp. 374-378. Hurd, however, asserts that the work suffers from one serious problem of unity deriving from its union of two different unifying designs - the one narrative and the other allegorical (ibid. p. 380).

[34] Croce, op. cit., especially chapters 4, 9 and 16.

[35] S. Hampshire, "Logic and Appreciation", in Elton, (ed.), op. cit.

In short, the notion of work-identity is deeply embedded in the problem of critical evaluation. Nor should this be surprising. For the value of a work would not seem to be something externally tacked on to the work, but is at least generated by the work's constitutive properties, if not itself a constitutive aspect and criterion of work-identity.

The role of ontological status in evaluation is neither as obvious nor apparently as great as that of identity and interpretation. It is true, however, that Plato based his quite negative evaluation of art on ontological principles. Art was but an imitation of an illusory world which itself was but a poor imitation of the real world of Ideas.[37]

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36. M. Macdonald, op. cit. (note 4 above).

37. Plato, of course, does not condemn art aesthetically, but rather ethically, politically, and epistemologically.

Since Plato's harsh but rather unconvincing critique, ontological principles have generally played a very different but still relevant role in critical evaluation. Like identity, the ontological status of a work of art seems in some way to limit the criteria for evaluation. The phenomenalist, whose ontological position excludes intentional and historical elements from the work, cannot employ in evaluating a poem the criterion of whether or not it expressed what the author intended it to express, or whether or not it satisfied the artistic goals and conventions under whose influence it was created. We should remember that the intentional and genetic fallacies have been invoked with respect to evaluation as well as interpretation.[38] Similarly, the idealist, for whom the work exists as a purely mental object, cannot evaluate it in terms of alleged material properties, because they are incompatible with the work's ontological status. He cannot praise a painting for the delicacy of its brush strokes or criticize it for the faded quality of its oil colours, because such material elements are not regarded by him as belonging to the work itself but only relating to the technical matter of externalizing it.

To reinforce the thesis that critical evaluation involves the notion of understanding what the work of art is and thus involves the notions of work-identity, ontological status, and interpretation, let us try to imagine a case where such matters are apparently absent from evaluation. Perhaps the most likely case would be the simple verdict "That's good" said in the presence of a work of art. Surely here, one might argue, we have aesthetic evaluation without invoking the meaning, properties, or mode of existence of what we are evaluating.

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[38] See Beardsley, Aesthetics, pp. 457-460. Beardsley here treats the intentional as falling under the more general genetic.

Two points, however, must be made against this argument. First, such laconic, unsupported verdicts are not typical of critical evaluation nor indeed would qualify as adequate in standard critical practice. Though Wittgenstein may be right in claiming that we first learn aesthetic evaluations as gestures of approval,[39] critical evaluations are typically backed by reasons and justifications which appeal to properties or meanings of the work. For this reason, many aestheticians prefer to speak of critical evaluation as appraisal or appreciation rather than as mere judgment.[40] But even if we prefer to think of evaluation as judgment, we must admit that it no more resembles a gesture of "rubbing the belly" than a declaratory judgment on constitutional law resembles the "thumbs-down" verdict in a Roman circus.

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[39] L. Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations On Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief, Oxford, 1970, p. 2.

[40] Wittgenstein himself seems to favour the notion of appreciation and is well aware that appreciation in the arts involves knowledge of what is being appreciated (see ibid., pp. 6-7). F.E. Sparshott (The Concept of Criticism, Oxford, 1967, pp. 121, 128) prefers the notion of appraisal.

Secondly, and more importantly, the absence of the notions of identity, ontological status, and interpretation in the above judgment is only apparent. All these issues are deceptively concealed in the seemingly clear demonstrative "that". In such abbreviated verdicts like "That's good", the nature or properties of the object of evaluation are indicated ostensively. The evaluation assumes and appeals to the fact that we know what object the speaker refers to (identity and ontological status) and see it (interpret it) as he sees it. The verdictive import of "That's good" in praising a literary satire like Swift's Modest Proposal will be lost if the hearer takes the object of praise as the speaker's emotional state or the colour of the text's cover or print (ontological status and identity), or if he takes (interprets) the work literally. Similarly, if we use our laconic verdict to praise a portrait, it would be entirely misunderstood were it taken to be referring to its utterer's emotional state or the back of the canvas, or were the portrait's colours and lines seen as a mere abstract design or diagram.

Having established how aspects of interpretation, identity, and ontological status always enter into the question of evaluation, let us now consider how evaluation reciprocally influences our handling of the former issues. Starting with interpretation, we may point out at the most basic level that we would generally not take such pains to interpret and re-interpret a work of art if we did not first feel some sense of its value.[41] A work of art strikes us as having value, and we are thus drawn to try to understand it better in order to explain and perhaps increase our initial appreciation of it. Critics frequently testify to this. Helen Gardner, for example, who sees the primary task of criticism as "elucidation" or interpretation rather than evaluation,[42] still admits:

> "This response to a work as having value is the beginning of fruitful critical activity as I see it. ... Having made the initial act of choice, or judgment of value, I want to remove any obstacles which prevent the work having its fullest possible effect."[43]

This role of evaluation in interpretation would also explain why greater works are constantly being re-interpreted while

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41. I agree, however, with Weitz (op. cit., p. 17) that the mere fact that a work is interpreted or criticized does not entail positive critical evaluation. For though such interpretation implies that the work is worth talking about, it does not at all follow from its being worth talking about that it is aesthetically good. However, though there is no strict entailment from interpretation to positive evaluation, and though there may be reasons other than experienced or anticipated value for our interpreting a work, positive evaluation is surely a major source of interpretation and is to some degree implied by repeated interpretation and re-interpretation of a work. This implication is especially strong if we realize what Weitz refuses to realize: that critical evaluation of a work of art includes more than "saying that it is aesthetically good (or bad or indifferent)" but also saying that it is important or influential in the artistic and critical tradition.

42. H. Gardner, op. cit., pp. 12-14.

43. Ibid., pp. 7, 14.

lesser works are spared this study. It is not so much that greater works are harder to understand, interpret, or know but simply that we want more to understand or know about them.

Secondly, evaluation is not only an impetus to interpretation, but often serves as a criterion of correct interpretation. Stevenson has argued this with respect to the poem:

> "the interpretation and evaluation of a poem are rarely separable steps in criticism. We do not *first* interpret it and then evaluate it, taking each step with finality. Rather, we test a tentative interpretation by considering the tentative evaluation of the poem to which it leads, progressively altering each in the light of the other."[44]

T.S. Eliot, certainly an influential critic, seems to support this view, for he tells us he does "not think of *enjoyment* and *understanding* [his correlatives of evaluation and interpretation] as distinct activities."[45] Indeed, Eliot suggests that true interpretation might even be defined in terms of proper evaluation, since "to understand a poem comes to the same thing as to enjoy it for the right reasons. ... And that means enjoying it to the right degree and in the right way, relative to other poems."[46] This, of course, is roughly tantamount to proper evaluation. Isabel Hungerland

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44. C.L. Stevenson, "On the Reasons That Can Be Given for the Interpretation of a Poem", in Margolis (ed.), op. cit., p. 124.

45. T.S. Eliot, "The Frontiers of Criticism", in *On Poetry and Poets*, London, 1969, p. 115.

46. Ibid.

goes so far as to suggest that under certain circumstances, the criterion or rule for choosing among rival interpretations is "to adopt that interpretation which does the best for the work, i.e., which results in the highest rating in the order of worth."[47]

This evaluative criterion of interpretation is no doubt employed by many critics, but there are some critical models where its role is rather limited. Thus, some historical critics choose to interpret some apparent inconsistencies or problems in some of Shakespeare's plays as the unhappy product of his borrowings and Elizabethan conventions rather than try to interpret them away in terms of myth, modern psychological insight, or complexity of attitude.[48] Here

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[47] I. Hungerland, "The Concept of Intention in Art Criticism", Journal of Philosophy, vol. 52, 1955, p. 740. Hungerland rightly remarks that there seems to be a variety of interpretative aims and consequent criteria:

> "there are a variety of purposes with which one may approach a work of art, without falling outside the boundaries traditionally drawn for 'aesthetic' experience. Furthermore, for each dominant purpose, there is a reasonable or relative rule of choice." (ibid., p. 733).

[48] For a study of such historical critics' treatment of Hamlet, see Weitz, op. cit., pp. 44-94. Their "uncharitable" attitude has been attacked by critics such as J. Dover Wilson (see ibid., pp. 107-108) and Abercrombie (op. cit.) who argue that we should try to find aesthetic justification and interpretation of alleged difficulties before resorting to explaining them historically. A distinction has thus often been drawn between "aesthetic" criticism, which is inclined to employ evaluative criteria of interpretation, and "historical" or "scientific" criticism which tends not to.

Here again, we seem to see a plurality of interpretative games with different rules and apparently somewhat different ends. But though this alleged plurality deserves and will later receive close investigation, we must now continue our present argument by moving on to see how evaluation also functions as a criterion of work-identity.

As I suggested earlier, value does not seem a foreign body tacked on to the work of art, but is rather generated by the work's identity and may be an aspect of that identity, even when value is conceived in instrumental terms, e.g., as effectiveness for aesthetic experience. Works of art that have long and continuously been highly valued reach a state where value is incorporated into the identity of these works. It is hard to imagine one's denying aesthetic value to works like Moby Dick, Gray's Elegy, Macbeth, The Last Supper or the Eroica; the very names of these works ring with honorific import. When high evaluation is so incorporated into work-identity, it functions as a criterion for identifying a work in its authentic presentations, versions, or performances. One reason, though certainly not the only reason, for saying that a particular performance (or text) of Gray's Elegy is more authentic and better represents the work than some other performance (or text) is that the former presents aesthetic excellence while the latter is aesthetically insufferable. Here, then, an accepted evaluation of a work serves as a criterion for the work's identity and as a standard for identifying and grading its authentic presentations and performances;[49] and I think the case is not very different in identifying the authentic performances, scripts, or scores of works of drama or music.

Moreover, evaluation might appear to determine work-identity in a more general, comprehensive manner. Since works of art are typically, though not always primarily, intended and considered for aesthetic appreciation and appraisal, it might be plausibly argued that the constitutive elements of the work must include those relevant to its aesthetic appraisal.

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49. It is worth noting with respect to this point a recent literary controversy over the identity of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, which centered on the question of which of the variant texts of the poem most effectively expresses the poem's essence. The participants of the debate (which was carried out over months in The Times Literary Supplement) all seem to concede that the constitutive essence or identity of the poem is of great aesthetic value; and so, the question "of how best to express the essence of The Ancient Mariner" (TLS, 3 June, 1977, p. 681) amounts to which version of the poem is aesthetically superior. N. Fruman, arguing for Coleridge's revised text, compares it to the original text and appeals: "Is it not tighter and vastly superior to the near doggeral of the original?" (ibid.) W. Empson, arguing against the cuts of the revised text, tells us:

> "Whatever the motive for cutting these passages, the poem is clearly better when they are restored. Most readers of the Oxford Text, where they come to the bottom of the page, put them back automatically." (TLS, 29 April, 1977, p. 523).

Here evaluative considerations clearly enter into the problem of fixing the text of a literary work; and since the text certainly seems a basic and important element of the literary work's identity, evaluative criteria can be seen to play an important role in determining work-identity.

Some philosophers, such as Strawson, go so far as to suggest that work-identity may be defined in terms of evaluation or appraisal: "the criterion of identity of a work of art is the totality of features which are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal."[50] Many, of course, would deny this organistic view. However, even if we deny that being relevant to aesthetic appraisal entails being constitutive of work-identity, it surely seems that being irrelevant to aesthetic appraisal strongly implies not being constitutive or central to identity.

Finally, turning to ontology, we may note that just as one's position on the ontological status of works of art will limit the range of criteria relevant for evaluation, so decisions (often implicit) to employ certain kinds of evaluative criteria suggest or preclude certain ontological positions. If one's criteria of evaluation apply to more than what is directly perceptible in the work, but relate also to material elements or intentional and genetic aspects attributed to the work, one seems unable to hold the ontological position that the work of art is a purely perceptual object. Literary

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50. P.F. Strawson, "Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art", in Freedom and Resentment, London, 1974, p. 185. Strawson, however, distinguishes such features or elements of the work from properties or qualities which could "be shared by different works of art" (ibid., p. 186). He shares with Croce, Hampshire, and Macdonald the view that the work of art is unique and that consequently "there are no general descriptive criteria of aesthetic excellence" (ibid., pp. 182-83).

critics who evaluate a poem in terms of authorial sincerity and realization of intention or in terms of its response to a complex tradition will, of course, be compelled to reject the view that the poem exists as a mere phenomenal entity, devoid of such intentional and genetic features. One reason why Collingwood's view that paintings are immaterial, mental objects is so implausible is that these works are so frequently appraised largely in terms of material features. One reason why such a view seems more plausible with respect to literature is that such features (e.g., colour, physical dimensions, etc.) are far less, if at all, relevant in evaluating a literary work.

It may appear that not only the criteria for attributing value but also the kind and degree of value attributed to works of art tend to influence positions on their ontological status. There is still in most of us some vestige of the traditional view of the correspondence of being and value. There is also a long intellectual tradition of valuing the spiritual or ideal above the material, and some works of art are among the things we value most. One is thus reluctant to regard them as mere material entities. This explains the appeal of idealist theories like Croce's and Collingwood's. Moreover, we often attribute great spiritual value and significance to certain great works of art (e.g., Paradise Lost, Hamlet, Giotto's The Mourning of Christ, Beethoven's Eroica), and this might suggest that they could not have mere material status. At this point it is illuminating to note that we feel no such qualms in regarding third-rate works of painting as having material status. This would indicate that one's inference from spiritual value to more-than-material existence is problematic, since surely we want to say that works of the same art enjoy the same ontological status. Of course, some might deny that such paintings are works of art. But in any case, the inference seems wholly unjustified; one might as well argue from the potential value of an entity to its potential existence.

Thus, though psychologically powerful, this particular influence of evaluation on ontology is logically unjustified and misguided, and should be avoided. But there still remains the seemingly logically inescapable influence of certain criteria of evaluation in precluding certain positions on the ontological status of works of art. Consequently, it has been demonstrated that positions on evaluation both are influenced by and influence positions on the interpretation, identity, and ontological status of works of art.

## V

I have argued in this chapter that the issues of the identity, ontological status, interpretation, and evaluation of the work of art are intimately interrelated, and in some respects interdependent. I have tried to establish this thesis by tracing some of the many different ways in which these issues are interrelated and influence each other. One conclusion to be drawn from my discussion is that the aesthetician, in his treatment of any one of these issues, should pay careful attention to the implications of his position for the other related issues. That these issues can be adequately settled in total independence of one another is a delusion. An initially plausible ontological position may imply positions on identity, interpretation, and evaluation which are disastrous, and for that reason would itself be unsatisfactory. We would not want to maintain an ontological position which would so limit our interpretation and evaluation of the work of art as to constrain and diminish our appreciation or experience of art.[51]

Another conclusion which my discussion suggests is the apparent incommensurability of critical theories of evaluation and interpretation. We have noticed that often behind rival interpretations of a particular work, there are rival methods or models of interpretation which claim to be the correct one. For example, with the interpretation of a poem, some feel that the true interpretation consists in the revelation of the poet's vision or what the poet meant by his text. Others argue that true interpretation should aim at the revelation of what the words of the poem mean to an educated sensitive reader when he is responding most fully and positively to these words. To determine which interpretation is correct, we should have to judge which better captures the poem's

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51. This seems to be one of the principles which lead Wollheim to reject both the idealist's and the phenomenalist's ontological positions on the work of art. See Wollheim, op. cit., pp. 60, 106.

identity. But there is no clear, undisputed identity to appeal to, for work-identity is in part a product of interpretation. Clearly, one interpretative model identifies the poem with the author's vision while the other with a concrete text as it directly appears to the reader. We cannot determine which is the better method of describing the given entity, the poem, for they seem to be describing different entities or at least very different aspects of the allegedly same entity. Particular rival interpretations built on these different models do not so much contradict each other as pass each other by. This might explain our surprising tolerance of apparently incompatible interpretations in criticism.

Similarly, with evaluation, critics may condemn a dramatic text for unrealistic characterization, while others will reject such a criticism as irrelevant, arguing that the work is not a psychological drama but a dramatic poem whose elements are symbolic or expressive, not mimetically representational. Is the play to be chiefly evaluated as dramatic representation or as poetry? Appeal to the work's identity to resolve this evaluative issue is as futile as before. Some critics might decide the former on the basis of a general theory of drama. Others whose general aim is increasing appreciation would choose the latter because it would yield a higher evaluation. But what if these last critics were presented with evidence that the author had the former intentions and standards in mind? Clearly, some would reject their previous position, but others, the non-intentionalists, would be unmoved. Again there seem to be a variety of critical games with different rules and criteria.

These conclusions are intriguing and point to a critical pluralism, which should be distinguished from scepticism, subjectivism, and mere historical relativism.[52] This notion of a plurality of interpretative and evaluative models or games deserves more extensive discussion which cannot be undertaken in this chapter. I must, for the present, rest content with having suggested this plurality and indicated how it manifests itself with respect to the four issues whose intimate interrelations I have tried to trace. Indeed, since these issues are so closely interrelated, it seems best to postpone our detailed examination of the possible plurality of models of literary interpretation and evaluation until we have more fully discussed the ontological status and identity of the literary work of art.

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[52] The critic R.S. Crane (The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry, Toronto, 1953) is one of the few who seem to advocate such a pluralism. Crane regards literary criticism not as a single unified discipline, "but rather a collection of distinct and more or less incommensurable 'frameworks' or'languages'" (ibid., p. 13) within which the same critical remark has different meanings and may even refer to different objects. He also appears to recognize the interdependence between one's views on the nature of literary works and one's position on the proper critical methods for their interpretation and evaluation (see ibid., p. 20). Crane sees the various critical frameworks as serving criticism's different ends which are "the different kinds of knowledge about poetry we may happen, at one time or another or for one or another reason, to want" (ibid., p. 27). Thus, behind the plurality of critical methods, frameworks, and ends, Crane assumes an underlying unity - the essentially cognitive nature of criticism. I shall later develop a position of critical pluralism which goes further.

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE WORK OF LITERATURE

### I

1. Ontology has always been one of the major areas of philosophical inquiry, and thus it is not surprising that philosophers of art have recently devoted considerable attention to the ontological status of the work of art. However, we have seen that this ontological problem is not merely one of narrow philosophical interest, but rather has great relevance for art criticism, since ontological positions have logical bearing on one's views on the identity of the work of art and on the acceptable criteria for its interpretation and evaluation. It is natural, then, that also art critics and theorists (as, for example, Abercrombie[1]) should try to resolve this ontological issue of what sort of entity the work of art is and what is its mode of existence.

However, despite the considerable attention it has received, the question of the ontological status of the work of art still remains extremely problematic and has issued in a wide variety of unsatisfying solutions.[2] Indeed, this problem of the work's mode of existence has been so frustrating as to suggest to one aesthetician, J. Margolis, that it should be abandoned as fruitless and even harmful, since its "predictable range of would-be answers invariably lead to paradox and mystification."[3] I submit that one reason why much treatment of this problem has proven unsuccessful is that aestheticians have often wrongly assumed that the works of the various arts must be ontologically uniform and thus have tried to present a uniform, monistic position with respect to the ontological status of the work of art. My discussion of Collingwood and Beardsley in chapter one has shown the distortive dangers of such an assumption of ontological uniformity. Common sense clearly suggests that a painting and a poem are ontologically not on a par; the former apparently identifiable with a particular material object and locatable in one particular place, the latter clearly not. Moroever, several philosophers have recently endorsed and cogently argued for such a common sense

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[1] See my discussion of L. Abercrombie in the previous chapter.

[2] Six of the major answers to this ontological question have been reviewed and refuted by R. Hoffman, "Conjectures and Refutations on the Ontological Status of the Work of Art", Mind, vol. 71, 1962.

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3. J. Margolis, "On Disputes about the Ontological Status of a Work of Art", British Journal of Aesthetics, vol. 8, 1968, p. 147. One must be quick to add, however, that Margolis' abandonment of the problem was short-lived. He has subsequently proposed an ontological theory of his own in "Works of Art as Physically Embodied and Culturally Emergent Entities", British Journal of Aesthetics, vol. 14, 1974, and has more recently defended and developed it in "The Ontological Peculiarity of Works of Art", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 36, 1977.

view.[4]

Given the apparent ontological variety of the works of different arts, I seem to be steering a much safer and simpler course by confining myself here to the problem of the ontological status of literary works. Unfortunately, however, this simpler problem is still far from simple. Indeed it is exceedingly complex. In this chapter I shall begin by indicating some of this problem's complexity and then go on to argue that the literary work's ontological status is itself complex. Having illustrated some of the ways in which the literary work is ontologically complex, I shall try to provide a general position which can accomodate these complexities.

2. The problem of the ontological status of the work of literature seems to issue or be formulated in many different questions. What sort of entity is the literary work? What is its mode or manner of existence? When can it be said to exist or cease to exist? Where does it exist? At a higher level of philosophical sophistication and technicality, it is often asked whether the literary work is material, phenomenal, or ideal and whether it is a particular, a universal, or a type. Philosophical speculation on the existence of the literary work has gone so far as to raise

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[4] For example, J.O. Urmson, "Literature", in G. Dickie and R.J. Sclafani (eds.), Aesthetics, New York, 1977; M. Macdonald, "Art and Imagination", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 53, 1952-53; R. Wollheim, Art and its Objects, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1970; N. Wolterstorff, "Toward an Ontology of Art Works", Nous, vol. 9, 1975.

the question of whether literary works really and fully exist; and it seems that on more than one occasion this question has been answered in the negative.

These questions (and they could be multiplied) give a preliminary indication of the complexity of this ontological issue, and perhaps I should declare here that I shall not be providing specific answers to all of them. I shall concentrate mainly on the earlier, less sophisticated questions, since I find them more productive and answerable. Discussion of whether the literary work is a particular, universal, or type and whether it is material, ideal, or phenomenal runs the risk of getting hopelessly entangled in more general and fundamental ontological controversies (e.g., nominalism versus realism, materialism versus idealism). Moreover, it seems to make the questionable assumption that the work of literature must fall neatly and wholly within one of these traditional ontological categories or, more precisely, within one and only one ordered pair of them.[5] Several aestheticians, however, assert that the work of literature cannot be thus ontologically pigeonholed,[6] and some indeed claim that works of art rather form a special ontological category of

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5. An ordered pair here would be a pair composed of one category from the 'metaphysical' dimension (e.g., material, phenomenal, ideal) and one from the 'logical' dimension (e.g., particular, class, type, universal). For this distinction of dimensions see Wollheim, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

6. Margolis (in the works cited in note 2 above) and Macdonald (op. cit.) present this view.

their own, the work of art being an ontological object *sui generis*.[7] Furthermore, the different philosophers who argue over the classification of the literary work in terms of traditional ontological categories often differently construe the nature and range of these categories.[8] As to the question of whether works of literature really and fully exist, it seems absurd to deny that they do; though I hope later to show how some aestheticians may have been led to make such an apparently absurd denial.

Let us begin with the first and probably most fundamental question: what sort of entity is the work of literature? It is very doubtful that we should get an adequate answer to this question by merely looking more closely and intensely at literary works, for surely these works wear no clear ontological label that could be read off like a title or date of publication. No doubt the authors of the various views on the literary work's ontological status have all looked closely and intensely at literary works, and yet they have reached very different and apparently incompatible conclusions. It therefore seems that mere contemplation of literary works, no matter how close or intense, is not enough to determine ontological status.

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[7] For example, D. Pole, "Presentational Objects and their Interpretation", in G. Vesey (ed.), *Philosophy and the Arts*, London, 1973.

[8] V. Aldrich (*Philosophy of Art*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), who regards all works of art as material, construes material as accomodating expressive and interpretational aspects, while Margolis ("On Disputes ...") sees material as "nothing more than material" (ibid., p. 148), i.e., excluding all interpretational or intentional aspects. Wollheim (op. cit.) regards a type as something distinctly different from a universal or a class, while R. Meager ("The Uniqueness of a Work of Art", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 59, 1958-59) regards the type as a universal, and C.L. Stevenson ("On 'What is a Poem?'", *Philosophical Review*, vol. 66, 1957) treats the type as a class. J. Margolis has recently (in "The Ontological Peculiarity of Works of Art") classified the type as a particular.

Wittgenstein seems to provide a better way of answering our ontological question. He tells us in the Investigations: "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is."[9] This important idea has been adopted by several contemporary aestheticians who argue that the question of what the work of art is really amounts to the question of how the term "work of art" is used.[10] To determine the ontological status of the work of literature we must therefore determine the usage or logical grammar of the expression "work of literature". Shifting the problem to the linguistic level is no doubt therapeutic, but it does not result in any immediate solution, for the logical grammar of "work of literature" is exceedingly complex; the usage of this term is intricate, fluctuating, and not wholly consistent. This should not surprise us. We have argued in chapter one that the concept of the work of literature is essentially contested and that means the proper use and logical grammar of the expression "work of literature" is essentially contested. This in turn implies that its usage is complex and not uniformly consistent. Thus, by placing our ontological problem on this linguistic level, we are only made aware of its complexity. And we should also become aware that a neat and simple solution to it may not be possible.

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[9] L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Oxford, 1968, p. 116.

[10] See, for example, M. Macdonald ("Some Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts", in W. Elton (ed.) Aesthetics and Language, Oxford, 1954, p. 124) and D. Henze ("The Work of Art", in F.J. Coleman (ed.),Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics, New York, 1968, pp. 34, 38) and also R. Hoffman (op. cit., p. 520).

The complexity of our ontological problem and the unlikelihood of a simple resolution of it should indeed already be clear to us from the previous chapter. We argued there that the ontological status granted a work of art is in part determined by what criteria are used in its interpretation and evaluation. We further noted that there are a variety of different interpretative and evaluative policies or models established in critical practice which prescribe different ontological properties to the literary work of art. Thus, the complexity of different well-entrenched models for interpreting and evaluating the literary work (which also seems to imply a corresponding complexity of logical grammar) should indicate that the ontological status of the work of literature is indeed itself complex.

3. Thus far I have made the fairly obvious point that the problem of the literary work's ontological status is very complex. I have also argued, in a quite general way, that the logical grammar of "work of literature" and the

ways we talk about the literary work of art (e.g., in interpreting and evaluating it) are also very complex. This would suggest that the ontological status of the literary work may itself be complex. Such a view, that the literary work is ontologically complex, is not an entirely new one and has been advanced by aestheticians of different philosophical orientations.[11] Having suggested that the literary work is ontologically complex, let us proceed to examine the aspects or sources of this alleged complexity.

## II

1. Perhaps the most obvious yet little acknowledged aspect of the literary work's ontological complexity is the ontological duality of its standard end-products or objects of appreciation. As we argued in chapter one, the literary work is typically appreciated in both written texts and oral performances. It seems to exist and be encountered both as a material object and as a material event. Now though several ontologists have argued for the underlying unity of material objects and events,[12] and have tried to show that they are

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[11] See for example D. Pole (op. cit.) and R. Sclafani ("The Logical Primitiveness of the Concept of a Work of Art", _British Journal of Aesthetics_, vol. 15, 1975), who are representative of the linguistic approach, and R. Ingarden (_The Literary Work of Art_, C.G. Grabowicz (trans.), Evanston, 1973), who represents the phenomenological approach.

[12] See for example W. Sellars, "Time and the World Order" in H. Feigl and G. Maxwell (eds.), _Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science_, vol. 3, Minneapolis, 1962; and also H. Reichenbach, _Elements of Symbolic Logic_, New York, 1947, pp. 266-274.

each reducible to the other, there is no doubt that on the ordinary common sense level, objects and events are clearly regarded as ontologically different.[13] Material objects endure through time and may be present in entirety at different times, while events do not so persist through time but rather occur in it. The literary work, encountered both as object and event, thus seems ontologically complex.

It may be objected, however, that the literary work itself does not exist as an object or event, written text or oral utterance, but is only manifested, expressed, or embodied in such spatiotemporal objects and events. Gray's Elegy, it may be argued, is not and cannot be identified with a particular written object or a particular oral performance. For if any of its written texts (including the original manuscript) were destroyed, it would not follow that the work would be destroyed; and if any particular performance (or indeed all performances) of it were aesthetically bad, it still would not follow that the work itself was aesthetically bad. These are some of the good reasons why it is implausible to regard literary works like Gray's Elegy as simply material particulars.[14]

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13. For a clear and concise account of the ontological differences between material objects and spatiotemporal events and processes, see E.M. Zemach, "Four Ontologies", Journal of Philosophy, vol. 67, 1970.

14. Wollheim (op. cit., pp. 21-24) brings similar and additional arguments against identifying the literary work with a material particular.

But the fact that such literary works do not seem to be mere material objects and events does not, I think, seriously threaten the claim that literary works are ontologically complex. First, though we may accept that there is such a literary entity as Gray's Elegy which is in some sense distinct from and beyond all its particular copies and performances, these copies and performances themselves sometimes seem to be regarded as literary works of art. They too are aesthetic entities which can be objects of critical study and appreciation, and thus we find the demand for facsimile copies and for recordings of performances. Moreover, even if we choose to regard only the transcendent 'work itself' as constituting a literary work, we are still left with some kind of ontological duality. The literary work itself remains an entity which is typically and properly manifested or embodied in both objects and events; and this is in contrast to the painting, etching, and sculpture, which are only embodied in objects, and, on the other hand, to the dance, drama, and musical work, which are only fully embodied in performances or events. N. Wolterstorff, who recently advanced an ontology of art works,[15] distinguishes along these lines between "object-works" and "performance-works", and maintains that the literary work (along with the film but in contrast to all other works of art) has a dual ontological status. "Literary works, then, are both performance-works and object-works."[16]

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[15] N. Wolterstorff, op. cit.

Thus, in the ontological duality of its standard end-products or manifestations, the literary work of art can be seen to be ontologically complex. Of course, the literary work would seem to lack this complexity were it regarded as essentially oral and thus as merely a performance-work. But such a view has been shown to be unsatisfactory. Though literature may have originally been simply an oral and performing art, this oral purity has been corrupted, as indeed Oscar Wilde has complained.[17] The written text is by now firmly established with the oral performance as a standard end-product of literary art, and its status seems to be further reinforced by recent literary developments such as concrete poetry.[18]

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[16] N. Wolterstorff, op. cit. p. 118.

[17] O. Wilde, The Critic as Artist, in G.F. Maine (ed.), The Works of Oscar Wilde, London, 1963, pp. 955-956. Wilde disapprovingly remarks:

> "Since the introduction of printing and the fatal development of the habit of reading amongst the middle and lower classes of this country, there has been a tendency in literature to appeal more and more to the eye and less to the ear, which is really the sense which from the standpoint of pure art it should seek to please and by whose canons of pleasure it should abide always. ... We, in fact, have made writing a definite mode of composition, and have treated it as a form of elaborate design." (ibid.)

Structuralist critics and theorists also make much of the written nature of literature, but celebrate rather than deplore it. See J. Culler, Structuralist Poetics, London, 1977, pp. 131-34, 162, 183-84.

2. The work of literature, however, may reveal other aspects of ontological complexity besides this duality of objects and events. In chapter one we saw that the concept of literature and, by implication, its cognate 'work of literature' are essentially complex. This essential complexity involves the fact that the literary work has a number of different aspects and thus admits of differing yet accurate descriptions. Perhaps the different aspects of the literary work are not all on the same ontological level and therefore constitute an ontological complexity in the work? The literary work of art may be regarded and described as a series of uttered sounds or written signs, as a pattern of meanings, as an expression of an intention or vision, as the representation of a real or imaginary world, as a highly structured and intense experience; and this list is not exhaustive. Surely

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[18] The standard status of the written copy is further strengthened by a very powerful, if not characteristically aesthetic, ally - the law. The English Copyright Act of 1956 defines a literary work as including "any written table or compilation". (See D.H. Davies (ed.), The Copyright Act, 1956, London, 1957, p. 109.) The American Copyright Act of 1976 tells us that only material objects and not oral events qualify as embodiments of the literary work and that for the work to be created it is enough that it be written down but not enough that it be performed. (See M.B. Nimmer (ed.), A Preliminary View of The Copyright Act of 1976, New York, 1977, pp. 82-83.) I realize that aesthetic problems are very different and perhaps more complex than legal problems about the arts, and that solutions to the latter are not binding on the former, yet, I think this legal evidence both reflects and will tend to reinforce the established legitimacy of the written object as an end-product or full embodiment of the literary work of art.

these different aspects or descriptions do not all seem to fall under one single traditional ontological category (such as material, perceptual, ideal, etc.), and, therefore, their presence would suggest some ontological complexity in the literary work.

Many ontological theories of the work of literature seem to focus on and aggrandize one, or one ontologically uniform group, of these aspects while systematically excluding all others. As some have noted, the debate seems to oscillate between the ontologically simple positions of pure materialism and pure idealism. The reason for such moves toward ontological simplicity (besides, of course, the instinctive desire for simplicity itself) is, I think, the false assumption that the presence of these sharply differing descriptions of the literary work implies that either only one (or one type of) description could be right, or that if more than one were right, then different things must be being described, and thus the identity of the literary work would apparently be destroyed.

However, as Ryle[19] and Goodman[20] have shown, the plurality of true descriptions does not imply a plurality of things described. The bursar's account of the college is certainly very different from that of the student, but this does not imply that one of them is incorrect or that two different colleges are being described. The work of literature, like the Oxford college, is variously describable and contains a great many aspects. Critics often concentrate their inquiry on different aspects of the work and thus construct in a sense different objects of analysis: e.g., the author's intention, the reader's experience, the text as verbal icon, the world depicted by the work. Yet as long as we recognize that the poem is an entity that can accommodate various and indeed ontologically variant aspects, we can treat these different objects of analysis as different aspects of the same literary work. But if instead we insist on regarding the work as one-dimensional, we are compelled to exclude many of its alleged aspects from the work proper, and thus seem not only to reject the critical enterprises which study them but also to diminish the richness of the literary work to which they contribute. Moreover, by not allowing for a plurality of aspects and hence a plurality of critical objects in the work, we may be quickly led by variant accounts of the work into problems of work-identity where the single work of literature splits into as many works as there are aspects or variations in the same aspect.[21]

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[19] G. Ryle, Dilemmas, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 75-78.

[20] N. Goodman, "The Way The World Is", Review of Metaphysics, vol. 14, 1960.

However, the fact that the literary work has a variety of aspects does not entail that it exists in or involves a variety of ontological levels, for one could suppose that its different aspects all fall under the same general ontological category. Yet this surely does not seem to be the case with the work of literature. The physical aspect of sound does not seem to be on the same ontological level as the author's intention, nor does the text seem on a par with the reader's experience of reading it. Yet, accepting the complex language and practice of criticism,[22] as I think the philosopher must, we cannot deny that these ontologically variant elements are all aspects of the literary work.

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[21] Harold Osborne (Aesthetics and Criticism, London, 1956) runs into such difficulties by identifying the literary work only with its perceptual aspect, regarding the work as "identical with the set of impressions" (ibid., p. 319) or "specific set of perceptions" (ibid., p. 233) embodied in the words of the work. Since this set of impressions or perceptions is apt to be different and differently described from reader to reader, Osborne admits "that any two persons reading 'the same poem' will probably be aware of different poems. ... This, it should be remarked, is literally true and not simply a matter of speaking." (ibid., p. 232) The same sort of problem arises for those like Goodman (Languages of Art, Oxford, 1969) who identify the work only with its text narrowly construed as a specific series of words of a given language. Here, textually variant versions of a given work, no matter how small the variance, must be regarded as entirely different works.

[22] Given the great diversity of criticism, one might just as well speak in the plural of the languages and practices of criticism.

It is understandable, then, that several contemporary aestheticians seem to hold that the various aspects of the literary work involve more than one traditional ontological category and that the work's ontological status is in some sense complex or special.[23] They tend to attribute, at the least, both material and intentional aspects or properties to the literary work. Sometimes a new ontological category or kind is then coined which will accomodate the literary work's apparently hybrid nature and that of works of other arts as well. David Pole argues that "a work of art is a thing *sui generis*"[24] and constitutes an ontological category of its own whose objects he labels "presentational objects".[25] J. Margolis regards literary works along with works of other arts and indeed other cultural products as being of the ontological category of physically embodied, culturally emergent entities.[26] Other aestheticians, however, seem to regard the literary work of art as ontologically different from the works of other arts and having its own special and complex ontological status.[27]

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[23] See D. Pole (op. cit.), R. Sclafani (op. cit.), J. Margolis, (works cited, note 2), A. Danto, "The Artworld", *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, 1964.

[24] D. Pole, op. cit., p. 148.

[25] Ibid.

[26] J. Margolis, "Works of Art as Physically Embodied and Culturally Emergent Entities".

[27] R. Wellek and A. Warren (*Theory of Literature*, London, 1970), for example, regard the literary work as an object *sui generis* "which has a special ontological status" (ibid., p. 156) and is not "of the same nature as a piece of sculpture or a painting" (ibid., p. 142).

I shall not here attempt to assess the nature of these ontological categories nor determine under which of them the literary work might be adequately placed. However, the very fact that they have been introduced suggests two important points. First, that none of the traditional ontological categories (e.g., material, perceptual, ideal) has been able to subsume the literary work in an adequate and satisfying fashion and that therefore these traditional categories do not seem to provide an exclusive and exhaustive classification of the kinds of objects there are. Secondly, the introduction of new ontological categories suggests that such categories or kinds are not a necessary, absolute, and unchangeable given in the world, but are classifications which can be introduced, modified, and replaced.

If I am right about these two points, it seems to follow that the aesthetician should not feel compelled to locate the literary work at one particular place on the material-ideal and particular-universal axes. For as we have seen with respect to the first axis, this would be compelling him to do the impossible, since the literary work clearly has both material and intentional or mental aspects.

But not only is there no obligation to define or treat the literary work's ontological status in terms of traditional ontological categories, there also seem to be good reasons to avoid handling the problem in these traditional terms. First, although (or perhaps because) these traditional categories have been so extensively used, they do not always seem to be used or construed in the same fashion, even among contemporary analytic aestheticians.[28] Variety of use here breeds confusion, and the proper use of these concepts may itself be contested. Secondly, defining the ontological status of the literary work in terms of these traditional ontological categories seems inescapably to involve us in fundamental ontological controversies (such as nominalism versus realism and materialism versus idealism) while our aim is rather more narrowly aesthetic. Defining the work ontologically as a universal seems to commit us to defending realism, while to define it as an ideal object may invite general, non-aesthetic materialist objections. Finally, perhaps the best reason for avoiding these traditional categories in defining the ontological status of the literary work of art is that they have not proven satisfactory. As Margolis notes, debate as to the work's ontological status has long "oscillated between the poles of materialism and idealism" where "the upshot is a stalemate."[29]

For these reasons, then, I shall not make an effort to determine under which traditional ontological category (or ordered pair of categories) the work of literature is to be located. But my arguments for extricating the question of the ontological status of the work from this question of pigeonholing should not be taken as an attempt to invalidate these fundamental categories or challenge their general utility. They are too deeply embedded in our philosophical and everyday thought for any aesthetic problem to uproot them; and even our aesthetic problem of ontology has been clarified, though not solved, by employing them. For by applying these fundamental ontological categories to the work of literature, we saw that its ontological status was complex, that is, at least complex with respect to these basic categories. We saw that the literary work could not be adequately subsumed under one of these categories since it exhibited a variety of aspects which seem to belong to more than one category. Thus, the aspectival complexity of the work of literature also seems to involve some ontological complexity.

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[28] See note 8 above.

[29] J. Margolis, "On Disputes ...", pp. 147, 149.

Having detected the complexity deriving from its duality of standard manifestations and the complexity emerging from its variety of aspects, we shall proceed to a third possible source of ontological complexity in the literary work of art. First, however, I would like to consider how recognition of the variety of aspects of the literary work may help us solve one puzzling issue about the work's ontological status.

3. Aestheticians have not infrequently raised the seemingly absurd question of whether the work of literature (or more generally the work of art) really and fully exists. Sartre has argued that the work of art, the object of

aesthetic appreciation, is something unreal.[30] Beardsley tells us that works of art "are all, so to speak, objects manqués. There is something lacking in them that keeps them from being quite real, from achieving the full status of things".[31] E.M. Zemach has asserted that works of art allow contradictory interpretations "since they are ontologically incomplete, i.e., not fully determined."[32] Surely it seems strange to deny that works of art are real and that they really and fully exist. How then do thinkers come to deny this?

I think that such views are reached in two different ways, through two confusions which are both supported by the error of not regarding the work of art as having a variety of aspects. The first way might be expressed through the following argument. One important aspect of the literary work is the world it depicts. Since most literary works of art seem to be works of fiction, the world depicted is typically a fictional world. The characters, events, places, and objects depicted are unreal, imaginary, ontologically incomplete. The world of the work is unreal, and this may

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30. J-P. Sartre, "The Work of Art", in H. Osborne (ed.), Aesthetics, Oxford, 1972, pp. 32-37.

31. M.C. Beardsley, Aesthetics, New York, 1958, p. 529.

32. E.M. Zemach, "The Interpretation of a Work of Art", Studies in Analytic Aesthetics (in Hebrew with English abstracts), Tel Aviv, 1970, p. viii. Zemach seems to abandon this position in his recent book, Aesthetics (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1976.

suggest to some that the work is likewise unreal.

However, this is clearly not a valid inference. It clearly does not follow from the literary work's depicting something non-existent or unreal that it itself is non-existent or unreal. But it may seem to follow if we regard the work of literature as consisting solely in the single aspect of the depicted world and thus in a sense identical with it. Yet such a view, of course, is unacceptable and inadequate both to critical practice and ordinary usage. We ordinarily do not and should not confuse the fictional (i.e., unreal) world of Middlemarch with the fictional (i.e., depicting something fictional) work, _Middlemarch_. We recognize there is more to the work of fiction than the fictional world depicted; there is, for example, the means and material of depiction — the work's language. Surely this is real, and surely criticism will not sanction the view that the language of the literary work is to be excluded from the object of criticism and regarded as a mere vehicle or "material analogue".

Thus Sartre may be right when he says "it is self-evident that the novelist, the poet and the dramatist construct an unreal object".[33] But that object is an aspect of the literary work and not the literary work _simpliciter_. He is therefore unable to conclude that the literary work as object of aesthetic attention is unreal. Zemach seems to make the

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33. Sartre, op. cit., p. 35.

same confusion, arguing from the ontological incompleteness of depicted objects in literary works (e.g., Hamlet) to the ontological incompleteness of the works they appear in. A similar confusion seems to underlie the view of Beardsley, who appears to conflate that he calls "the aesthetic object", meaning "the work of art as object of criticism" with the fictional depicted aspects of a work which generally are also called aesthetic objects.

Perhaps most assertions of the unreality or ontological incompleteness of the work of literature can be traced to the confusion of the fictional world with the fictional work,[34] the former being only one aspect of the latter. But there is, I think, another likely source for such an intuitively unconvincing ontological position. Again the source seems to be a confusion; here, the confusion between being not fully determined and being ontologically incomplete. As R. Ingarden[35] has argued, there is a sense in which the literary work is not fully determined. Performances of a literary work can differ in a great many aspects and still be performances of the same work. The same work can admit of conflicting interpretations. Even variant texts can be texts of the same work. The work of literature, it is argued,

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34. Macdonald ("Art and Imagination", p. 218) also associates this confusion with Sartre's view that the work of art is unreal or imaginary.

35. R. Ingarden, op. cit. E.M. Zemach has also expressed this view in both the works cited in note 32. In the latter work, however, he does not draw the conclusion that the literary work is ontologically incomplete.

can accomodate all these variations because it is not fully specified or determined with respect to them. The work is thus seen as a schematic formation whose undetermined areas or aspects are variously filled in by its various manifestations or "concretizations". From the view that the work is schematic or "not all there", one may be tempted to conclude it is therefore unreal and ontologically incomplete.

However, being schematic does not mean being unreal. Moreover, from the fact that some aspect of the work is not fully determined (i.e., leaves room for variation), it does not follow that the work itself is ontologically incomplete. But if one confuses being schematic with ontological incompleteness and then goes on to identify the work of literature with only one not fully determined aspect of it,[36] then one is tempted to make the inference that the literary work is unreal and ontologically incomplete. Such temptation has, I trust, been removed by my arguments for the literary work's plurality of aspects. Thus, though recognition of this plurality of aspects seems to involve the view that the literary work is ontologically complex, it at least helps protect us from the far less plausible view that the literary work of art is ontologically incomplete or unreal.

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[36] It is worth noting that Ingarden himself recognizes a number of aspects or "strata" in the literary work and only asserts that several, not all, "contain 'places of indeterminacy'". See R. Ingarden, The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, R.A. Cronley and K.R. Olson (trans.), Evanston, 1973, p. 13.

4. After having reassured ourselves that a work of literature is a reality and not an ontological phantom, let us return to the question of the work's ontological complexity and examine another possible source or aspect of it. This third element of complexity concerns the much discussed problem of the distinction and relation between what is often called the literary work itself and its various copies and performances, which for convenience can be collectively labelled "manifestations". Such a distinction is made not only by aestheticians but seems to be fully endorsed by practising critics and deeply entrenched in the conceptual apparatus of the literary layman. As we saw earlier, one cannot identify Gray's Elegy with any particular copy or performance of this work. Nor can we identify it with the class of such copies or performances, since, for example, we would not say that Gray created this class, though of course he created the work. Or again, we would never expect that any scholar of Gray has read the entire class of copies (which may steadily grow), though we surely would expect him to have read the entire work.

If we cannot adequately identify Gray's Elegy with a particular copy or performance, or class of copies or performances, it is natural to suppose that the work itself is something more than its manifestations. Most people, I think, uncritically make this supposition, and surely most literary critics seem to practice in accordance with it. The question, then, is what is the ontological status of this entity, the work itself. Thus, we seem to arrive at another source of complexity in the problem of the literary work's ontological status. For the problem seems to involve not only the status of the literary performance or copy we encounter in typical aesthetic situations, but the status of the work itself so manifested, which seems in some way distinguishable from its manifest copies and performances. And while the ontological status of literary performances and copies may seem relatively unproblematic, when it comes to determining the ontological status of the literary work itself, perplexity and controversy set in. Moreover, if we take the literary work as somehow incorporating both manifestations and the entity manifested, then we seem to arrive at ontological complexity in the work; for surely the manifestations and that which they manifest do not seem to be ontologically on all fours.

Most theories of the ontological status of literary works can be seen as attempts to simplify this apparent complexity in one of two ways: by rejecting either the work's manifestations or the notion of the work itself as a multiply manifested entity. The first way identifies the literary work wholly with the entity manifested, thereby excluding its manifestations from the literary work proper and treating them as mere vehicles for presenting and preserving the work. Alternatively, ontological simplicity may be achieved by denying the very existence of the multiply manifested work itself, which leaves the literary work with the more or less ontologically homogenous manifestations.[37] Both approaches seem to place simplicity above accuracy, and neither seems to give a satisfactory, balanced account of the complex logical grammar of "literary work". or of what constitutes the literary work of art in the complex language of criticism.

Attempts to simplify by identifying the work with the multiply manifested entity have taken a variety of forms. Some aestheticians (e.g., Lewis[38]) have held that the literary work itself is an abstract entity which is concretely manifested in, or at least through, its copies and performances. Yet regarding the work as an abstract entity seems to raise more problems than it solves. It does not account for the sensuous qualities we attribute to literary works, nor does it explain how we grasp the abstract entity through the concrete copy which is said to manifest it.[39] Other aestheticians (e.g., Meager[40]) have asserted that the literary work itself exists as a universal whose copies and performances are its instances. But regarding the work as a universal seems equally unsatisfactory. For universals are said to be timeless and neither created nor destructible, while works of art clearly have a spatiotemporal history, and are certainly created and may be destroyed.[41] We know, for instance, that Gray's Elegy was created and came into existence about the year 1750 and that many ancient works of literature (e.g., Margites, Epigonoi) have been destroyed or "allowed to perish from neglect".[42] We can also surmise that countless, now nameless, works in the oral tradition have likewise perished. Moreover, universals are thought to be qualities or relations, yet Gray's Elegy does not seem to be a mere quality shared by its copies and performances or a relation between them.[43] We typically regard works of literature as individuals, not properties or relations.

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[37] As I argued earlier, the standard manifestations of literary works, written copies and oral performances are not entirely ontologically uniform.

[38] C.I. Lewis, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation, La Salle, Ill., 1946.

[39] For a detailed criticism of Lewis' position, see R. Rudner, "The Ontological Status of the Esthetic Object", Journal of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, vol. 10, 1950.

[40] R. Meager, op. cit. Wolterstorff (op. cit.) also may hold the view that the literary work is a universal, for he holds that "most if not all performance-works are universals" (ibid., p. 116).

Many contemporary philosophers of art have proposed yet another way of reducing the literary work to the entity manifested by its copies and performances. Here, this entity, the literary work itself, is said to be a type or megatype, while copies and performances of the work are tokens of the

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41. It should be further noted that not only does the literary work have a spatiotemporal history, but that this history is often very important to the work's meaning and identity. This is very well illustrated in Borges' story, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote".

42. H.J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Literature, London, 1934, p. 10.

43. Macdonald ("Art and Imagination") brings similar arguments against treating the work of art as a universal.

type or megatype. This widely held position seems more satisfactory than the two previously discussed, since it can better accomodate the individuality and sensuous nature of works of literature and since it grants greater ontological importance to the work's manifestations or tokens.[44] Yet the type theory of the work of literature seems to run into difficulty when we consider the case of poems composed in the author's mind and not yet written down or recited. We are strongly inclined to say that the poem already exists or has been created though no token copy or performance of it has been created. Yet how then are we to identify the work as a type, for surely it is hard to imagine the type existing before the existence of any tokens;[45] especially

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44. Like the type, the type theory of the work of art may be construed in more than one way. Because of the type's ontological dependence on tokens, the work of literature as type may be seen as incorporating its tokens and inseparable from them. It becomes a type-token entity, accomodating both manifestations and that which they manifest. This appears to be Margolis' view in "The Ontological Peculiarity of Works of Art". However, the work as type may be seen as a separate object existing as a form beyond and apart from its tokens which merely serve to present and perserve it. This seems to be the view of A. Harrison in "Works of Art and Other Cultural Objects", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 68, 1967-8. Thus, at least for purposes of exposition, it is best to treat the type theory with those theories which reduce the work to a manifested entity and exclude its manifestations from the work proper.

45. Urmson makes this point with respect to the type theory of the work of music in his article "Literature", p. 335.

when those who regard the work as type insist on the type's strict ontological dependence on its tokens, where "the type does not exist except instantiated in its proper tokens".[46]

Thus, there seem to be difficulties in all these major attempts to reduce the literary work of art to an entity above or apart from the copies and performances which manifest it. The nature of this multiply manifested entity is decidedly unclear, and, in any case, many typical locutions are clearly not about such an entity but about the manifestations instead (e.g., "David Copperfield is the thick book with the black cover"; or "Gray's Elegy brought tears to the entire audience"). These factors coupled with the fashionable distase for ontological opulence have led some linguistic philosophers to maintain that there is no entity, the literary work itself, which exists differently or distinct from its various copies and performances. This, then, is the second means of avoiding the apparent ontological complexity of viewing the literary work as both a manifestation and multiply manifested entity. Existence of the manifested entity is denied, and the literary work's ontological status can be seen as simply that of its manifestations.

Linguistic aestheticians have offered at least two methods of placing the literary work wholly on the same ontological level as its manifestations: one very simple and the other highly sophisticated, the former urging us to take language literally and the latter to treat it as elliptical and misleading. W. Charlton presents the former approach, treating the linguistic expression "copy of the work" as literally embodying aesthetic truth. He argues that this expression clearly implies that the literary work must be that which its copies copy or are copies of, and this he concludes are original manuscripts and oral performances.

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[46] J. Margolis, "The Ontological Peculiarity of Works of Art", p. 46.

> "So if a work of literature is that of which you and I have copies, it will be something like a performance; a token, then, rather than a type, even if a paradigmatic token. And that is reasonable. My copy of the De Corona is a copy of a performance by Demosthenes before the Athenians ... We may say, that those literary works of which we possess copies are original writings or speeches."[47]

Charlton's reduction of the literary work to its original manifestation is clearly unsatisfactory. We have already argued that the work cannot be identified with a particular copy or performance, and Wollheim has shown more specifically that it may not be identified with the original manuscript or performance.[48] There are many cases where the original manuscript has been lost, while the work is not lost; and certainly we no longer have the original performances of countless works which have originated orally and have then been preserved through oral tradition or transcription. Nor does the critic who admires the work necessarily admire its original manuscript or performance. Moreover, the author often corrects or improves upon his manuscript, yet we do not say that his new, improved manuscript is a bad copy of the work or a new work. Charlton's position obviously will not do, and it should make us somewhat wary of drawing hasty conclusions from the surface grammar of linguistic expressions. That we speak of particular objects as being copies of a literary work does not seem to imply that there is one paradigmatic particular which they all copy. Copies of a literary work are not like copies (or reproductions) of a work of painting, though language seems to assimilate this difference.[49] We are again made aware of basic differences in the arts and the danger of language in concealing them and suggesting analogical inferences.

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[47] W. Charlton, Aesthetics, London, 1970, p. 103.

[48] See Wollheim, op. cit., pp. 22-24.

The second form of reducing the literary work's ontological status to that of its manifestations certainly recognizes that linguistic expressions may be misleading and that ontological inferences from their surface grammar may be erroneous. Indeed, this reduction of the literary work is based on the view that the surface grammar of certain substantive expressions used to refer to works of art misleads us into supposing that there is something referred to beyond the various manifestations of the work. R. Rudner,[50] an early proponent of this approach, has argued that philosophers have been fooled into assuming the existence of an aesthetic

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49. The work of painting, in contrast, is said to be lost when its original canvas is lost and is properly located only where its original canvas is located. We do not, strictly speaking, see it in seeing a copy, while we do see the literary work in any of its copies.

50. Rudner, op. cit.

entity beyond the work's manifestations (the work itself) by misinterpreting the use of names of art works. Statements like "There are many editions of Moby Dick" or "Gray's Elegy can be found in many books of poetry" do suggest that names of literary works are not always used to name or refer to specific copies or performances. It is then natural to ask, what in such cases do these names name or designate? The use of a work's name surely suggests there is something being named, and the multiply manifested "work itself" is thus posited as the nominatum.

However, Rudner argues that work-names are in this sense misleading and that in such locutions "the occurrence of the name of the art work is a syncategoramatic one",[51] "a non-designative one".[52] Names of art works are granted only "the propriety of referring to a particular rendition"[53] or manifestation. Critical discourse concerning the literary work is regarded as merely a convenient shorthand for talk about the various manifestations. The work of literature is thus reduced to its manifestations. Margaret Macdonald seems to suggest a similar view, that there is no "real" work of art existing beyond its (actual and possible) manifestations[54] and that in this sense the work itself is "only, as it were, a manner of speaking".[55] D. Henze likewise argues that the notion of the work itself is "only a linguistic crutch and has no ontological significance."[56]

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[51] Rudner, op. cit., p. 386.

[52] Ibid., p. 387.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Macdonald, "Some Distinctive Features ...", p. 127.

[55] Ibid., p. 124.

This form of nominalistic reduction of the literary work to its manifestations is no doubt ingenious and has considerable charm for those who seek ontological simplicity. But, in a way, such a view achieves ontological simplicity for the work only by annihilating it. The work of literature as a multiply manifested object of criticism is nullified. The individual status of works like Gray's Elegy is destroyed. All that exists are literary copies and performances which are somewhat similar in some respects, but no work of which they are copies and performances. Names of literary works are mere classificatory terms like "Shakespearean tragedy" or "metaphysical poetry" or "Baroque art". Descriptions or judgments of the work become generalizations about manifestations so classified or statements about criteria for such classification.[57] As Andrew Harrison has remarked: "On this view poems reduce to predicates."[58]

Such a view of criticism and its objects would hardly be endorsed by our ordinary notion of the literary work as individual and would surely be repellent to most practicing critics. The critic does not view or practice the interpretation and evaluation of a work of literature as investigations into the criteria for the application of classificatory predicates. He generally treats and speaks of the work as a real individual, often a unique and highly unified individual, not as a logical fiction on a par with "the average taxpayer". And as long as our aim is to describe the work as reflected or constituted by critical discourse, we must reject the nominalistic reduction which dissolves the literary work into more or less related literary manifestations characterized by a classificatory predicate.

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[56] Henze, op. cit., p. 36.

[57] In the former case, "Gray's Elegy is good" would be construed as merely meaning "Most manifestations classified as Gray's Elegy are good"; while in the second case, it might be rendered as "If a manifestation (m) is to be correctly classified as Gray's Elegy, then m should be good." Neither form of analysis seems adequate.

[58] Harrison, op. cit., p. 114.

We have noted that the literary work seems to be ontologically complex in that it appears to embrace both manifestations (e.g., literary performances and copies) and that which may thereby be manifested. We have then seen that attempts to simplify this apparent complexity, either by reducing the work to a merely manifested entity (abstract, universal, or type) or alternatively to manifestations or a classificatory term for manifestations, have proven unsatisfactory. I think we must recognize that we typically treat and speak of works of literature both as concretely manifest things, copies or performances, and also as multiply manifested things that are not identical with but presented in such concrete manifestations.

One of the attractive things about the type theory of the work of literature is that it recognizes that terms like "work of literature" or "poem" and names of literary works have a dual semantic role. Sometimes they are used to refer to particular (token) copies or performances and sometimes instead to speak more generally of the (type) work manifested in such copies and performances. We often say things like "I bought The Wasteland in Blackwell's", referring to a particular copy, but we also say things like "The Wasteland appears in many books of poetry", where we are not referring to such a particular. Stevenson, a major exponent of the type theory of the work of literature has convincingly argued that "poem" has this dual semantic role of referring both to token poems and type poems, and that it may even have both roles in the very same sentence: e.g., "Each student was expected to write down the same poem the teacher recited."[59] The type theory seems to be right in incorporating both concrete manifestations and that which they manifest into the notion of the literary work. But if usage is a reliable guide to ontological status, it would seem that the literary work is still more complex. This ontological complexity is witnessed or reflected in the complex semantic role of the words used in designating the literary work, which seem to refer to both manifestations and that which they multiply manifest.

Perhaps one reason why philosophers have tried to reduce this apparent complexity is that they felt it divides a work of art into two distinct objects, when there must be only

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59. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 332.

one work, e.g., one Gray's Elegy. As Macdonald has remarked, the distinction between the work of art and its manifestations "looks like a distinction between two kinds of objects."[60] Understandably reluctant to accept this, she thus argues:

> "that because a word has two uses it does not follow that it is used for two objects. 'Work of art' is just used ambiguously in the manner described without implying any expansion or contraction of the universe."[61]

This is basically true, but I would add that this complexity of use, this fundamental ambiguity of semantic role to refer both to particular manifestations and something not identifiable with them, nonetheless suggests a corresponding ontological complexity. For we must remember that to say the work is complex is not to say that it is a compound of two different objects. Thus, again, if logical grammar is an indication of ontological status, the fundamental complexity of it here would seem to reflect a corresponding ontological complexity in the literary work of art.

However, this ontological complexity should not be construed as a sort of dualism, where the literary work is some compound or aggregate of both token-like manifestations and a type-like multiply manifested entity. The literary work should rather be seen as the kind of entity which embraces both sides of this type-token distinction and is reducible neither to a transcendent entity that may be multiply manifested, nor to particular manifestations, nor to a mere conjunction of the two. Much as Sclafani has argued for the ontological complexity of the work of art as "physical-interpretational" thing,[62] so one might argue for the literary work's complexity as an entity that can be both manifestation and that which may thereby be manifested (but which, in fact, need not be manifested at all). The multiply manifested work of literature and the literary work as concrete manifestation would not then be seen as different literary works or individuals, but rather as different aspects of the same individual, the same literary work of art. The distinction between manifestation and the multiply manifested "work itself" can thus be construed as a distinction between aspects of the same entity rather than one between two different entities; and this involves no expansion or contraction of the universe, only recognition of the complexity of the things which exist in it.

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[60] Macdonald, "Art and Imagination", p. 215.

[61] Ibid.

The view that the literary work typically exists as both manifestation and that which may be multiply manifested also helps explain the peculiarity of the question, where is the work of literature? Sometimes questions like "Where is Moby Dick?" seem reasonable and indeed to some extent answerable. Yet when we try to give any thorough and systematic answer to such questions we are frustrated; for a literary work is clearly not wholly locatable in any one particular place (as is the work of painting), nor is its location confined to any mind. This seems to indicate that the question of where to locate the literary work is, contrary to our first impression, a spurious and unanswerable one. However, given the work's ontological complexity, this paradox may be explained as follows. When we are concerned with the work as manifestation, i.e., with a particular copy or performance, the question makes sense and is answerable (e.g., Moby Dick is on the top shelf). But to ask the specific location of that which is multiply manifested by such copies and performances is patently fruitless and absurd.

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[62] Sclafani, op. cit.

## III

1. In this chapter I have argued that the work of literature is ontologically complex, and I have tried to show three different aspects or sources of this complexity: the ontological duality of its manifestations or end-products, the ontological variety of its different aspects, and the complexity involved in its being typically treated both as manifestation and as something which may be multiply manifested and may not be reduced to any manifestation or group of manifestations. This last source of complexity was reflected in the ambiguous semantic role of names of literary works and terms such as "poem", "novel" and "book".

It is somewhat tempting simply to conclude that the literary work's ontological status is complex in the ways I have shown, and to leave our ontological conclusions at that.

This seems most prudent, but would, I think, for most readers be very unsatisfying. When a philosopher addresses himself to the question of the ontological status of the literary work, the question of what sort of entity the work is, one tends to expect something very different than, or at least more than, the conclusion that it is an ontologically complex entity. Such a conclusion seems to urge us to ask further: what kind of ontologically complex entity? And even when the various complexities are traced, we still may feel that a real answer (true or false) has not been given. For we have come to expect a simple and general answer as to what kind of entity the literary work is; and if the work is found to be ontologically complex, we tend to expect the philosopher to accomodate these complexities within his simple, general answer. Whether or not such expectations are reasonable, I shall try my best to meet them in the remainder of this chapter. I shall suggest a general answer to the question of what kind of entity the literary work of art is which nevertheless accomodates in its simple formulation all the three forms of ontological complexity that we have detected in the literary work. I suggest that the literary work of art is a verbal entity, more specifically, a verbal formula.[63]

The view that the literary work is a verbal entity has already been proposed in chapter one, when I advocated it as

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63. One reason to seek this greater specificity is that the concept of entity, so vague and general, may be attacked as an empty pseudo-concept. Rather than simply drop the term "entity" and merely say the work is verbal, I shall keep it as a place-holder till its more specific replacement emerges from my discussion.

a superior alternative to Urmson's view that literature was essentially an art of oral performance, where the written text was not a proper object of appreciation but merely served as a score for producing or imagining oral performance. I argued that regarding the work more generally as a verbal or linguistic entity, which can as such be oral or written, better reflects common critical practice, which treats both written text and oral performance as standard manifestations or objects of literary appreciation. Literary works fully exist and are properly manifested whether they are merely orally performed or merely inscribed; and they may be appreciated and profitably criticized in terms of both their oral and visual aspects. Over the long history of literature, the oral aspects have been more important, but for centuries visual aspects have also played an important role, which has recently greatly increased with such developments as concrete poetry. Verbal entities, such as words and sentences of which literary works are said to be composed, are entitites which accomodate both oral and inscribed aspects and are typically displayed in both (oral) events and (inscribed) objects. Thus, regarding the literary work as a verbal entity will admirably account for the first aspect of the work's ontological complexity — the ontological duality of its standard manifestations: oral performances which are events[64] and inscribed texts which are objects.

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[64] There is, however, a sense of "performance" where it is hard to identify a performance with a particular event. A recorded performance is in a way repeatable and permanent unlike an event and can present itself in an indefinite number of sound events.

2. Other advantages of ontologically classifying the literary work as a verbal entity quickly present themselves when we turn to the second source of the literary work's ontological complexity — its plurality of aspects which seem to display ontological diversity as not being all subsumable under a single traditional ontological category. Practicing critics employ a variety of different tools and techniques to investigate the many different aspects of the literary work of art. The work is treated as a series of sounds or inscriptions, as a pattern of meanings, as the author's vision or intentional expression, as the reader's experience, as a depicted world, etc. These are all aspects of the literary work, all objects of criticism, which are typically and profitably studied by critics and whose relative importance is often hotly contested, indicating that the concept of the work of literature is both essentially complex and essentially contested. This complexity or multiplicity of aspects explains the inadequacy of views that the work is merely material or merely ideal. We saw, moreover, that regarding the work as having but one aspect yields problems of work-identity and helps mislead us into doubting that the literary work is real. Clearly we need to grant the literary work the kind of ontological status that will accomodate its variety of aspects.

The status of verbal entity seems extremely well suited for this job. Not only does it accomodate both oral and inscribed aspects, but it also accounts for the aspect of meaning which is obviously crucial to the literary work of art. Verbal entitites thus embrace both sides of the material/intentional distinction which literary works seem to straddle. Through its general dimension of meaning (which itself includes a number of different aspects) the verbal entity can accomodate several important aspects of the literary work. Though in one sense the meanings of verbal entities are public and rule governed, they also seem to display a more subjective aspect or colouring. Thus, the literary work as verbal entity can accomodate not only the meaning of the text as determined by rules of usage, but also the more personal authorial meaning and the text's meaning as experienced by the reader. Moreover, the notion of verbal entity seems able to account for the depicted aspect of a work of literature. The depicted world might well be construed as the reference of the words of the text or some other function of their meaning. A fictional world, which we may refuse to grant the status of referent, is, however, readily recognized as ultimately a linguistic construction. We know that George Eliot created Middlemarch from real words and not from imaginary bricks, cement, and human souls and bodies. Finally, by viewing the literary work as a verbal entity or construction from words we can better understand the puzzling fact that while the work is not a mere mental entity, it can be composed or created in the mind. For constructions from words (e.g., phrases and sentences) may be composed in the mind, since we also think and not only speak and write in language. Yet, such verbal compositions are surely not reducible to mere mental entities. This is precisely the case with literary works. Though often said to be composed in the mind, they are still regarded as more than mental. Thus, classifying the literary work as a verbal entity accounts for yet another ontological complexity.

Literature and language are, of course, intimately related, and thus it seems congenial to link the ontological status of literary works to that of verbal or linguistic entities in general. We have seen, moreover, that literary works and other verbal entities share a variety of aspects which do not all seem to be ontologically on a par and which defy neat subsumption into one of our traditional ontological categories. It therefore becomes increasingly reasonable for the aesthetician to define the literary work ontologically as a verbal entity, and then to leave it to philosophers of language and ontologists to determine how the latter is in turn to be ontologically classified.

3. The position that the literary work is a verbal entity seems to deal quite adequately with the first two sources of the work's ontological complexity. I think that the third aspect of complexity, that concerning the distinction between the work and its manifestations, can also be satisfactorily accomodated within our position; though doing so may raise a few problems and require some minor modification. At first blush, the notion of verbal entity seems ideally suited for the kind of type-token complexity involved here, and indeed the type-token ambiguity was first introduced by

Peirce in connection with that archetypal verbal entity — the word.[65] Literary manifestations or tokens, whether copies or performances, may justly be characterized as verbal entities. Moreover, the type-like entity which is manifested in the various manifestations of the work also seems to be a verbal entity. We speak of the poem itself and not only of its manifestations as being composed of words. Indeed, some are inclined to think of the poem itself and its authentic copies or performances as being composed of the same (type) words, where this verbal identity is, as it were, the criterion of the correctness or authenticity of manifestations.[66]

Yet such cases of verbal identity between a literary work and its standard manifestations are perhaps as much the exception as the rule. We are often confronted with a complex array of copies and performances which are recognized as authentic manifestations of the work and yet which are not, at least in the literal sense, verbally identical. We find copies with misprints, performances with mispronunciation, and both copies and performances with small errors of omission which still allow the work to be properly manifested and appreciated. In such cases, work-identity but not verbal identity seems to be preserved. We do not have exactly the same words presented, though if the mistakes are very small or obvious, we might say that in some sense verbal identity shows through these minor errors.

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[65] C.S. Peirce, in C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (eds.), Collected Paper of Charles Sanders Peirce, Cambridge, Mass., 1933, vol. 4, p. 537.

[66] See for example Goodman, Languages of Art, pp. 115-16, 209.

This, however, cannot be said for the many cases where we have variant (type) texts for the same work of literature as a result of authorial revisions or the lack of any one authoritative manuscript, as, for example, with Coleridge's extensive revision of The Ancient Mariner or the widely variant manuscript texts of Chaucer's The House of Fame. In such cases, copies, performances, and the variant (type) texts they manifest clearly are composed of different (type) words; and thus there is a problem in regarding them as the same verbal composition, though we surely want to regard them as the same work of literature. This problem of verbal identity is most extreme in the case of translation where variant (type) texts and their tokens may have virtually no words in common. Again, if we want to say that the literary work is a verbal composition, we face the problem that the same work seems to involve different verbal compositions.

Here we see once more that problems of the literary work's identity lead to problems with respect to its ontological status. One is uneasy in identifying the work as a verbal composition when very different compositions seem to constitute or manifest the work. One therefore wants to say that the literary work is, as it were, something manifested by but still more than its variant type-compositions and their tokens. Because of such difficulties, aestheticians like Stevenson[67] and Margolis[68] have suggested that the literary work is a megatype, where token manifestations

> "will belong to the same megatype if and only if they have approximately the same meaning; so it is not necessary that the tokens belong to the same language or that they have that similarity in shape or sound that makes them belong to the same type."[69]

Now there are two problems with such a view, even excluding the problem of what constitutes approximate similarity of meaning. First, as Stevenson himself points out,[70] though the notion of poem seems to lend itself willingly to the token-megatype ambiguity, the notion of words in terms of which Stevenson and others[71] want to define the work clearly does not. Though we are inclined to say that La Peste and The Plague are the same work in different languages, it is hard to say they are composed of the same words in different languages. The second problem is the identification of the literary work with something (here a megatype) having token manifestations when often the work is said to exist before

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67. Stevenson, op. cit.

68. J. Margolis, "The Identity of a Work of Art", in Coleman, op. cit.

69. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 337.

70. Ibid., p. 338.

71. For example, Aldrich (op. cit., pp. 74-77) and Macdonald ("Art and Imagination", p. 217).

there are any such tokens of it. We all know that poems may be composed in the poet's mind and are thus often said to exist before there are any token copies or performances. Arnold indeed tells us that Menander regarded a work as completed, though not having yet written a single line, simply "because he had constructed the action of it in his mind."[72] Nor is it plausible to stretch the notion of token manifestation to cover the act of mental composition. One is loath to regard the mental composition of the poem as an immaterial copy or silent recitation of the poem's words which is manifest to the poet. Moreover, though tokens of works in the oral tradition include only events which are not continuously existent, we do not say that such works have existed discontinuously, coming in and out of existence with their token performances. Thus, literary works seem to differ from types or megatypes in that they can exist before and at least temporarily without tokens.

However, though it is still implausible to maintain that the literary work does not exist till it is uttered or written down, one may be tempted to argue that until the work is publicly manifested in a copy, performance, or whatever, it does not exist as an object of criticism. This view is indeed tempting, but, I think, not entirely accurate; unless we wish to deny that the creative artist does not and cannot be a critic of his work until it is actually written out or uttered. But such a view is preposterous, for the artist is surely engaged in the criticism of his work in the very process of creating it. T.S. Eliot, both poet and critic, testifies to this indispensable role of criticism in the composition of poetry.[73]

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[72] M. Arnold, "Preface to Poems, 1853", in L. Trilling (ed.) The Portable Matthew Arnold, New York, 1949, p. 193.

Thus, in addition to the problem that the same literary work may embrace and be manifested in variant verbal compositions, we also have the problem that the work seems able to exist before and at least temporarily without the existence of any verbal composition that concretely manifests it. We therefore seem unable to identify the literary work with any particular verbal composition (type or megatype) that is concretely manifested in copies or performances. And while one may try to plead that the former problem should be relegated to the problem of the work's identity, the latter problem is simply one way of putting the familiar and clearly ontological question of when can the literary work be said to exist.

Neither of these difficulties seems so great or fundamental as to make us abandon our general and intuitively satisfying position that the literary work is a verbal entity. However, they do suggest that the more detailed description of this verbal entity as a particular composition of words is not entirely adequate. I think a happier way of ontologically characterizing the work of literature would be as a verbal formula rather than as a verbal composition. The notion of verbal formula, as I construe it, has an added ambiguity which deals with both of the above difficulties. For a particular verbal formula can be seen not only as a formula composed of certain words, i.e., more or less what we have called a particular verbal composition. It can also be seen as a formula expressible in different word formulations for the composition of particular verbal compositions compliant with it. In this sense, we may say that a particular verbal formula admits of different verbal formulations. For instance, the sentences "John and Mary got married", "Mary and John were married", "Marie et Jean se sont marriés" might be considered three different formulations of the same verbal formula. Such a formula or pattern may be taken as the fundamental formula or prescriptive pattern for composing different verbal patterns which comply with it.[74]

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[73] T.S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism", in F. Kermode (ed.), Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, London, 1975, p. 73.

This second aspect of the notion of verbal formula will account for the variant texts of the work which are composed of different words and which may also differ significantly in meaning. These different texts may be seen as complying with the same basic formula. For the notion of complying with a formula is much more flexible than both textual identity and identity of meaning. Yet it also seems capable of more clarity and precision than Stevenson's notion of 'having approximately the same meaning'. Moreover, we often come across variant texts or variant interpretative performances of the same text that differ sharply in meaning and yet are regarded as manifestations of the same work. Though these variants can hardly be said to be similar in meaning, they can be said to comply with a formula that, so to speak, defines the work's identity, since the formula need not strictly prescribe one specific sequence of words and certainly does not prescribe one specific way of reading or understanding them. Literary works are patently open to a variety of interpretative performance and critical interpretation.

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[74] Different formulations of a given formula may differ in meaning as well as in actual words or word sequence. The question of what constitutes complying with or being (formulations of) the same formula or the same literary work is basically the question of the identity of the literary work and will be treated in detail in the following chapter.

The notion of formula also helps relieve the discomfort of unperformed and uninscribed literary works. Once an author has thought up a poem, we tend to say that the poem exists, even though there be no copies or utterances which would qualify as manifestations of it. What then exists to guarantee the existence of the literary work? Not a mental copy or silent, imagined performance; this too may be lacking while the work exists. Rather what in the end must exist is a formula for the production of copies and performances. A work of literature exists when and as long as there exists a formula that can only be properly expressed in words and that prescribes which verbal compositions qualify as manifestations of the work. The existence of such a formula might be seen as a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of a literary work of art.

There is nothing awkward about such a formula existing in the author's mind or in the minds of those who perpetuate an oral tradition. Nor need it be continually before the mind to exist. It exists as long as it can be remembered, followed, or expressed, or is available in a copy or performance. There is also nothing odd about a poet or primitive creating a verbal formula when all he thought to have created was a specific verbal outburst. For any concrete verbal composition can serve as a formula for the production of other verbal compositions that comply with it. In presenting a literary manifestation, one presents a literary formula, a work of literature.

My position that the work of literature is a verbal formula is in some respects not so remote from the position that I began by attacking — Urmson's view that the literary work is a recipe for oral performance. Both of us regard the work of literature as something which engenders and exists in copies and performances, and yet is not identical with them and can exist at least temporarily without them. Urmson errs, as I trust I have shown, in thinking that the recipe which itself may be written or oral prescribes complaints that are only oral; that, in other words, oral performance is the only proper end-product of literary art and ultimately the only true object of literary appreciation. I have a strong hunch that Urmson fell into this error because he was trying to solve two different problems at once. At the same time that he was tackling the problem of the ontological status of the literary work, he was also trying to resolve the problem of literature's association with the performing arts. The latter may be resolved by regarding literature as essentially an oral and performing art, and this implies that written texts and indeed works themselves are to be regarded as essentially recipes for oral performance. I hope to have shown in chapter one that this view of the art and work of literature is fundamentally mistaken and that, moreover, it is unnecessary for the grouping of literature with the performing arts.

In the present chapter I hope to have provided a superior account of the ontological status of the literary work. I began by considering the complexity of this issue and the different questions that have traditionally been asked in connection with it. Most of these questions I hope to have satisfactorily answered, though some of them, e.g., those of ontological pigeonholing, seem so formulated as to preclude a correct answer. The complexity of the issue and the complexity of critical discourse concerning the literary work of art suggested that the ontological status of the work was itself complex. Three aspects or sources of ontological complexity were then detected and discussed. Finally, I tried to accomodate all these aspects of ontological complexity in a simple and general answer to what is taken to be the fundamental ontological question here: what kind of entity is the literary work of art. I proposed the simple sounding solution that the literary work is a verbal entity and, more specifically, a verbal formula.

The simplicity of this answer should not belie the ontological complexity of the literary work which I have tried to demonstrate. My general, summary answer maintains whatever simplicity it has only through the fact that the notion of verbal formula accomodates so many ambiguities and complexities. When these are all unpacked, neither my position nor the ontological status of the literary work should appear simple.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE IDENTITY OF THE WORK OF LITERATURE

### I

1. The problem of the identity of the work of literature is central for the philosophy of literary criticism. We have seen that it has bearing not only on the question of the literary work's ontological status but also on the more practical critical questions of interpretation and evaluation. Unfortunately, however, it is as difficult as it is important. Like the problem of ontological status, the problem of the literary work's identity is extremely complex and involves a variety of puzzling questions. To make matters worse, it is sometimes confused with problems of a different sort. Therefore, it seems best to begin our treatment of the problem of the identity of the literary work by distinguishing it from these other problems and by examining some of its aspects and complexities. This clarification of the problem of the work's identity should help lead us to a better understanding of the elements desired of a theory of work-identity. In light of these desiderata we can then proceed to examine certain philosophical attempts to define the identity of the literary work. Criticism of these attempts will lead to an alternative approach to work-identity. This, then, is the program for the present chapter.

2. In chapter two we distinguished the problem of work-identity from that of ontological status with which it has on occasion been confused. Roughly speaking, the latter is basically a question of what sort of entity any work of literature is, while the problem of identity is rather that of what constitutes a particular work of literature and distinguishes it from another. Given the ontological conclusion of chapter three that the work of literature is a verbal formula, the question of identity still remains: what constitutes a particular verbal formula and distinguishes it from others; what constitutes being or complying with the same formula?

However, the problem of the identity of the work of literature must also be distinguished from another problem which may likewise be suggested by the expression "the problem of the identity of the work of literature". This different, though not unrelated, problem is better described as the problem of the nature of literature and the consequent nature or definition of a literary work of art. We have briefly discussed this problem in chapter one. It is the rather broad problem of distinguishing the realm of literature from other realms, and in speaking about the problem of the identity of the work of literature, one might be taken as referring to this problematic distinction, i.e., what distinguishes a work of literature from that which is not a work of literature.

However, though the problem of the nature of literature is surely important, it is not the problem of identity which I shall discuss here and which is generally recognized by aestheticians as the problem of the identity of the work of literature. What is instead regarded as the problem of the literary work's identity is rather the apparently narrower issue of what are the criteria of identity and individuation within the realm of literature. Here the question is rather what constitutes a particular work of literature and distinguishes it from another, different work of literature; e.g., what constitutes Canterbury Tales and distinguishes it from Decameron.

Interestingly enough, however, though this question of identity seems narrower and more internal than the question of the nature of literature, one might argue that in another way it may indeed transcend the latter question's definition of the realm of literature. For we might well want to say that a good dramatic rendition or film version of a literary work (e.g., Samson Agonistes) would constitute a genuine manifestation of this work, and yet it would seem that such manifestations are not properly examples of the art of literature but are rather instances of the arts of drama and cinema. For even if we choose to regard drama and cinema as in some sense literary arts, surely these arts are commonly distinguished from the art of literature. Thus, paradoxically, the same work of art, Samson Agonistes, could apparently include works of different arts: poetic, dramatic, and cinematic; and there does seem something odd about saying that a poem and a film are the same work of art.

Are we then to limit the identity of a literary work more narrowly and maintain that such non-literary or more-than-literary manifestations are not, in fact, manifestations of the literary work in question but rather of some new counterpart work of art in a different medium? One is somewhat reluctant to take this line, since it seems to require for any one work of art the positing of as many different homonymic works as there are different media for its manifestation; and it would seem to fragment what is usually taken as an individual work of art into a collection of different works that maintain purity of medium. Thus, though we usually think of Hamlet as a single work of art, since its genuine manifestations include a variety of media (e.g., written texts, dramatic performances, films, etc.), we should, by this view, conclude that Hamlet is not one but several different works of art. Moreover, if we regard difference of medium as entailing difference of work-identity, we must then face the problem of what constitutes difference of medium and thus yields different works. Is the poem in the medium of sound a different though counterpart work from the poem in the medium of the written text? Surely not; but if not, why should we regard a meticulously faithful adaptation of a short story into a play for voices with a narrator as a performance of a counterpart work in the art of drama rather than a dramatic performance of the given work of literature? No doubt such adaptations involve interpretation and creativity, and result in a new aesthetic object; but so does the oral performance of a poem, and yet in such cases no new work is posited.

Thus, one puzzling question concerning the literary work's identity is whether versions of a literary work in other art forms are to count as manifestations of the original work or rather instances of a new work. Perhaps the identity of the literary work is such that there can be no general "yes or no" answer to this question. But even if we confine ourselves to purely literary manifestations, similar problems of identity and individuation still abound. We are acquainted with many works of literature by reading them in translation. Yet in what sense is the translation of a literary work the same work?

Many aestheticians have argued that the identity of a poem cannot sustain translation,[1] that 'poetry is what gets lost in translation'. There are many poems (notably short lyrics where sound and rhythm are very significant) which seem to defy adequate translation. A translation here might be denied the status of a genuine manifestation of the given poem, and we might insist that the work be read in the original. But the fact remains that we generally do not think of poems in translation as different poems. We would not deny that someone read the Odyssey if he read it in English rather than Greek; nor would we deny that he read

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[1] For example, B. Croce, Aesthetic, D. Ainslie (trans.), New York, 1970; N. Goodman, Languages of Art, Oxford, 1968; W. Scobie, "Margolis on 'The Identity of a Work of Art'", Mind, vol. 69, 1960. These aestheticians indeed assert that not only poems but prose works are not truly translatable.

Canterbury Tales if he read it in modern English rather than Middle English. And when we move from poetry to prose, it seems that translation poses still less a threat to the literary work's identity. Translations of Don Quixote are not regarded as new novels but rather manifestations of Cervantes' work. But, on the other hand, surely not any translation will do, and perhaps every translation will differ appreciably from the original. Moreover, certain prose works, like Joyce's Ulysses, seem far less susceptible to translation than much poetry.

Thus, the question of whether a translation of a literary work is a manifestation of the work it translates does not seem to admit of a general, definitive yes or no answer. Assuming that certain works do sustain their identity through translation, the question arises as to what is required of a translation to sustain work-identity and justify our speaking of the original text and its translation as the same work. Assuming that a work of literature cannot be translated and yet remain the same work, the question then is why. What are the criteria of work-identity that are not met by a translation and yet satisfied by the various manifestations and often variant versions of the literary work in its original language? Behind these different assumptions and questions seems to loom the basic problem of work-identity: what constitutes a particular work of literature, and what therefore constitutes being or being a manifestation of the same work of literature?

We have encountered this problem with respect to translations and to adaptations of the work in arts other than literature. But the problem exists just as clearly when we confine ourselves to merely literary manifestations of the work in the language in which the work was originally written. As I have argued earlier, many works exist in variant written texts and performances which exhibit neither syntactic identity nor complete synonymy. Such variation may result deliberately through editorial abridgement, expurgation, modernization, or stylization, or through authorial revision. But it may also be produced unintentionally through errors in printing and transcription or through errors committed in oral performance and then perpetuated either in writing or in an oral tradition. With works of earlier periods, textual variations may simply be due to a plurality of surviving manuscripts of a work, none of which can be established as the original or authoritative. As Wellek and Warren point out, with many literary works the hunt for the single authoritative text is futile and with some works it is doubtful whether there ever existed an authorized definitive text.[2]

Textual variations of a work may differ in extent and significance as well as cause. There may be variations in mere punctuation or spelling, which even textual scholars regard as "accidentals". But there may be differences of

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2. R. Wellek and A. Warren, Theory of Literature, London, 1970, pp. 60-61.

entire words (already on the level of substantial variance for textual scholars) and sentences. In certain versions of certain poems (e.g., The Ancient Mariner), whole stanzas have been deleted; entire scenes may be absent from a text of a given dramatic work (e.g., the A text of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus), and entire chapters may be omitted from some versions of a novel (e.g., the original version and Shaw's edition of Dickens' Great Expectations). Yet generally we regard such variant versions of a work as manifestations of the same work, and critics often debate which version best manifests it. Though Coleridge greatly revised his originally published text of The Ancient Mariner, we do not say he created two different poems which equivocally bear the same name. Both texts are regarded as manifesting the same work, but, as we saw, critics hotly contest as to which better manifests it or more authentically reflects its essence or identity.

A literary work, then, seems to tolerate some degree of textual variance without degenerating into two different works. But surely there are limits to such tolerance. Otherwise, any text could be a text of any work, and there would be no room to distinguish a text as being of a particular literary work rather than another, and thus indeed no room to distinguish one literary work from another. What then are the limits of textual variance? What are the criteria of individuation by which many different manifestations are still one literary work? What is required of a manifestation for it to be regarded as an authentic manifestation of this particular work? Again, if we look at our actual practices of individuation, there seem to be no general and definitive answers to these questions. Philosophers have tried to help here, and their attempts to provide clear and firm criteria of identity will later be considered.

The problematic complexities of work-identity which I have so far discussed might all be characterized as problems of the many and the one, the many different manifestations of the same individual work of literature. But there is also a problem of individuation which might be characterized as a problem of the part and the whole. Though there is a powerful aesthetic tradition of holism which argues that a work of art is an organic unity whose parts are aesthetically inseparable from each other and from the whole they create, it seems an undeniable fact that parts of literary works may themselves be works of literature that have aesthetic value independent of the literary works in which they appear.[3] Balzac's short story "Sarrasine" was originally published separately in the journal La Revue de Paris (November 1830) and only later incorporated in his Scènes de la vie parisienne, which itself can be regarded as merely a part of his life's comprehensive opus, La Comédie Humaine. Dostoyevsky's tale of the Grand Inquisitor and Carroll's "The Walrus and the Carpenter" can likewise appear and be appreciated as literary works apart from the larger works in which they were originally incorporated. We speak of Joyce's Dubliners and Herbert's The Temple as particular works of literature, but we also speak of the individual stories and poems that appear in these works as literary works in their own right. Should we think of the latter as only parts of individual works or the former as not really single works of literature but rather aggregates of many different works? Neither alternative seems very satisfying, simply because our individuation of literary works seems to fluctuate here according to our interests and needs. The identity of the literary work is in this sense very much conventional and context dependent. Sometimes we want to treat The Temple as one single work of poetry, as a unified whole; but other times we wish to treat some of its poems as individual works in themselves.[4] Thus, we find still another way in which the identity and individuation of the literary work seem extremely complex and vague.

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[3] This problem has been recently discussed by S.D. Ross, "Ambiguities in Identifying the Work of Art", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 36, 1977.

This vagueness and complexity were to be expected, given the literary work's ontological complexity and the complexity of critical practices which we argued not only reveal but often help form the identity of the literary work. However, the vagueness I have been trying to demonstrate in the last few pages may be distinguished from the vagueness I argued for in chapter one. There I maintained that the concept of the work of literature exhibited both degree- and combinatory vagueness. Here I have tried to show how it also exhibits the third kind of vagueness that Alston discusses: vagueness of individuation.[5]

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[4] Interestingly, the interpretation of a component part of The Temple may well change according to whether it is taken on its own or as part of the entire work. See J.H. Summers, "Herbert's Conception of Form", in F. Kermode (ed.), The Metaphysical Poets, New York, 1969, pp. 246-247.

3. By now we have distinguished the problem of the literary work's identity from some other problems with which it may be confused, and we have also demonstrated some of this problem's complexity by discussing some of the puzzling questions which it involves. This preliminary discussion seems to suggest that the identity of the literary work is vague, complex, and somewhat conventional and contextual. Subsequent analysis will examine whether these suggestions are correct. At present, however, the problem of the literary work's identity requires further clarification. Though I have shown that this problem emerges in different questions and may be formulated in different ways, it seems best for purposes of clarification to concentrate on one way of formulating the problem. Having argued that identity and ontological status are interrelated, I think it best to formulate our problem of identity in light of our ontological conclusions.

Since the literary work of art was held to be a verbal formula or pattern, the question of its identity might seem formulable as the question of the identity of verbal formulae or patterns. Yet this would be too general. For though all literary works may be verbal patterns, not all verbal patterns are literary works of art, and there is no doubt that in non-literary contexts, individuation of verbal formulae or patterns may be very different. Therefore, our question of identity is rather that of the identity of 'literary' verbal formulae or the individuation of verbal patterns that are regarded as literary works. Since the notion of literary formula or pattern anyway entails the notion of verbal formula or pattern, we can speak more briefly of the identity of literary formulae and the individuation of literary patterns. The problem of the identity of the literary work might then be formulated as the question of what constitutes a particular literary formula and distinguishes it from a different literary formula.

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[5] W. Alston, "Vagueness", in P. Edwards (ed.), Encyclopedia of Philosophy, London, 1967, vol. 8, p. 220. Degree vagueness and combinatory vagueness are also explained in this article, and distinguished in chapter one, pp. 48-49 above.

Now if we look closely at this formulation, we can detect an ambiguity which reflects a very basic ambiguity in the concept of the identity of the literary work. Given that a particular literary formula is constituted by certain features or properties, what is meant by being a constitutive feature or property? Does it mean being constitutive in the sense of essential or only in the sense of being a component or part or aspect of the work? The two alternative answers here reflect two different senses of the concept of the literary work's identity, both of which find application in critical and aesthetic discourse.

Several aestheticians distinguish between the essential or constitutive properties of a work and its inessential or contingent properties. A. Harrison argues that "to identify a work of art ... is inescapably to lay down what are the essential features of the work and what are inessential".[6] The identity of the work for him is "the hard core of essential features" as distinguished from "the surrounding penumbra of inessential ones."[7] Goodman similarly distinguishes between the constitutive and contingent properties of a work, and regards the identity of the literary work as including only its constitutive properties, all of which are notationally defined.[8] Many critics seem to share this view of work-identity, where identity is seen as an inner core or essence which may be filled out or surrounded by other non-essential features. Helen Gardner speaks of "a work's centre, the source of its life in all parts",[9] and we noted in the debate over the text of The Ancient Mariner that critics speak of the essence of a poem which may be sustained while several features of the poem be modified through revision. The notion of an underlying core of essential features that can remain substantially the same despite variations of certain features of the work is one important conception of work-identity and

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6. A. Harrison, "Works of Art and Other Cultural Objects", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 68, 1967-8, p. 125.

7. Ibid., p. 123.

8. Goodman, op. cit., pp. 115-20, 209-11.

9. H. Gardner, The Business of Criticism, Oxford, 1970, p. 23.

one which can explain how work-identity may be maintained through authorial revision, translation, and adaptation to other media.

However, there is also a wider sense of identity where not only the essential features or core of the work, but any feature or property that can be seen as part of the work and thus can be relevant for its interpretation and evaluation is considered part of its identity. A certain feature, e.g., a particular phrase, may be considered part of the work and of possible relevance in interpreting and evaluating the work, yet not be regarded as in any way essential. In other words, were this feature deleted or modified, we would still regard the work as being the same work and not say that a different work has taken its place. But with this second conception of identity, we need not ignore or discount this change as irrelevant to the work's identity. We could instead say that the identity of the work has slightly changed or developed, or simply that the work has slightly changed. Indeed, it is hard to distinguish here between the identity of the work and the work simpliciter, for virtually all that belongs to the latter seems also to belong to the former.[10]

If the first notion of identity could be described as a stable inner core or essence, this second notion of identity might be characterized as a continuously evolving concrescence. The literary critic and theorist, Abercrombie, seems to hold this second view of work-identity when he argues that the literary work's meaning includes anything that can be found in it and that the work's identity is "continually creative" and "continually changing".[11] But though the work's meaning, medium, and actual components may change, Abercrombie holds that "in another sense it [i.e., the work] is always the same; for it always exists in unbroken connection with its author".[12] Identity is thus preserved through change. Here, the very history of the work, the chain from its present appearance to its original conception by the author, seems to be an important element of its identity. Lionel Trilling holds a similar view of work-identity, where the "real" work includes everything the work is and has undergone. The poem is not only

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[10] There does, however, seem to be some difference between this notion of the identity of the work and that of the work simpliciter, for in certain contexts they are clearly not interchangeable; e.g., saying that the student recited or copied out the poem could not be replaced by saying that he recited or copied out the identity of the poem.

> "the poem we now perceive ... [and] the poem the author intended and his first readers read ... But in addition the poem is the poem as it has existed in history, as it has lived its life from Then to Now".[13]

We have, then, two fundamental conceptions of work-identity: one taking it as what the work essentially is or what is essential in the work, the other seeing identity as merely a matter of what the work is or what is in the work.[14] These two different conceptions of identity are reflected in two different kinds of interpretative practice. Sometimes the interpreter tries to reveal the essence, imaginative centre, or core of a work, while other times he is merely concerned with revealing what is simply in the work rather than falsely read into it.

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[11] L. Abercrombie, "A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting", Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 16, p. 29.

[12] Ibid.

[13] L. Trilling, "The Sense of the Past", in The Liberal Imagination, London, 1961, p. 186.

There is, however, still a third important conception of work-identity which seems to conflate or straddle these two. The first conception, we remember, is based on the distinction between the essential features of the work which constitute its identity and other features which may belong or be attributed to the work but are not part of its identity. Yet how are we to draw this distinction in practice? If we maintain that every feature of the work may be relevant for its interpretation or evaluation, then any feature may turn out to be essential to the work though we do not now regard it so. Later interpretation which may be based on it may reveal the work in a manner where what seemed inessential becomes essential. Moreover, since most literature has been created with care and deliberation, there is the inclination to believe that whatever is in the work is there for a good reason and is aesthetically relevant. The notion that all the work's parts are necessary to it dates back as far as Aristotle, and the view that the literary work (and the poem in particular) is an organic unity whose parts are all essential to the whole is still a popular view. In light of these considerations, the third conception of work-identity denies the distinction between the essential and inessential features of the work, for all the work's features are deemed essential. Like the second conception of identity, it includes all the work's features, however, it denies that any of these features may be removed or modified without essentially changing the work's identity. The inner core of essential features of the first conception is simply expanded in the third conception to cover all the features of the work which are in principle aesthetically relevant and which the second or wide conception of work-identity includes in the identity of the literary work. Thus, by the third conception of work-identity, whatever is a feature of the work is an essential feature of it and functions as a necessary criterion of its identity. This view of work-identity can be found not only in idealistic aestheticians like Croce, but also in more empirical philosophers and critics.

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[14] These two conceptions of work-identity might be crudely represented by a diagram of two concentric circles, e.g., ◎, where the inner circle represents the work's essential or central features and the outer one all the work's features. The first conception treats the work's identity as the inner circle, while the second the outer. The third conception of identity, discussed below, stretches the inner circle to coincide with the outer.

Strawson seems to hold this view when he maintains that "the criterion of identity of a work of art is the totality of features which are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal."[15]

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[15] P.F. Strawson, "Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art", in "Freedom and Resentment, London, 1974, p. 185.

Cleanth Brooks expresses such a view in expounding the heresy of paraphrase. Brooks argues "that the paraphrase is not the real core of meaning which constitutes the essence of the poem".[16] He admits that efforts to paraphrase "can do no harm if we do not mistake them for the inner core of the poem".[17] However, he argues, if we do take one of them to represent the essential poem, then we must regard the total context of the poem's other features as inessential to the poem or else assume "that we can reproduce the effect of the total context in a condensed prose statement."[18] But these alternatives are unacceptable to Brooks for whom "the whole context is crucial" to the coherence, unity, and "essential structure of the poem".[19] With Brooks we clearly see how the inner core of essence expands into the whole context or totality of the work.

Thus, we have at least three different conceptions of the notion of the identity of the literary work, though the third conception might be seen as reducible to a special case of either the first or second conception; i.e., as a case where alleged inessential features are either included into the central core of essence or excluded from being part of the work at all. This basic ambiguity with respect to the very concept of work-identity presents grave problems to any aesthetic theory which seeks a clear and precise definition of the identity of the literary work. The third

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16. C. Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, London, 1960, p. 180.

17. Ibid., p. 188.

18. Ibid.,

19. Ibid., p. 189.

conception might be seen as an attempt to dispel this ambiguity by bridging between or merging the two fundamental conceptions of identity, that of inner essence and that of totality, through the organistic doctrine that all the work's features are essential and central to the work's identity.

Perhaps this is one reason why organicist theories of work-identity have been so popular and why attempts to define the work's identity tend to move toward the third conception of work-identity. However, such theories and definitions of work-identity present a very false account of the ways in which literary works are actually individuated. We have seen that literary manifestations may differ in many aesthetically relevant features and still be the same work, and that a work may be modified in several aesthetically relevant features and remain the same work. But a proper appreciation of the basic inadequacy of such theories of identity requires a better understanding of what a theory of identity should provide. Thus, having argued that the concept of the literary work's identity is vague, complex, and fundamentally ambiguous, let us proceed to examine some of the elements that may be required of a theory of the identity of the literary work of art.

## II

1. There are several things that may be desired from a theory of the identity of the literary work. At the most basic level, it would be expected to give a general account

of the relation of the literary work's different manifestations to each other and to the work itself. In virtue of what are they manifestations of the same work? A variety of answers have been offered here. Manifestations have been held to belong to the same work if they create or at least can create the same experience or same set of impressions. Jones reading token text x and Smith reading token text y can be said to have read the same work, if in reading the different texts they have had the same experience or set of perceptions. Here the identity of the literary work is simply explained either as identity of experience or identity of perception. I.A. Richards[20] has proposed the experiential version, while H. Osborne[21] has propounded the perceptual criterion. Both views share the same sort of vitiating difficulties, many of which are due to the subjectivity and intrinsic variety of experience and perception. These difficulties will be brought out more fully when we consider these very similar theories in the next section.

Apart from identity of experience and identity of perception, other standards of identity have been offered to explain the work's identity in its different manifestations. One of the more striking has been the criterion of syntactic identity of text, where syntatic identity is conceived as involving the identity of word combinations in the same given

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20. I.A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, London, 1976.

21. H. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, London, 1956.

language, and where "text" is broadly understood as either written or oral. If two different token texts are in this sense syntactically identical, then they are manifestations of the same literary work. Since part of Richards' experience and Osborne's perceptions is the experience or perception of the particular words of the text, syntactic textual identity would be for them a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of work-identity. Thus Osborne maintains that "the poem is the specific arrangement of words which we call the poem ... No other set of words can be substituted".[22] The criterion of syntactic identity has been advocated by several philosophers, most rigorously and powerfully by Nelson Goodman.[2] But it too has obvious problems, since the different manifestations of a literary work are frequently not syntactically identical. Goodman, though, was well aware of this in formulating his theory, and we will have to examine his theory more carefully before making too much of its apparent problems.

Instead of the syntactic standard of identity, one might be tempted to advocate semantic identity as what accounts for the identity of the literary work in its different manifestations. This, of course, would allow syntactically variant texts (including translations) to count as manifestations of

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22. Osborne, op cit., p. 319. See also Richards, op. cit., pp. 177-78.

23. Goodman, op cit., especially pp. 115-20, 207-11.

the same work, provided that they are semantically identical, i.e., have the same meaning. But sameness of meaning or synonymy has proved to be a complex and baffling notion in its own right, and by invoking it here one would raise as many questions as one answers.[24] The same goes *a fortiori* for Stevenson's 'approximate sameness of meaning'.[25] Moreover, it is often said that the meaning of a literary work may change from one period to another, and these changes of meaning may occur without any corresponding syntactic change of text. But despite such differences in meaning, we do not posit different works of literature. Indeed, even in the same period there may be literary manifestations (notably interpretative performances) which differ greatly in meaning but are nonetheless held to be manifestations of the same work. Given the literary work's tolerance of variant interpretations (in performance and criticism), it surely seems unwise to regard identity of meaning as the standard of the literary work's identity.

We may recall that Stevenson spoke of approximate sameness of meaning in order to define the notion of megatype. And indeed it is the notion of megatype which Stevenson and

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24. The problematic nature of the notion of synonymy is discussed by W.V. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in *From a Logical Point of View*, New York, 1963; and by N. Goodman, "On Likeness of Meaning", in *Problems and Projects*, New York, 1972.

25. See C.L. Stevenson, "On 'What is a Poem?'", *Philosophical Review*, vol. 66, 1957, pp. 337-38.

others[26] use to account for the identity of the literary work through its different manifestations. The different manifestations of a literary work which are syntactically variant can still be tokens of the same megatype. One might even try to accomodate dramatic and film versions of a literary work as tokens of the megatype work. It has therefore been held that we identify the literary work itself with a megatype, that we "identify the poem with the megatype poem".[27] I have already argued on ontological grounds that the literary work cannot be adequately regarded as a megatype. Thus, I find it unacceptable to treat the identity of the literary work as the identity of a megatype. But, in any case, if identity of megatype is construed as roughly equivalent to approximate sameness of meaning, then, as we have seen, our actual practice of individuation of works provides sufficient grounds for rejecting the megatype theory of work-identity.

Finally, let us consider the account of work-identity which seems to emerge from our ontological view that the literary work is a verbal formula. Here, different literary manifestations may be said to be of the same work if they comply with (and thus present) the same basic literary formula.

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26. For example, J. Margolis, "The Identity of a Work of Art", in F.J. Coleman (ed.), Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics, New York, 1968. Margolis, however, does not define identity of megatype in terms of sameness of meaning, but rather sameness of design.

27. Ibid., p. 42.

The same general formula or pattern may admit of variant formulations which differ semantically as well as syntactically. Yet as long as these variant formulations may be seen as complying with the same general formula attributed to the work, they can be regarded as manifestations of the same work. Being (manifestations of) the same work is thus explained in terms of compliance with the same formula. This explanation seems superior to the others, since it allows not only for experiential, perceptual, and syntactic variance, but also for variation in meaning and aesthetic quality. A basic literary formula or verbal pattern allows for considerable variation in a variety of aspects, since it does not strictly prescribe every relevant aspect of that which can be said to comply with it.

I think, then, that the relation of the work's different manifestations to each other and to the work itself can quite plausibly be seen as mutual compliance with or embodiment of a particular verbal formula or pattern. But though this explanation of the identity of the work's different manifestations seems reasonable enough, it appears to leave some very interesting questions unanswered. One is inclined to ask what exactly constitutes the basic formula and what exactly are the limits of variation which compliance with it will allow. These indeed are important questions, but I do not think a philosopher need give or can give a general answer to them. It is, of course, the critic, not the philosopher, who is best equipped to determine the basic pattern of a work and what kind and degree of variation that pattern allows. But one should neither expect the critic to provide general rules here. Common sense clearly suggests that only a piecemeal approach would be adequate, since different literary works surely differ in their tolerance of variation. A long novel or essay will probably tolerate the changing of a few lines, while a short poem will probably not. Moreover, to complicate things in a different direction, surely much depends on which lines are changed and how they are changed. Finally, we saw that our actual critical practice of individuating literary works is often context dependent. In some contexts a given variation or variant manifestation will be allowed, while in others it may not be permitted or may be only reluctantly condoned as somewhat tolerable but not adequately authentic. Thus, the fact that this last theory of work-identity leaves certain questions open is not a vitiating vice, but may in fact be a virtue.

2. The question of the limits of variation which a given work's manifestations are allowed (e.g., of how far a copy may depart from the original text and still be an authentic copy of the work) leads us to consider the second important element that may be required of a theory of work-identity: explanation of our judgments of the authenticity of manifestations. The problem of the literary work's identity is intimately connected with the question of the authenticity, genuineness, or correctness of alleged manifestations of the work. Identifying a particular literary work is basically a problem of determining what copies or

performances are to count as authentic or genuine manifestations of the work; and determining what properties should or must be present in an authentic manifestation more or less amounts to determining the constitutive properties of the work, i.e., determining the work's identity. This close conceptual connection between the identity of a literary work and the authenticity of its manifestations seems to be acknowledged by several aestheticians.[28]

Since these two matters are so closely connected, we should expect a theory of work-identity to provide an account of our judgments of authenticity of manifestations. How do we judge whether an alleged manifestation of a given work is in fact a true or authentic manifestation of it and not a false or inauthentic one? This problem of authenticity might indeed be the motivating practical crux of the problem of work-identity, or at least a major source of its interest for aestheticians. For one has little fear of failing to distinguish one known work of literature from another, even if they are very similar. One is unlikely to mistake Decameron for Canterbury Tales. On the other hand, one is quite susceptible and consequently apprehensive of mistaking an inauthentic manifestation of a particular literary work

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28. For example, Goodman, Languages of Art; N. Wolterstorff, "Toward an Ontology of Art Works", Nous, vol. 9, 1975, p. 125; Harrison, op. cit., pp. 125-26. K. Walton, "The Presentation and Portrayal of Sound Patterns", In Theory Only, vol. 2, 1977, p. 8, makes much the same point with respect to the identity of the musical work and the 'correctness' of performances of it.

(e.g., a fraudulent text, an incompetent translation, an incorrect oral reading, etc.) for an authentic manifestation of the work in question and thus for an acceptable object for the valid interpretation and just evaluation of the work. We want to criticize the work correctly, and for this it is essential that we are actually criticizing the work, i.e., by studying and criticizing an authentic, representative example of it and not an inauthentic manifestation which misrepresents the work. We cannot justly judge a thing by judging an inadequate imposter of it. Here again, we see the link between the work's identity and its interpretation and evaluation.

Now as there is reason to fear such inauthentic manifestations because of their capacity to yield wrong critical judgments, there is also cause to fear them because they do in fact exist, and their unjust claims to the status of authenticity may all too often be accepted. There are countless inadequate translations and oral performances, false texts, drastically abridged or bowlderized editions which falsely claim to be genuine manifestations of given works. For such claims may be made and indeed generally are made, implicitly, though no less effectively, by the mere title that the inauthentic manifestation assumes. Nor is it surprising that false claims of authenticity are made; since many works of literature are held to be of great value, and authentic manifestations of such works are therefore thought to manifest and thus partake in this value. The names of highly valued works of art are honorific terms and reflect on the objects that bear them an aura of value. Inauthentic manifestations assume these honorific names to enjoy the benefits (financial or otherwise) of such suggested value. Since inauthentic manifestations may lead a critic to wrong interpretation and evaluation, one of the critic's important roles is to make judgments of authenticity to expose false manifestations and determine which copies and performances authentically manifest the work. Textual criticism, establishing authenticity of text, is, of course, part of this role.

Outside of its relevance for identifying the literary work for interpretation and evaluation, the problem of authenticity of manifestations is central to another aspect of the problem of work-identity — the problem of the preservation of the literary work or, for short, work-preservation. Works of literature, we have seen, have a more liberal and problematic identity than works of painting. There is only one object that is the authentic Mona Lisa, but we cannot so simply identify a literary work with one object. There are many authentic copies of Paradise Lost; and thus even if the original manuscript were lost, the work would not be said to be lost but could be seen in any other authentic manifestation of it; and we may produce an unlimited number of such manifestations.

The fact that the literary work may be thus proliferated through authentic manifestations would seem to safeguard its preservation but, paradoxically, it exposes the work to the possible danger of destruction by erosion or corruption of identity. As a result of careless copying, bad translation, drastic editing, and inaccurate performance, a literary work may find its authentic manifestations being supplanted by new inauthentic ones. If the former are abandoned or forgotten and the latter become the standard for the reproduction of 'authentic' manifestations, we may find that the identity of the work has changed. This change may be a very radical one, and if so, we might say that we have indeed lost the original work. It has degenerated or changed into a truly different work of literature.

The threat of losing works through such a process of identity-erosion triggered by the acceptance of inauthentic manifestations may not seem a very real danger. But there is little doubt that some literary works of earlier periods have been greatly modified or 'corrupted' through inadequate standards of authenticity coupled with unfaithful copying and oral reproduction. What indeed makes the threat of work-erosion now so remote is that we are constantly and more carefully making judgments of authenticity to brand and weed out corrupting inauthentic manifestations. Without judgments of authenticity, without determining what is and what is not a proper manifestation of a given work, any copy or performance can be a manifestation of any literary work, and thus no work can be individuated from another.

Thus, we find that judgments of authenticity are essential not only for identification of the work for adequate criticism but also for preservation of the work's distinct identity (and thus indeed of the work itself) through time and the proliferation of manifestations. A theory of identity, then, should account for these judgments of authenticity. But we need not demand from the philosopher a general rule or set of rules by which to judge the authenticity of any manifestation of any literary work whatever in whatsoever context. This task, if it were a possible one, might be left to the critic. What is instead required of a philosophical theory of work-identity is an account of the basic logic governing our judgments of authenticity, a logical model which can be seen to underlie and accomodate our practices of determining authenticity.

The theories of work-identity which we have already briefly described seem to suggest such accounts of our judgments of authenticity. Authenticity of manifestation may be judged in terms of capacity to yield the experience or perceptions with which the work is identified; and it may be left an open question for the critic as to whether the defining experience or perception is that of the author, his contemporary audience, or the ideal reader. Alternatively, a manifestation may be judged as authentic or not by whether or not it has the same meaning as a paradigmatic or authoritative manifestation, and again we might leave it to the critic to determine what the latter is to be. But since two interperative readings of a work may differ greatly in meaning and yet both be regarded as authentic, this explanation seems rather unlikely. Instead, one might look to the syntactic theory and hold that manifestations may be judged authentic according to whether they faithfully reproduce a text which is syntactically identical to the authoritative text of the work. What constitutes the authoritative text is again the task of the critic.

Finally, we might say that a manifestation's authenticity may be judged in terms of its compliance with the formula or pattern identified with the work. The role of determining what constitutes this pattern would be left to the critic, but, more importantly, so might the question of what constitutes compliance. The notion of compliance seems far more flexible than the notion of identity. Compliance with a pattern or formula therefore seems a more versatile standard for judgments of authenticity than either identity of experience, perception, meaning, or syntax. Part of the greater flexibility of the notion of compliance is that it naturally accomodates degrees in a way that identity does not. We often and quite naturally speak of something complying to a certain degree with certain requirements, but we do not so readily speak of something as identical to a certain degree with something else. The fact that compliance admits of degrees is a great advantage in accounting for our judgments of authenticity for, as we shall see, the notion of authenticity of manifestation also admits of degrees.

3. We have seen two basic requirements for a philosphical theory of work-identity: explanation of the sense in which there is identity among the different manifestations of the

same literary work, and explanation of our judgments of authenticity of manifestations. Traditionally, however, it seems that more has been expected of a theory of work-identity, for various aestheticians have tried to provide more. Since the work's identity provides a touchstone for and indeed sets the limits of valid interpretation and evaluation of the work, one would naturally like to have this identity well defined. Moreover, given the close connection between identity and authenticity, a clear definition of work-identity should provide an adequate standard for judging the authenticity of alleged manifestations of the work; and this again would be helpful to the critic. Thus, defining a literary work's identity would seem to provide not only a better understanding of the work through determination of what features or properties are truly part of it, but also a means of identifying the work in its authentic manifestations.

It is natural, then, to want a clear definition of the literary work's identity, and thus not surprising that aestheticians have tried to provide one. The aesthetician does not try to do this by carefully studying one work at a time and by defining the identity of each in its own way in light of this scrutiny. He rather considers the matter more abstractly and gives a blanket definition for the identity of each and every work of literature. More precisely, he provides a general defining rule which may be similarly applied to any literary work to yield the definition of its identity.

I have maintained, however, that the role of determining a work's identity or constitutive properties is essentially that of the critic, a role which involves interpretation and evaluation. Given the great differences between different works of literature, it seems highly unlikely that the identity of every literary work is simply definable by the very same rule or standard. Again, when we consider the complexities of our actual practices of individuating literary works and judging what is to count as authentic manifestations of them, it seems implausible that a general rule defining identity could be found which could conform to and explain them. Surely the identity of literary works would best be defined or determined in piecemeal fashion by critics closely acquainted with the works concerned rather than by uniform definition through the application of a general rule advanced by philosophers.

However, it is unfair to reject these definitions simply on the grounds of unlikeliness. We must at least present them and see how well they achieve the two aims of defining work-identity. These definitions will be studied with the theories of work-identity from which they emerge, theories which we have already briefly presented and which, as theories of work-identity, must also be examined in terms of their adequacy in fulfilling the two basic explanatory roles of such a theory.

## III

1. Let us begin with the theories of work-identity advocated respectively by Richards and Osborne: the experiential identity theory and the perceptual identity theory. These theories are very similar and may indeed be regarded as different versions of the same basic theory or approach to work-identity, that which defines identity in terms of an experiencing or perceiving subject.[29] Because of their similarity they may be considered together.

Richards identifies the poem with a particular "class of experiences",[30] and Osborne regards the literary work as a specific set of perceptions or the potentiality thereof.[31] Both these views are ontologically unacceptable, since we can write and recite a poem, yet we can hardly speak of writing or reciting a class of experiences or a potentiality of perceptions. But let us here ignore such ontological objections and confine ourselves to Richards' and Osborne's treatment of the problem of identity, which for them is the problem of defining this class of experiences or (potential) set of perceptions. Richards defines the identity of the literary work in terms of a particular defining "standard experience".[32] Experiences which are similar to it belong to the class which comprises the work; those which differ do not and are not really experiences of the work.[33] Osborne similarly employs "a specific set of perceptions"[34] which defines the work. There is only one correct way of perceiving the work, "of seeing it as it is",[35] and perceptions which differ from this defining set of perceptions are, in fact, perceptions of a different work of literature. Thus, both Richards and Osborne would maintain that "any two persons reading 'the same poem' will probably be aware of different poems",[36] since their experiences or perceptions of a work are likely to differ significantly and since works are defined and individuated in terms of identity of experience or perception.

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[29] Since Osborne actually defines the work on one occasion in terms of "perceptual experiences" (op. cit., p. 247), his theory might be regarded as a more specific version of Richards' general experiential theory of work-identity.

[30] Richards, op. cit., p. 178.

[31] Osborne, op. cit., pp. 231, 234, 247, 319.

What, then, is the defining experience or perception from which others cannot significantly vary and still be experiences or perceptions of the work? Richards proposes that we "take as this standard experience the relevant experience of the poet when contemplating the completed composition."[37] Osborne is not so explicit, but clearly implies that the defining set of perceptions should be the author's.[38]

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[32] Richards, op. cit., p. 178.

[33] Richards writes that experiences belonging to the work must "not differ in any character more than a certain amount, varying for each character" (ibid., p. 178). For instance,

> "the experience must evidently include the reading of the words with fairly close correspondence in rhythm and tune. Pitch differences would not matter, provided that pitch relations were preserved." (ibid.p.177-78.)

[34] Osborne, op. cit., p. 234.

[35] Ibid., p. 319.

[36] Ibid., p. 232.

Here we have a theory which provides a general definition of the literary work's identity: what constitutes substantially the same experience as that of the author contemplating his finished work constitutes the work's identity. Moreover, we have seen that Richards' and Osborne's experiential or perceptual theories can be construed as providing an account of the identity of the different manifestations of a given work and also an account of our judgments of authenticity. Two different manifestations are to be regarded as the same work of literature and judged as authentic manifestations thereof, if and only if they can produce substantially the same experience or set of perceptions as that which defines the work.

Unfortunately, however, this account of the identity and authenticity of the work's manifestations is inaccurate and problematic. Indeed, Richards' and Osborne's subjectivist approach to work-identity, in either its experiential or perceptual version, yields absurd consequences. It commits us to the view that the same poem cannot be experienced or perceived in substantially different ways, since experiences or perceptions that significantly depart from the defining one do not qualify as experiences or perceptions of the work defined. Such a position is, of course, absurd. Even if one ignores the obvious fact that different critics often perceive and respond very differently to the same work of literature, there is enough evidence from one's own personal experience of reading works that the same work may be experienced or perceived in a variety of different ways. Moreover, critics often assert that two very different perceptions or interpretations of the same work may be valid.

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[37] Richards, op. cit., p. 178.

[38] Osborne, op. cit., pp. 233, 316-17.

It is thus wrong to regard the literary work's identity in terms of identity of experience or perception. Indeed, such a standard of work-identity undermines the whole practice of criticism; since if different experiences imply different works of literature, then, as Osborne admits, when critics seem to disagree about a particular work, "we can never know whether they have experienced the same or rather different works of art."[39] Moreover, assuming they have experienced and are talking about the same work, critical disagreement then amounts to no more than 'semantic' disagreement — divergence over how to describe the very same experience or perception of the work. Finally, equating work-identity with identity of experience or perception also results in the

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39. Osborne, op. cit., p. 233.

absurdity that a single copy or performance of a poem is typically not a manifestation of one literary work but of an indefinite number of different literary works, as many as there can be significantly different experiences or perceptions of the manifestation. Surely this is a very odd and inadequate way of accounting for different literary manifestations being the same work of literature.

Aside from these vitiating difficulties, similar problems arise with respect to judgments of authenticity. The very same copy or performance would be held to be an authentic manifestation of several different literary works, i.e., the different works corresponding to the substantially different experiences or perceptions of it. Moreover, we can point to a different sort of problem with the perceptual or experiential criterion of authenticity. We can imagine without difficulty that great changes in Weltanschauung make it impossible for what we normally consider an authentic copy of Gray's Elegy to produce substantially the same experience as Gray's. Here, even if our copy be a perfect facsimile of Gray's own original manuscript, it could not be an authentic manifestation of the work, since it could not possibly evoke the necessary experience. If one tries to salvage the experiential criterion by qualifying it to "being able to produce the desired experience given favourable conditions", one can imagine circumstances favourable enough that even a clearly inauthentic copy or performance of the work would trigger the desired response and thus be regarded as authentic. Perhaps to defend their position against this possibility of the right experiences being produced by the wrong texts, Osborne and Richards seem to introduce syntactic textual identity as a necessary condition for the identity of experience and thus as a necessary criterion for the identity of the literary work and the authenticity of its manifestations. But, unfortunately, there are also serious problems with the standard of syntactic identity which we shall presently consider.

However, let us first briefly conclude our assessment of Richards' and Osborne's subjectivist approach. Identity of experience or perception cannot adequately account for our practices of identifying different literary manifestations as the same work of literature, nor for our judgments of the authenticity of alleged manifestations of a given work. In attempting to achieve these basic aims of a theory of work-identity, this approach involves us in a variety of unacceptable consequences. Thus, despite the fact that it offers a general definition of the literary work's identity, Richards' and Osborne's approach should be rejected.

Moreover, when we examine the definition itself, we find that it fails to provide the two things desired from such a definition. That the literary work is a class of experiences or perceptions which do not differ substantially from the defining experience of the author when contemplating the finished composition is a definition which does not shed very much light on the nature of the work in question. It does not provide a better understanding of the particular work and its important properties. Nor does this sort of definition achieve the second aim of defining the work's identity, for we have seen that it is inadequate as a standard of authenticity. Part of this inadequacy is due to its inclusion of syntactic identity as a necessary condition for authenticity of manifestation. This syntactic criterion and its difficulties will now be examined more closely.

3. Many aestheticians handle the problem of the literary work's identity by employing the standard of syntactic or textual identity. Even when the work is not identified with the text *per se* (as with Richards and Osborne), identity of text still may be regarded as a necessary criterion for work-identity and authenticity. Croce, too, though not equating the work with its text, nevertheless holds that the text is so closely linked with the work's identity that any change in the former violates the latter. In the literary work of art, says Croce, "there are none but proper words: the same intuition can be expressed in one way only."[40] Thus, any modification or translation of the text "either diminishes and spoils, or it creates a new expression",[41] a new work of art.

My aim here is not to survey the aestheticians who have employed the criterion of syntactic identity in their theories of the literary work's identity, but rather to examine the criterion itself and its capacity to provide a satisfactory theory of work-identity. The validity and value of the syntactic approach might best be considered in its most rigorous and comprehensive form, where the literary work's identity is treated and defined entirely in terms of syntactic textual identity. This can be found in Goodman's theory of the identity of the literary work of art, a theory which issues in a general definition of the work's identity.

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[40] Croce, op. cit., p. 72.

[41] Ibid., p. 68.

Goodman maintains that syntactic textual identity, i.e., the identity of a text of a given language irrespective of its semantic aspect or meaning, can provide an adequate account of the literary work's identity and is, in fact, both a necessary and sufficient condition for work-identity and for the authenticity of manifestations. We should note, however, that Goodman construes syntax much more comprehensively than we have earlier described it. For him it includes not only combinations of words but combinations of any characters of the language in which the text is composed. Thus, for Goodman, syntactic identity of text includes even identity in spelling and punctuation, "exact correspondence as sequences of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks."[42] This standard of textual identity is seen as the sole criterion of identity and authenticity, and issues in the following definition of the literary work's identity:

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[42] Goodman, Languages of Art, p. 115.

> "A literary work, then, is not the compliance-class of a text but the text or script itself. All and only inscriptions and utterances of the text are instances of the work; ... Even replacement of a character in a text by another synonymous character (if any can be found in a discursive language) yields a different work. ... Both identity of language and syntactic identity within the language are necessary conditions for identity of a literary work."[43]

Goodman's definition of the literary work's identity provides a clear account of the sense in which different literary manifestations can be related to each other as the same work of literature. It also supplies a precise account of how judgments of the authenticity of alleged manifestations of a given work are to be made. Moreover, Goodman's theory has some advantage over Richards' and Osborne's approach in that it can readily accommodate different perceptions, experiences, and valuations of the same work of literature. It can even accommodate the fact that different authentic manifestations of a work may differ in meaning and aesthetic properties. So far so good, but difficulties soon arise where Goodman's position departs sharply from our ordinary practices of individuating literary works and judging the authenticity of their alleged manifestations.

We ordinarily regard a work's important aesthetic properties as highly relevant to the work's identity and important for the authenticity of a performance of the work. Yet Goodman explicitly excludes such properties from the core of constitutive properties which define the work's identity and the authenticity of manifestations.[44] Moreover, it is obvious that we do not typically require the perfect syntactic identity which Goodman's theory advocates. Accepting his extreme position would result in some very bizarre consequences. A copy which differs from the original text by a single letter or punctuation mark cannot strictly count as a copy of the work in question but "yields a different work". An author, editor, or performer cannot make the slightest revision in a work without producing a different work altogether. Translations, of course, are not manifestations of the works they purport to render; to read a work one is logically compelled to read it in the original. And if there are n rival texts of a work, though they be only minimally different, they are texts of n different works misleadingly bearing the same title. However, such variant texts are precisely what we call them — different texts of the same work, and not texts of different works. But, if we accept Goodman's theory, we must reject our ordinary practices of individuation and accept the odd consequences which follow from his theory.

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[43] Goodman, Languages of Art, p. 209.

Goodman is well aware that common sense ("that repository of ancient error"[45]) and our ordinary critical judgments of identity and authenticity contradict his strict syntactic standard. "But", he argues, "ordinary usage here points the way to disaster for theory"[46] and must be abandoned, since its more flexible criteria which permit a few wrong letters or words (or in music, a few wrong notes) are too loose to ensure preservation of work-identity and can, in principle, yield horrible distortions of the work.

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[44] Goodman, Languages of Art, pp. 120, 129.

[45] Ibid., p. xii.

> "The innocent-seeming principle that performances differing by just one note are instances of the same work risks the consequence — in view of the transitivity of identity — that all performances whatsoever are of the same work. If we allow the least deviation all assurance of work-preservation and score preservation is lost; for by a series of one-note errors of omission, addition and modification, we can go all the way from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to Three Blind Mice."[47]

The same kind of argument might be applied to literary works and their words and letters, and show the logically possible metamorphosis of Milton's "Lycidas" into "Jack and Jill".

This, then, is the reason why Goodman rejects ordinary usage for his strict syntactic standard of identity and authenticity. But is there really reason to fear this remote, mere logical, possibility? And thus need we depart so sharply from our ordinary critical practices in order to safeguard against it? I hardly think so. We need criteria of work-identity and authenticity to guard against real or plausible threats, not mere logically possible ones. And one can hardly imagine confusing "Lycidas" with "Jack and Jill". But Goodman, contemptuous of common sense and distrusting ordinary critical practice with its reliance on such vague notions as meaning and aesthetic properties, insists that only his precise syntactic definition of the constitutive properties of the work will adequately ensure the preservation of its identity.

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[46] Goodman, Languages of Art, p. 120n.

[47] Ibid., pp. 186-87.

Now in evaluating a preservative, we should, I think, take into account the value of what it succeeds in preserving. For instance, a preservative for canned peaches, though it may preserve in excellent condition the shape and colour of the fruit, will not be a good or even satisfactory preservative if it does not preserve the flavour. Likewise, with the work of literature, we desire a preservative definition or theory that preserves what we want to preserve in a work's identity. Goodman's theory fails to do this; the work which it preserves is not really worth the cost of preserving. Established critical practice better preserves literary works, or to be perhaps more accurate, preserves better works. Goodman's preservative definition fails in two different directions: it is both too strict and too slack.

Goodman's definition of work-identity is much too strict in ruling out all copies and performances which have one wrong letter, word, or punctuation mark. Such minor misprints or mispronunciations should not be thought of as automatically violating the work's identity, especially since in many cases we even recognize what the errant letters or words should be.[48]

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[48] Indeed the author's original defining text may itself have obvious misprints or misspellings which need correction in later editions and performances of the work.

More importantly, the strictness of Goodman's definition has the ironic result of making the literary work's identity extremely fragile. Its identity is violated by and cannot suffer the slightest textual variation, not even an obvious misprint; and this involves a real and not merely logically possible threat to work-preservation. We can easily imagine the original text of a work being supplanted by a syntactically variant text, where due to the latter's superiority (e.g., in spelling) the first text is forgotten. By Goodman's theory, this work of literature has been lost through the loss of its original, though less satisfactory, text.

Thus, Goodman's rigidly precise criterion of identity can readily preserve a literary work right out of existence. But not only is the work he defines too fragile, it is also too inaccessible. It cannot be read or appreciated in any form except in its original language and original syntax. We cannot read the Odyssey except in its original Greek text, if indeed we have it; and we cannot truly read or study Shakespeare in an English text with modernized spelling. To define a work that cannot in principle be translated is to define too inaccessible a work. We want at least most of our literary works to maintain their identity through translation.

Goodman has more recently defended the strictness of his theory by arguing that his definition of work-identity and authenticity is not descriptive of the ordinary but rather of the ideal.[49] However, this claim is unconvincing, for the works defined by Goodman are hardly ideal. And this is not merely due to too much strictness, but also because his definition is also in a different way much too loose and permissive, much more so than ordinary usage, in accepting certain questionable performances as genuine manifestations of given works. And though the 'ideal' may justify strictness, fragility, and inaccessibility, it cannot at the same time tolerate over-permissive slackness.

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[49] Goodman, Problems and Projects, p. 135.

Goodman's purely syntactic definition of work-identity and authenticity cannot help but be too slack. By altogether excluding meaning and aesthetic properties from the notions of identity and authenticity, his theory allows for completely improper readings of the text, indeed interpretative travesties of the work, to count as perfectly authentic performances of the work. An ironic or mocking reading of a sincere love poem or devotional poem may satisfy the syntactic standard and thus, for Goodman, count as perfectly authentic instances of the works in question. Yet surely we do not, nor should we wish to, treat such readings or performances as authentic manifestations, but rather regard them as obvious distortions, mockeries, or parodies of such works. This is because we typically treat meaning and aesthetic properties as important factors of a work's identity, yet such properties form no part of the identity of the work defined by Goodman. His definitions thus hardly define the ideal. The kind of work and authentic performance his syntactic standard defines and preserves is not really worth preserving.

Aside from its inadequacies as a standard for judging the authenticity of performances of a given text, Goodman's definition of work-identity is helpless as a standard for determining the authenticity of rival texts of a work of literature, of deciding, for example, whether the folio or second quarto text of Hamlet is more authentic. The problem of the relative or comparative authenticity of rival texts is a very important critical problem, but the syntactic standard can only treat cases where there is a unique, available, definitive text. Yet frequently we have no such text, and with some works there may never have been one. Not only is Goodman's theory ill-equipped to handle the problem of rival texts, it is logically compelled to deny there is a problem, since different texts must be, by definition, texts of different works. But we surely cannot deny that this problem exists and that it is often fruitfully handled by literary critics who employ criteria of identity and authenticity other than purely syntactic ones. These criteria would appear to include aesthetic and semantic criteria as well as historical.

Given its failure as a standard of authenticity, does Goodman's definition compensate by providing the second desideratum of a definition of work-identity, i.e., a better understanding of the work through the determination of its constitutive or important properties? Hardly. For when we inquire into the identity of a particular literary work to enrich our understanding of it, we are not typically inquiring into the exact syntactic make-up of its text, but rather into the work's meaning, imagery, plot, and aesthetic properties. When we want to know the difference between Goethe's Faust and Mann's Doctor Faustus, we will not be satisfied by the answer that the text is different. Nor is this dissatisfaction allayed by pointing to the innumberable textual differences in these works. Thus, even if the syntactic standard were adequate for identifying authentic manifestations of a literary work, it surely does not seem to provide an adequate definition or understanding of the work it identifies. Syntactic textual identity is at best a criterion or test for identifying the work, but not a definition of the work's identity.[50]

The syntactic definition of the literary work's identity, as represented by Goodman's theory, thus fails to achieve either of the two major aims that motivate attempts to define the work's identity. But not only does Goodman's syntactic approach fail to provide an adequate definition of work-identity, it also fails to provide an adequate philosophical theory of work-identity, an account of identity which will account for our practices of individuating different literary

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50. As Max Black points out, there is surely a difference between even an adequate test for identifying something and the identity of the thing so identified. A particular man may be adequately identified by an identity number or by his fingerprints, yet neither we would say adequately defines or describes his identity. (M. Black, "Review Article: The Structure of Symbol Systems", Linguistic Inquiry, vol. 2, 1971, pp. 534-35). It is easy to understand how confusion between such definitions may arise, since a satisfactory definition of something's identity should provide an adequate means of identifying it. But the opposite, we see, does not hold.

manifestations as the same work of literature and for our judgments of the authenticity of alleged manifestations of given literary works.[51] Goodman's theory cannot possibly account for them, since, as we saw, it cannot accommodate or conform to them. Thus, the theories of perceptual, experiential, semantic, and syntactic identity have all been seen to be inadequate to the very complex identity of the literary work. Before concluding by suggesting a better approach to work-identity, I would like to point to three basic methodological features which seem to underlie and vitiate the theories I have so far considered, particularly Goodman's. Exposing these basic errors should help guide us toward a more satisfactory view of the literary work's identity.

3. The first unsound methodological principle which the theories I criticized seem to share is the use of a single, exclusive criterion to determine or account for the literary work's identity. We saw that Richards and Osborne treated and defined work-identity by an exclusive standard — experience

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51. It is worth noting that the syntactic approach to work-identity has also been rejected by jurists in their treatment of copyright. They recognize that it is essential to the protection of literary property that copyright "cannot be limited literally to the text, else a plagiarist would escape by immaterial variation." (See B. Kaplan and R.S. Brown, Cases on Copyright, New York, 1966, p. 247). It is moreover interesting that not only can a syntactically variant text violate a copyright, but a syntactically identical text need not, if it is not copied from the protected text. Indeed, there can even be a plurality of valid copyrights of syntactically identical works. (See ibid., p. 172). Rather than the standard of syntactic identity, jurists seem to favour the common formula or pattern account of work-identity which I advocated earlier. (See ibid., pp. 247-48). The pattern can be extended to and is therefore protected in adaptations of the work to other media.

or perception. This resulted in the unacceptable impossibility of different experiences or perceptions of the same work, since the work was defined and individuated only in terms of this single experiential or perceptual aspect. Similar problems arise when work-identity is treated solely in terms of identity of meaning (where performances that differ in meaning cannot be manifestations of the same work) or when identity is defined by the exclusive syntactic standard which accommodates neither the variant texts nor translations of a literary work.

In our chapter on the literary work's ontological status, we saw that a work has many different aspects which do not even fall under one and the same traditional ontological category. Given this complexity, it seems very unlikely that literary works may be adequately identified and individuated by a single criterion, relating essentially to but one aspect of the work. It seems absurd to force oneself to adopt for all literary works in all contexts only one criterion among the many experiential, perceptual, syntactic, semantic, historical, and aesthetic criteria that may be relevant. We should not feel obliged like Goodman to deny the relevance of aesthetic properties for identity and authenticity simply because we accept the relevance of syntactic criteria. We should instead recognize that we employ a variety of criteria in our actual judgments of identity and authenticity, and that there is nothing wrong in this, except perhaps its frustration of an unreasonable desire for simplicity. Indeed, given the general ontological complexity of the literary work as well as the specific complexities of particular works that practicing critics reveal to us, we should realize that only a complex network of criteria can do justice to the identity of the literary work and can account for our practices of individuation and judgments of authenticity.

The second dangerous methodological feature displayed by the theories I have criticized is the rigid and premature closure of the concept of the particular work through its being strictly and inflexibly defined by necessary and sufficient conditions. The work's identity is once and for all given and rigidly defined and thus cannot suffer even the slightest modification or development. The identity of the particular work and the authenticity of its manifestations are fully and finally defined by one particular experience, set of perceptions, meaning, or text; and thus whatever departs from or is not contained in that definition is forever to be excluded from the work proper. Depending on the type of strict definition[52] we maintain, we get the absurd consequence that there can be no new experience or perception of a given work, or that no new meaning can be properly given to the work, or that the work can suffer no change in text. But it is a critical commonplace that frequently the same literary work has, over the ages, been seen or experienced in new ways, or has taken on new meanings, or has undergone textual changes. Moreover, even if such developments were the rare exception rather than the rule, one should still want to keep the concept of the particular work open, so that it could accommodate such change were it to occur.

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[52] Here, and frequently later in this chapter, I use the expression "strict definition" and cognate expressions to convey the notion of definition by necessary and sufficient conditions.

The concepts of particular works of literature, like the concept of the literary work, are essentially empirical, open-textured concepts; and therefore cannot be correctly defined by strict definition, i.e., necessary and sufficient conditions of application. To insist on closing these concepts by defining the necessary and sufficient properties of particular works is thus to expose oneself to obvious difficulties. Taking Goodman's definition, for example, we are forced to deny that the work's text can be modified or revised, even by the author, and are forced to insist that the growth and evolution of a literary work in the oral tradition is a conceptual impossibility. Given the essentially creative nature of literary art (which includes also creative interpretative performance) and the creativity of some of its most compelling critics, we must be careful not to be caught with our concepts closed.

Goodman's theory and to a certain extent also the other theories of work-identity I criticized seem to be vitiated by a third fundamental mistake. They tend to treat the authenticity of manifestations as a simple and categorical "yes or no" affair. Either an alleged copy or performance is authentic, and then it is perfectly authentic, or it is simply inauthentic and not really a manifestation of the given work. In other words, these theories do not account for or tolerate degrees of authenticity. With Goodman, for example, a syntactically correct copy or reading of the definitive text constitutes all of what is respectively required of an authentic copy or performance. Nothing less, but also nothing more, is demanded. Thus, though one syntactically correct reading be an interpretative travesty and a second instead excel in interpretative fidelity, both performances of the work, for Goodman, must be perfectly and hence equally authentic, since they both fully meet the syntactic standard. Moreover, a third performance differing from the second only in the omission of a single insignificant syllable would, of course, be completely inauthentic, since it did not fully meet the syntactic standard of authenticity. Indeed, for Goodman, it would be an instance of a different work altogether. The same sort of disregard or intolerance of degrees of authenticity can, I think, be found in the theories of Richards and Osborne, though they are more concerned with the authenticity of experience and perception than authenticity of manifestation.[53]

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[53] For Richards, if the reader's experience varies slightly beyond the permitted limit of variance from the author's defining experience, the reader simply has not read or experienced the work in question. (See Richards, op. cit., pp. 178, 163). For Osborne, if the reader has not actualized exactly the same "specific set of perceptions" as those defining the work, he has actualized and perceived a different work. If authenticity of manifestation is regarded by them as simply a question of whether the manifestation can or cannot produce the authentic experience or perception, then it too seems to be a categorical issue.

However, even a short glance at our critical needs and practices clearly shows that this sort of categorical, 'all or nothing' approach is entirely wrong and unsuitable to our actual judgments of authenticity. It is a critical commonplace that of the many performances and copies of a work which are accepted as authentic, some are more authentic than others, better capturing or conveying the given work's identity. In confronting a performance of a poem or a variant text or translation of a given literary work, our judgments are more often the grading of comparative authenticity than the categorical decision of authentic or inauthentic. In the somewhat analogous arts of music and drama, the existence of degrees of authenticity of performance is perhaps more obvious, but judgments of relative authenticity are also made with respect to different readings or performances of given literary works. But even leaving performance aside, we cannot help but recognize the importance of the notion of relative authenticity in literary criticism. Among the rival texts of the same work of literature, some text or texts are held to be more authentic than others. The second quarto text of _Hamlet_ is now regarded as more authentic than the folio text, while both are held more authentic than the first quarto. Considerable critical effort is often spent on determining the relative authenticity of rival texts of a work. Wilson wrote two volumes on _Hamlet_'s texts,[54] and Greg devoted two books to showing that the A text of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus is less authentic than the B text and that Greg's reconstructed text is more authentic than either.[55] Yet for ordinary purposes of appreciation and even for most critical purposes, we would regard a copy of any of these three texts as a genuine manifestation of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, and not even Greg would hold that the less authentic texts are not texts of the work but instances of other works.

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[54] J.D. Wilson, _The Manuscript of Shakespeare's "Hamlet"_, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1934.

Clearly, then, judgments of relative authenticity are an important aspect of literary criticism; and they are made not only with respect to early works which lack a clearly authentic manuscript or first edition. Authorial revisions of a modern work present similar problems, where variant texts clearly come from the author and are held authentic but where critics debate as to which is more authentic and better captures the essence of the work. The notion of comparative authenticity is again important in judging translation, where the critic's job is typically to grade the fidelity or authenticity of the translation rather than categorically pronounce whether or not it is a manifestation of the work it translates. Finally, we may note that even different editions of the very same text admit of degrees of authenticity. For example, an edition of Alice in Wonderland or Songs of Innocence and Experience which includes the appropriate illustrations will be regarded as more authentic, more reflective of the work's identity, than editions which contain the same text but lack the illustrations.

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[55] W. Greg, Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus", Oxford, 1950; and W. Greg (ed.), The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, Oxford, 1950.

Thus, we cannot deny the importance of relative or comparative authenticity in literary criticism, and theories of the literary work's identity which do not allow or account for it are doomed to inadequacy. The intolerance of relative authenticity which seems to plague the theories I have criticized appears to be a direct consequence of their defining the work's identity in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, conditions which must be met fully and hence equally by all manifestations (or experiences or perceptions) that are authentic and belong to the work in question. This unacceptable apparent consequence should make us wary of approaching work-identity with such strict definitions in mind. And the premature closure that such definitions entail should convince us that theories which aim at or issue in definitions of this sort are unsuitable for determining or accounting for the identity of the literary work and the authenticity of its manifestations. Similarly, we have learned to be wary of theories and definitions which rely exclusively on one simple defining criterion or aspect of the literary work. With these basic methodological lessons learned, let us try to suggest an alternative approach to the determination of the literary work's identity and the authenticity of its manifestations.

## IV

1. In suggesting an alternative approach to the identity of the literary work, I do not intend to offer a theory leading toward a strict general definition of the literary work's constitutive properties which, in turn, provides a clear standard of authenticity, a definition and standard that can be applied to all literary works in all ordinary and critical contexts. This is not simply due to personal incompetence, but because I believe and hope to have shown that definitions of this sort cannot in principle be adequate. I have argued earlier that determining the literary work's identity and the authenticity of its manifestations is best achieved not by meta-critical theory but by detailed practical criticism of individual works, not by general definition but by piecemeal analysis of particular works and their manifestations. The various critics of Hamlet have told us far more about the identity of this work than any mere literary theorist could. It is they who reveal and determine what are the constitutive features and properties of the work and what should count as or be required of its authentic manifestations.

However, it is unlikely that even practical criticism will issue in adequate strict definitions of the identity of particular literary works, since their identity is often essentially contested by critics. Not only what is central to Hamlet but what actually happens in Hamlet is hotly contested. And though Hamlet may be a particularly controversi work, countless other works similarly give rise to heated and apparently irresolvable debate as to their true meaning, important features, essential tone, etc. Most critics have come to accept that there can be no one exhaustive, final interpretation of a literary work, no complete and absolute account of all its meanings and aesthetic properties. One therefore wonders why literary theorists and aestheticians have been slow to draw the conclusion that there can be no absolute, exhaustive definition of the work's identity, a definition of the work's necessary and sufficient properties which are required of any authentic manifestation of it.

The philosopher, then, should abjure the task of defining work-identity and authenticity, but he need not therefore fear redundancy with respect to the problem of the identity of the literary work. Not only is he left with the job of pointing out the errors of philosophers who have wrongly undertaken the task of strictly defining work-identity and authenticity; he also has the role of determining what type of definition and criteria would in principle be suitable to our judgments of identity and authenticity. Though he cannot define work-identity or define the exact content of the concept of a particular work, he can clarify what sort of concept it is, what its logical structure is, and thus how its content should be defined or specified. Similarly, though he cannot provide a particular criterion or set of criteria for judging authenticity, he can perhaps determine the logical status of such criteria and how they must function to accommodate our critical needs and judgments.

Our philosophical aim, then, is to determine how the identity and authenticity of literary works may be defined or specified, and to do this by determining what sort of concept is the concept of the particular work, e.g., the concept of Hamlet, Moby Dick, etc. Our philosophical investigations have already provided some negative conclusions on these matters. We have seen that identity and authenticity do not seem definable by any simple, exclusive standard that can be applied to all works and manifestations in all contexts. We have seen that we cannot adequately define work-identity in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions which would prematurely close the concept of a particular work of literature. Similarly we have seen that we do not and should not strictly define or judge authenticity in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions which would make authenticity an absolute, categorical issue and not allow for judgments of comparative authenticity. Finally, we have seen that definitions and standards of authenticity cannot be regarded as in any way final and incontestable, since the identity, true nature, or constitutive properties of the literary work are, typically, essentially contested.

These negative findings might be developed into more positive conclusions: namely, that the literary work's identity and authenticity are governed by a complex and open set of criteria and are essentially contestable and context dependent. The concept of the particular work of literature is thus to be regarded as an open, complex, gradable, and essentially contestable range concept, and its content should consequently be defined or specified not by a strict definition of necessary and sufficient conditions but rather by a range definition or pattern of indication.

The term "range concept" I adopt from Max Black,[56] though the notion of such concepts which are open, vague, and not governed by necessary and sufficient conditions has been advanced by several philosophers. Range concepts, then, are concepts which cannot be rigidly or precisely defined by any single or simple set of necessary and sufficient properties or conditions of application. Instead, as Black points out, the criteria for application are "very numerous, admit of variation in the degree to which they are met, and no simple conjunctive or disjunctive combination of them is both necessary and sufficient."[57] Moreover, these various criteria which admit of degrees of satisfaction also vary in their weight or importance for application of the concept. Range concepts thus do not present us with a clearly defined, sharply demarcated class of instances which must satisfy the defining conditions fully and hence equally, but rather with a complex range or network of instances which extend from

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56. See M. Black, "Definition, Presupposition, and Assertion", in Problems of Analysis, London, 1954. Black does not actually use the term "range concept" here, but it is implied by his coinage and use of the cognate terms, "range word", "range term", "range definition". For a treatment of such concepts that somewhat resembles range definition, see Kaplan's procedure of "indication". (A. Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry, San Francisco, 1964, pp. 73-76.)

57. Black, "Definition, Presupposition, and Assertion", p. 28.

the clearest, most authentic or paradigmatic instances of the concept to the less standard or authentic, and finally to the borderline cases of application of the concept. To define a range concept or term we cannot offer necessary and sufficient conditions, since such criteria would not accommodate the complexity and continuous variability of the concept's application. Instead, we specify the content of a range concept or define a range term by presenting and describing one or more paradigms, indicating and describing (at least some of) the group of weighted criteria or "constitutive factors" which govern application, and by indicating "how variations in the constitutive factors determine the degree of 'distance' from the various paradigms."[58]

Even from this brief account of range concepts and their definition, it should be clear that the definition of particular literary works, the determination of their identity and the authenticity of their manifestations, should be approached in such a manner. But let us try to bring out the advantages of the 'range' approach to work-identity and authenticity in more detail. First, it accounts for the variety of criteria employed in determining work-identity and authenticity: syntactic, semantic, perceptual, etc. And it also accounts for the fact that different criteria may have different weight. For instance, in a poem by Cummings typographical spacing may be a criterion of identity and authenticity, but a far less important one than, say, word meaning.[59] Similarly, we may regard aesthetic value as a constitutive factor of Gray's Elegy; yet syntactic and semantic criteria may outweigh it, so that a poor reading of the work, though low in aesthetic value, may still count as authentic. But such a reading will, of course, be less authentic than a good reading of the poem which satisfies the other criteria to the same degree.

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[58] Black, "Definition, Presupposition, and Assertion", pp. 29-30.

This points to a second important advantage in treating the concept of a particular work as a range concept — doing so accounts for our judgments of comparative authenticity. We saw that of the many performances and written texts of a given literary work, some are held to be more authentic than others. These differing degrees of authenticity can be explained in terms of the differently weighted criteria which themselves admit of various degrees of satisfaction. The more and more weighty criteria satisfied and the more they are satisfied, the more authentic will be the performance or written text. Range concepts are essentially gradable concepts, extending continuously from the paradigmatic or most authentic to the borderline cases, and thus admirably accommodate the different degrees of authenticity of a

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59. One may be tempted to generalize that oral criteria are more significant than visual criteria and that criteria of lexical meaning are more important than oral ones. But each work of literature has its own specific make-up and relative weights of criteria. For this reason, only a piecemeal critical approach rather than a general philosophical rule is suitable for determining a literary work's identity.

literary work's manifestations.

By treating authenticity as gradable rather than absolute, we also appear to provide an escape from Goodman's argument against the authenticity of manifestations that vary from the standard text by a single word, letter, or punctuation mark. For now, though a performance or copy B which differs from the authentic performance or copy of Gray's Elegy, A, by merely erring in one word, may still be considered a genuine performance or copy of the work, it will not be considered as authentic as A, assuming again that A at least equals B in all other criteria of authenticity. Since B is not the equal of A in authenticity, we have no relation of strict equality or identity and thus no need to fear from the transitivity of identity and the metamorphosis it can yield in a series of one word errors. Thus, if we take such a series, where each successive performance or copy has one less correct word than the previous one, all other things being equal, the less right words the less authentic the performance or copy will be until it would not be regarded as an acceptable manifestation of the work.

One is tempted here to ask at what particular point or degree on the scale of authenticity do we draw the line between authentic and inauthentic manifestations of Gray's Elegy, between what counts as the work and what does not. But the whole point of the gradable, open range concept is that we do not have to draw the line precisely at a particular degree, nor do we necessarily want to draw such a line. For such concepts function quite adequately without having any precise boundaries. As Wittgenstein remarks:

> "We do not know the boundaries because none have been drawn. To repeat, we can draw a boundary — for a special purpose. Does it take that to make the concept usable? Not at all. (Except for that special purpose.)"60

Now in our dealings with literary works of art, we have many different purposes which in turn suggest different boundaries as to what degree of authenticity is required of authentic or acceptable manifestations of the work. This phenomenon was reflected in the fact that our judgments of identity and authenticity are often context dependent, dependent on our current needs and aims. Thus, for the average student or layman wanting an acquaintance with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales a modernized edition of the work may be regarded as sufficiently authentic, while for the purposes of the Chaucerian scholar only an authenticated Middle English text of the work would count as sufficiently authentic. Depending on the critical context, translations, modernizations, adaptations, and abridgements will be judged authentic or inauthentic manifestations of the works they claim to render. And again, depending on the context, certain poems and stories will be judged and treated as parts of larger literary works or instead as independent literary works in their own right. Since our concepts of particular literary works are range concepts having no clear and rigid boundaries

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60. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Oxford, 1968, p. 33.

but rather blurred edges and vague contours, they allow us to draw different boundaries, make different applications of the concepts, in different contexts.

Nor are we limited in these contexts to either categorically applying the concept and asserting identity or making a relative judgment of authenticity. There are other possibilities besides authentic or inauthentic and more or less authentic. Besides gradability of variance from the paradigmatically authentic, there are recognized categories of variance, e.g., translation, which are so well established that we frequently do not trouble ourselves with questions like whether a translation of the work is or is not the work, or is more or less the work. It is simply a translation of the work and that is that.

The fact that range concepts are governed by different and differently weighted criteria and have blurred edges also accounts for the fact that the concepts of particular literary works, their identity, and the authenticity of their manifestations are essentially contestable. Controversy is apt to arise over the choice of paradigms (e.g., as a result of authorial revision or the survival of rival manuscripts), over the validity and relative weight of the different criteria (e.g., is the paraphrasable meaning, imagery, or oral quality more important in a given poem?), and finally over the degree and dimensions in which manifestations may deviate from the paradigms and still be authentic. Moreover, the vague contours and open texture of the range concept allow for the openness and flexibility required of the concept of a particular literary work so that it can accomodate for the modification or evolution of the work's identity as a result of authorial revision, innovative performance, and creative critical interpretation.

Treating the concept of the particular literary work as a range concept is also advantageous in that it suits and supports a general theory of work-identity which seemed much more promising, though less precise, than the others I considered. I had suggested earlier that the identity of the work of literature might be adequately explained in terms of a basic verbal pattern or formula. Different literary manifestations could be held to be the same work of literature if they are to be regarded as manifesting or complying with the same literary formula. Moreover, a manifestation's authenticity could be judged in terms of its compliance with the formula or pattern that is identified with the work, and there may be different degrees of compliance and hence authenticity. This view seems to meet the two basic requirements for a philosophical theory of work-identity: explanation of the sense in which there is identity among the work's different manifestations, and explanation of our judgments of authenticity of manifestations. Moreover, this view is in accord with our ontological conclusion that the literary work is a verbal formula.

The only problem with this account of identity seemed to be that the precise nature or make-up of the verbal formula and the exact rules or limits of compliance were left extremely vague and open and seemed to defy clear formulation. But now we see that this is not a flaw in the theory, but merely part and parcel of the openness, vagueness, and contestability of the identity of the work of literature. The concept of a particular literary formula should be seen as a complex, open, gradable, and essentially contestable range concept, like the concept of the particular literary work which it is invoked to analyze. A literary formula or work involves a range of different formulations or patterns which present in somewhat different ways and in differing degrees of adequacy the same basic verbal formula or pattern,[61] whose 'true nature' is open to change and may be contested. Our decision as to what constitutes being manifestations of the same formula or being an authentic manifestation of a given formula will again tend to be context dependent, varying with our critical needs and purposes.

Finally, the view that the concept of the particular work of literature is a complex, open, gradable, and contestable range concept has the advantage of treating works of literature in a manner similar to works of music and drama, which share the same problematic multiple identity and unlimited reproducibility of authentic manifestations. For the concepts of particular works of music and drama are even more clearly open, gradable, and contestable range concepts with a very complex network of criteria of identity and authenticity. Among the many authentic performances of Macbeth there are different degrees of authenticity, and such authenticity depends not only on that of the script and how it is read, but also on such criteria as gesture, movement, scenery, lighting, costume, etc. The comparative authenticity of rival performances is, of course, contested. Perhaps the complex, open nature of dramatic and musical works is more obvious than that of literary works because it is so often concretely demonstrated in innovative performance. In the work of literature, where performance plays a more minor role and the written text a consequently greater one, it is far easier to suppose that the work's identity can be adequately strictly defined in terms of that text.

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[61] This pattern approach to work-identity has not only been advanced by jurists, but has been proposed, though with respect to musical rather than literary works, by K. Walton (op. cit., p. 15) who describes the musical work "as a hierarchy of sound-patterns".

However, we have seen that such strict definition of identity is inadequate and methodologically misguided, one important reason for its inadequacy being the open texture of the identity of the literary work. Indeed it is so open that it may appear to include objects that transcend the realm of the merely literary. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one is somewhat reluctant to deny that certain faithful adaptations of a literary work in a new medium (e.g., a film or dramatic performance) may count as genuine manifestations of the work.[62] Even here, the literary work's identity does not seem clearly or rigidly bound.

One must not, however, confuse a concept's openness with emptiness, nor its being contested with being confused and chaotic. Works of literature have a very rich identity, though perhaps not a wholly static one; and this identity may be specified or described though not strictly and exhaustively defined. It is, I think, best specified or defined through the critic's analysis of the work. By his description of its constitutive elements, structure, and aesthetic properties, by his interpretation of its themes, images, and meaning, and by his evaluation of its aesthetic merit (for value too may form part of the identity of a work), the critic defines the literary work's identity. Through his analysis of the work, through his assessment of its important qualities, the critic is often able to determine which of two rival texts is more authentic and which of two translations better captures the identity of the work.

Thus, it is understandable that when we want to learn about the identity of a particular literary work of art, what really constitutes it, what it is all about, we consult the interpreting and evaluating critic, not the philosopher. It remains, however, for the philosopher to analyze the logic of the critic's interpretation and evaluation, and this task provides the program for the next two chapters.

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[62] In such cases, one might say that the film complies with the given literary formula but goes beyond it in non-literary aspects, or instead simply that the film roughly complies with it. Of course, the question of what are the constitutive or individuating properties of a given literary formula is an open and complex critical question. They may include historical properties (e.g., author, date of composition) as well as syntactic, semantic, and aesthetic properties, etc.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# THE LOGIC OF INTERPRETATION

## I

One of the more important and controversial problems in contemporary analytic aesthetics concerns the logic of critical interpretation. There appear to be at least two (and perhaps three) distinguishable, though closely related, aspects to the problem. The first concerns the logical status of interpretative statements. Do such statements express propositions with truth value or do they merely express decisions or recommendations? If the former, are these propositions really about the work itself or only about the critic's way of seeing it? Again, if interpretations do express propositions about the work itself, are they in principle determinable as true or false, or only at best, as plausible or implausible?

Critics typically support their interpretations with reasons. The second aspect of our problem thus concerns the logical role of these reasons. Do they function as real evidence logically supporting an interpretative conclusion, or are they but rhetorical devices to persuade the reader to adopt the critic's point of view? Perhaps they are but further descriptions of the critic's experience of the work, or are they tools for focusing attention on something or for creating a desired perception in the reader? The third aspect, intimately connected with the second, concerns the general form or character of interpretative argument. If these arguments are indeed logical, is their logic typically inductive, deductive, or rather something entirely different?

In their attempt to determine the logic of interpretation, analytic philosophers of art have propounded very different views regarding these three aspects of the problem, often without distinguishing between them. It should be stressed that for these philosophers the attempt to determine the logic of interpretation is primarily an analytic or descriptive matter, not a normative or legislative one.[1] Their aim is to analyze the logic actually employed in interpretation, not to recommend a logic that should be employed; they claim to describe what qualified critics actually do in interpreting, not to prescribe what they should do. Yet when we survey the results of their analyses, we find a perplexingly wide divergence of views. Aestheticians hotly debate which of these analyses of interpretative logic is the correct one, but seem to be getting no closer to the solution of this question.

I believe that the reason for this is that the question itself is spurious. There is no one logic of interpretation, but rather many logics of interpretation. Different critics play different interpretative 'games' with different sets of rules or 'logics' implicit in the games they practice. These different games reflect and serve different ends, and the diversity of these games and their variant logics is concealed by the fact that they are not explicitly formulated or demarcated and tend somewhat to overlap. The diversity of interpretative logics is further concealed by their sharing much the same terms (e.g., "the poem", "the right interpretation"), though using them in often very different senses. I maintain, then, that the cause for the divergence of analyses of interpretative logic is that they are analyzing different logics. They take as their objects different interpretative games.

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[1] Some analytic aestheticians do, however, make critical recommendations; e.g., Beardsley, whose 'intentional fallacy' is a case of legislating against authorial intention as a goal or standard of criticism. See M.C. Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, Detroit, 1973. See also W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy", Sewanee Review, vol. 54, 1946.

In this chapter I would like to substantiate this claim by briefly surveying some of the major positions on the logic of interpretation and pointing to the different critical games which they respectively portray. By so demonstrating that critical interpretation is not a univocal concept, I would like to argue that the philosopher, as analyst, is not justified in rejecting interpretative games which do not fit his model on the grounds that they are not 'true' interpretation or that they do not satisfy the 'true' or 'proper' ends of interpretation. For the true nature and ends of interpretation are essentially contested by critics, and thus to determine such questions is to legislate or recommend and not to analyze.

One final introductory remark is in order. Philosophical analyses of critical interpretations might themselves be illuminatingly compared to the interpretations they analyze. For as the critic interprets the meaning and import of the original work of literature, so the aesthetician must interpret the interpreting critic's remarks. As the same work or line of poetry may be taken a number of ways, so the same critical interpretation or remark may sometimes be taken or interpreted differently. As the interpreting critic may sometimes assert that a line has a meaning other than that the author intended, so the interpreting meta-critic sometimes asserts that a critical remark has a logical status different from that the critic intended or thought it to have. We might, with hesitation, continue this analogy to suggest that as there seems little likelihood that we shall reach a simple, final, and unchallengeable interpretation of a complex work of literature, there is not much hope that we shall reach a simple, final, and unchallengeable interpretation of interpretation.

## II

What is the logical status of interpretative statements? There seem to be three major positions on this issue which we may characterize as descriptivism, prescriptivism, and performativism. To make our comparison of them more convenient let us adopt the formula "W is I" as representing a typical interpretative statement (e.g., "Measure for Measure is allegorical", "Hamlet is a study of a vacillating, melancholy hero"); where "W" is a variable whose values are works of literature, and "I" is a variable whose values are interpretative predicates about works of literature. We can then portray and contrast these three interpretative positions by seeing how they differently analyze this formula.

(a) Descriptivism treats interpretative statements as expressing propositions. But there are many brands of descriptivism which find very different propositions in the same typical interpretative statement. The subjectivist construes "W is I" as "W is I to me". Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater are among the most famous proponents of this theory of interpretation, and many critics have indeed practiced interpretation in accordance with it. These critics, who include Pater, Swinburne, Huneker, and Symons, have been appropriately labelled impressionist critics, since their interpretative assertions concern their impression of the work.[2] Here, if the critic is sincere, his interpretation will be true, but such truth may be aesthetically trivial in the sense that it is truth about the work of art's effect on the critic and not about the work itself. The value of such interpretation is seen not in its literal truth but in the beauty and richness of experience it describes and affords its reader. An interpretation is evaluated much in the same way as the work it interprets is evaluated, and we thus should view, to borrow Wilde's phrase, "the critic as artist".

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[2] Discussion of these impressionist critics can be found in T.S. Eliot's "The Perfect Critic, in F. Kermode (ed.) Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, London, 1975; and in H. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, London, 1955, pp. 318-20.

Subjectivism has its appeal. Conflicting interpretative statements about a work of literature and our critical tolerance of them are easily explained by the subjectivist position, for certainly a work can be or mean different things to different people. However, it cannot be denied that not all interpreting critics accept or practice according to the subjectivist standard. Many critics rather claim or assume that their interpretative efforts are aimed at Matthew Arnold's non-subjectivist goal, "to see the object as in itself it really is".

Such an ideal is held by the strong descriptivist or absolutist, for whom "W is I" quite simply means "W is I" or "'W is I' is true". Interpretative statements are either true or false, and conflicting interpretations are incompatible and cannot be accepted. The interpreter either correctly describes the true meaning of the work or he is not successful; and the true meaning of the work may be identified with authorial intention (e.g., E.D. Hirsch[3]) or it may not (e.g.,

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[3] E.D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation, New Haven, 1967.

M.C. Beardsley[4]). We may never know or be certain of the true interpretation, but it is there to be known and makes all interpretations which differ from it false. This straightforward view is troubled by the fact that very different interpretations of the same work often strike one as acceptable and, in some sense, valid. Yet, by the absolutist doctrine, only one of them can be true, and the others must therefore be wrong or false.

Because of this problem, several aestheticians have suggested a brand of weak descriptivism which abandons the notion of absolute truth and falsity for the logically weaker notions of plausibility and adequacy. For the weak descriptivist, "W is I" means "'W is I' is (highly or most) plausible" (Margolis[5]) or "'W is I' is (highly or most adequate" (Weitz[6]). It is worth remarking here that both Margolis and Weitz construe interpretative assertions as expressing explanatory hypotheses and not statements of matter of fact, and that both maintain that the plausibility or adequacy of interpretations can be graded, albeit vaguely. It also should be mentioned that these philosophers distinguish interpretation from description, the latter being statement of facts and the former the explanation of these facts. Yet their belief that there are such facts supporting and explained by an interpretation places them in the descriptivist camp.

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[4] Beardsley, op. cit., chapter one.

[5] J. Margolis, "The Logic of Interpretation", in J. Margolis (ed.), Philosophy Looks at the Arts, New York, 1962.

[6] M. Weitz, Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism, London, 1972.

It is noteworthy that both strong and weak descriptivists can and do appeal to differing interpretative procedures in actual critical practice to support their meta-critical models. Thus, Margolis in arguing for his view that interpretations are logically weak and may tolerate each other even when they are non-converging and incompatible cites the following "typical" remark from a book review to justify his position.

> "Too bare a summary cannot do justice to the cogency of Mr. Knox's proofs or to his valuable incidental insights. His interpretations must be welcomed with thanks, provided we do not (as he would doubtless insist we should not) exclude other modes of interpretation."[7]

Beardsley, the absolutist, in attacking Margolis's position and in arguing for the 'intolerability of incompatible interpretations' also brings what he considers typical critical remarks to support his position.

> "I find the critic Samuel Hynes, for example, contrasting the opinions of Clark Emory and Hugh Kenner on the Cantos and adding: 'Obviously, they cannot both be right, if the passage describes an earthly paradise, then it cannot be a perversion of nature.'"[8]

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7. Quoted from J. Margolis, "The Identity of a Work of Art", in F.J. Coleman (ed.), Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics, New York, 1968, p. 39.

8. Beardsley, op. cit., p. 43.

Is Margolis's or Beardsley's citation more typical? Surely we are not to determine this by mere statistics, but there seems to be no other way. Is it not clear that these variant remarks, claimed to be typical, are indeed typical of variant interpretative practices? The logical status of interpretations is thus differently described because not all interpretations have or are meant to have the same logical status. Thus far we have seen only the logical plurality within the descriptivist position, but there are two other general positions which claim to be the model or correct analysis of all interpretation, yet which, I shall maintain merely model, like descriptivism, some of the many interpretative games that critics play.

(b) Prescriptivisim regards interpretative statements not as expressing true or false propositions nor even adequate or inadequate hypotheses, but rather as expressing decisions or recommendations of how to regard the work of literature. The prescriptivist analyzes "W is I" as "W should be seen as I" or "W is to be taken as I". A work of literature may be seen in many different ways and be taken to mean many different things. Witness the vast variety of different views that critics have taken of Hamlet. According to prescriptivism the interpreting critic is recommending which manner of observing or taking the work we should adopt, and his arguments to support his interpretation are attempts to get us to accept this recommendation and see the work as he does. This position is strongly suggested in Wittgenstein's writings on aesthetics and in his notion of aspects, and it would seem to be held by such contemporary aestheticians as Aldrich,[9] Isenberg,[10] and Stevenson[11]. Stevenson, who makes the clearest and most cogent presentation of prescriptivism, argues that interpretative judgments are essentially expressions of 'the critic's decision' of how the work of art should be observed and 'quasi-imperative' recommendations that others should observe or regard the work similarly.

> "Having roughly familiarized himself with all the ways in which a work of art *can* be experienced, a critic must proceed to make a selection from among them - a *decision* about how he is to observe the work in the course of his subsequent appreciation ..."[12]

> "It is the task of a critic not merely to dwell upon an aesthetic surface, but to make up his mind, and to help others make up their minds, *which* aesthetic surface is to be dwelt upon."[13]

For Stevenson, "the critic's 'decision' - the channeling of his sensibilities in which he comes to accept certain ways of observing a work of art, when appreciating it, and to reject others"[14] - introduces the normative or prescriptive character of interpretative judgments. This is because such decisions are motivated and governed by factors that are not merely logical or cognitive. Stevenson admits that critics often give their interpretative statements the air of objective description, but he argues that behind this guise of objectivity, interpretative statements really function as prescriptions or quasi-imperative recommendations. Thus, for example, when the critic makes the interpretative assertion that a work is unified, he is implicitly, but essentially, recommending that we observe it in that way; and our acceptance of this judgment may be compared "with the overtly imperative expression, 'Yes, let's observe it in the way that makes it appear unified'".[15]

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[9] V. Aldrich, *Philosophy of Art*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963.

[10] A. Isenberg, "Critical Communication", in Margolis (ed.), op. cit.

[11] C.L. Stevenson, "Interpretation and Evaluation in Aesthetics", in M. Black (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis*, Ithaca, 1950.

[12] Ibid., p. 357.

[13] Ibid., p. 380.

[14] Ibid., p. 361.

This, then, is the prescriptivist view of interpretation. It can explain the existence and relative tolerance of a variety of interpretations and the challengeability and lack of finality of any one interpretation. It can do so simply by its view that there are many different ways of seeing the work and that an interpretation, i.e., the recommendation of one way, does not logically exclude other ways as false or unprofitable. Critics often debate over which interpretation is better or worse, or even right or wrong; but right and wrong or proper and improper must not be confused here with true and false. For prescriptivism, the critic in asserting that his interpretation is proper or right is essentially asserting that the work of art should be taken or seen as he sees it rather than that it factually is what he describes it to be.

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15. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 374.

The prescriptivist position purports to describe actual interpretative practice and can indeed support itself by appealing to certain remarks of qualified critics which distinctly suggest the prescriptivist view. The prescriptivist tenet that the interpretation a critic propounds is only one of many possible interpretations a work may admit is strongly suggested by one interpreter of Hamlet, F. Fergusson.[16] Fergusson, who argues for his own myth-ritual interpretation of Hamlet, admits that the work can be seen differently from other points of view. Nor do differing interpretations logically exclude or "rule out" each other.

> "It is not necessary to rule out the Eliot-Robertson or the Joycean interpretation, merely because one accepts Mr. Dover Wilson's: on the contrary, the various critics should be taken as Jamesian 'reflectors', each lighting a facet of the whole from his own peculiar angle."[17]

Moreover, all these interpretations which need not be ruled out as false or as distorters rather than reflectors are nevertheless rejected by Fergusson who propounds his own myth-ritual interpretation of Hamlet. Even Weitz, who argues against the prescriptivist view of interpretation, admits that Fergusson's remarks and practice do suggest "the view that critical interpretations are neither true nor false, but invitations on the part of the critic to see the play or some aspect of it in the way the critic proposes in his particular interpretation."[18]

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[16] F. Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre, Princeton, 1943.

[17] Ibid., p. 101.

The second prescriptivist tenet, that the critic is essentially deciding and urging that of the many viable ways of seeing the work his way should be adopted and that the interpretative statement is in this sense normative and quasi-imperative, might seek support from critical remarks like the following, which are not atypical and are made by the renowned critic, F.R. Leavis. Leavis, arguing against the established view of Othello as the tale of a noble hero cunningly undone by a greater villain whose mind and character are as intriguing and crucial as Othello's, surely seems to recommend in normative fashion a way of seeing the play. "We ought not in reading those scenes to be paying so much attention to the intrinsic personal qualities of Iago as to attribute to him tragic interest of this kind."[19] Leavis continues to urge us in a quasi-imperative manner: "And it is plain that what we should see in Iago's prompt success is not so much Iago's diabolical intellect as Othello's readiness to respond."[20] It is perhaps possible to give a non-prescriptivist interpretation of these remarks, but nevertheless such remarks, as they stand here and also in their context, surely suit and support the prescriptivist

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18. Weitz, op. cit., p. 102.

19. F.R. Leavis, "Diabolic Intellect and the Noble Hero", in The Common Pursuit, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1976, p. 138.

20. Ibid., p. 140.

model of interpretation and make it seem that prescriptivism, like descriptivism, is a just account of some interpretative statements.[21]

(c) Performativism holds a somewhat different view of interpretative statements. They are not descriptions or quasi-imperative recommendations but rather performances. "W is I" is construed as "W is rendered I", i.e., not as a proposition but as a portrayal of W in I-fashion.[22] The performativist likens critical interpretation to interpretative performance and asserts that the former, like the latter, is creative in the sense of helping to create and determine the qualities and meaning of the work of art rather than merely revealing them. By this theory, the features and meaning of the work are not just there to be picked out,

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21. It may be argued that if the prescriptivist account is taken for all interpretative statements we seem threatened by an infinite regress. For if "W is I" always means merely "W should be seen as I", what does it mean to see W as I, except to see it as being seen as I, etc. *ad infinitum*. But this argument in no way denies that prescriptivism is correct for much interpretative statement. Moreover, a prescriptivist could perhaps argue that we can escape this regress and fix the meaning of being I by appealing to non-critical contexts where a true meaning or interpretation is granted.

22. This performativism should not be confused with Austin's theory of performatives, especially if we take Austin's original narrower version, which Urmson expounds as superior. (See J.O. Urmson, "Performative Utterances", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 2, 1977.) Austin's performative utterances involved the use of a ritual formula in appropriate circumstances in an act which would not normally count as saying something. Interpretative performativism, however, neither regards interpretative utterances as ritual or wholly conventional formulae nor as characterizable as doing rather than saying something.

described, and listed by the critic, but rather are dependent on interpretation for their determination. The performativist denies the description/interpretation dichotomy, much as many philosophers of science reject the observation/theory dichotomy, for both hold that 'the facts' are themselves theory or interpretation dependent.

As the prescriptivist could explain the widely divergent interpretations of a given work of literature as recommendations to observe the work in different ways, so the performativist can explain this variety of critical interpretation as parallel to that of interpretative performances, none of which is final in the sense of ruling out all others. Moreover, as the prescriptivist may employ the normative terms of right and wrong, correlative to the descriptivist true and false, so the performativist also may characterize or grade interpretations as successful or unsuccessful, convincing or unconvincing.

Though I have encountered no extensive formulation of the performativist position, two eminent aestheticians do profess views which could be characterized as performativist. R. Wollheim, for example, argues that critical interpretation, like interpretative performance, is ineliminable and never final, and he cites Valéry's maxim: "A creator is one who makes others create."[23] Wollheim also argues against the fact/interpretation dichotomy. M. Macdonald[24] presents the most explicit performativist statement, asserting that "criticism and appraisal, too, are more like creation than like demonstration and proof"[25] and "that the task of the critic resembles those of the actor and executant rather than those of the scientist and logician."[26] She denies the fact/interpretation dichotomy, since works of art "are not simple objects whose features can be presented for listing."[27] Interpretation, then, is creative and helps create its object. Indeed, it is ineliminable since the work itself is constituted by its interpretations — is what it is interpreted to be — and cannot exist apart from some interpretation.

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[23] R. Wollheim, Art and its Objects, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1970, p. 103.

> "It is often said that a great artist is reinterpreted in every age and no doubt by some of these interpretations he would be much astonished. Yet even the apparently bizarre interpretations are often illuminating. It seems to follow that interpretation is partly subjective invention ... Certainly, the critic claims to be interpreting the work, not supplying his own fancies. But the work is what it is interpreted to be, though some interpretations may be rejected. There seems to be no work apart from _some_ interpretation."[28]

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[24] M. Macdonald, "Some Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts", in W. Elton (ed.), _Aesthetics and Language_, Oxford, 1954.

[25] Ibid., p. 130.

[26] Ibid., p. 127.

[27] Ibid., p. 126.

[28] Ibid.

There are several critics whose views would support this meta-critical position. H. Gardner,[29] for instance, tells us that we must "allow a work to gather meaning through the ages"[30] and that consequently there can be no "final and infallible interpretation."[31] L. Trilling expresses a similar view, regarding the literary work as a kind of concrescence of various meanings it was held to have over the ages.[32] L. Abercrombie maintains "that anything which may be found in that [work of] art, even if it is only the modern reader who can find it there, may legitimately be taken as its meaning."[33] Finally, we may take Valéry's clearly performativist pronouncements:

> "As for ... interpretation ...: there is no true meaning to a text ... Once published, a text is like an apparatus that anyone may use as he will and according to his ability ..."[34]

All this, of course, is only critical doctrine, but it is no doubt based on the success of creative critical practice. Miss Gardner, for example, cites Coleridge and Bradley as

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29. H. Gardner, The Business of Criticism, Oxford, 1970.

30. Ibid., p. 17.

31. Ibid., p. 51.

32. L. Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, New York, 1950, p. 186.

33. L. Abercrombie, "A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting", Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 16, 1930, p. 21.

34. P. Valéry, The Art of Poetry, D. Folliot (trans.), New York, 1958, p. 152. See also Empson's performativist remarks in W. Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1976, p. 282.

rewarding creative critics.[35]

Moreover, it is not difficult to find performativist elements in the practice of critics who do not claim to be 'creative' in this sense of determining the work rather than revealing it. J. Dover Wilson[36] in his interpretation of Hamlet argues for certain textual emendations which would result in changing the work as we have it in any of its early textual forms, e.g., substituting "sullied" for "solid" or "sallied". His interpretation also involves the insertion of what he considers 'lost' or omitted stage directions; e.g., the 'lost' stage direction giving Hamlet an entry on the inner stage in II, 2, 158 enabling him to overhear Polonius and Claudius plotting the eavesdropping of his talk with Ophelia, and the 'fact' that Claudius does not see the dumb-show because he is talking instead with Polonius or Gertrude. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the validity of Wilson's interpretations are challenged and defended in terms of the success of possible and actual performances embodying them.[37]

The same sort of performative interpretation which seems more to determine than reveal or explain the alleged givens of a work may be seen in M.C. Bradbrook's interpretation of the last soliloquy of Doctor Faustus, where she argues against Empson's reading.

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[35] Gardner, op. cit., pp. 29-30. See also Valéry's tribute to the critic, Alain: "Alain is not very harsh toward my work; I think that he sees and creates in it what I should have wished to do, which is not what I have done, far from it." (Valéry,op. cit., p. 154).

[36] J. Dover Wilson, What Happens in Hamlet, Cambridge, 1935.

[37] See Weitz, op. cit., p. 130.

> "'Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
> I'll burn my books - Ah, Mephistopheles.'
>
> The last is, of course, a scream (and so the reading proposed by Mr. Empson does not stand)."[38]

However, its being a scream is not, of course, a fact in the text which is described or explained by interpretation, but is itself a product of interpretation. The test of such an interpretation would seem to be its success and appeal rather than its truth as description or explanation. Even if it is defended in terms of being consistent or true to the rest of the play, one still seems to be justifying a creative determination on the grounds of harmony rather than justifying a descriptive truth by evidence.

There is more than a grain of truth in performativism, but like descriptivism and prescriptivism it errs by generalization. A roughly faithful model of some interpretative statements will be a distorted theory of all interpretative statements, because interpretative statements often differ significantly in what they logically express or perform.

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[38] M.C. Bradbrook, "Marlowe's Faustus", in W. Farnham (ed.), Twentieth Century Interpretation of Doctor Faustus, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969, p. 22.

## III

As we distinguished three positions on the logical status of interpretative statements, so there seem to be three, though not wholly parallel, positions on the role of reasons in interpretation. The first sees the reasons a critic gives for his interpretation as evidence which logically supports his interpretative hypothesis. Though the hypothesis may not be fully verified as true, it may at least be confirmed as probable, plausible, or adequate by the reasons given in support of it. Thus, though the reasons may be inconclusive, their relation to the interpretative conclusion is seen as a logical relation, reasons having the logical role of evidence.

This view very nicely complements the descriptivist position, and it is thus not surprising that Weitz, Margolis, Beardsley, and Hirsch adopt it. Moreover, I think it is clear that in certain interpretative undertakings reasons do have this role. Historically oriented and especially author-oriented interpretation certainly employs its reasons as confirming evidence. If one's interpretative hypothesis concerns what the author intended by the poem, and for many critics this is the interpretative goal, then facts concerning the historical setting, the conventions and audience of the period, and the life and other writings of the author all may be introduced as evidence which helps to confirm or falsify the particular hypothesis. Even Stevenson, who rejects the view that reasons have this logical role of evidence, still admits that if one sees authorial meaning as the goal of interpretation, one could regard reasons as functioning as evidence in an inductive argument, "each giving to an interpretative conclusion this or that sort of partial confirmation".[39] Thus, for at least one interpretative game, which Stevenson, however, thinks is not worth playing, reasons have a logical role of evidence.

But what then is Stevenson's view of the role of reasons in interpretation? Here, as elsewhere, he is a non-cognitivist, holding that the relation of reasons to an interpretative conclusion is not logical but causal and psychological. The interpretative judgment expresses the critic's decision to observe the work in a particular way; and his reasons for such a decision are not purely cognitive in nature, since in art-appreciation one's aims are not purely cognitive and also since "like any psychological process, the critic's decision has a great many causes"[40], among them "the critic's personal sensibilities".[41] Thus, the relation of critical reasons "to the quasi-imperative judgment they support (which is the same, in essentials, as the relation between knowledge and the decision knowledge guides) is causal rather than logical; hence they 'guide without constraining'."[42]

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39. C.L. Stevenson, "On the Reasons That Can Be Given for the Interpretation of a Poem", in Margolis (ed.), op. cit., p. 124.

40. Stevenson, "Interpretation and Evaluation in Aesthetics", p. 359.

41. Ibid., p. 370.

42. Ibid.

For an example of how reasons seem to function as causes or motives in a not wholly cognitive interpretative decision take the reason James Smith gives for his allegorical interpretation of Doctor Faustus.

> "Recognition of both these allegories, and that they are of complicated rather than simple type, is I think necessary to remove obstacles to the reader's enjoyment. For if it is not made, various absurdities arise which are incompatible with the reputation the play is felt to deserve."[43]

Here one decides or is urged to decide to adopt an allegorical interpretation in order not to diminish one's enjoyment or appreciation of the play. Such a reason far more resembles a motive or cause for taking an interpretative decision than a piece of evidence logically confirming a 'scientific' hypothesis. The presence of a non-scientific, more than cognitive element is obvious in such interpretative moves and does indeed support Stevenson's model. When reasons for an interpretation are so closely related to such motives of increasing the reader's enjoyment, or of making the work richer or more relevant, they do play a more causal and normative role; explaining the motives for a decision and recommending this decision on the basis of these motives.

The third position on the role of reasons might be called perceptualism. According to the perceptualist, interpretative reasons have two different but complementary roles. First, they may function as verbal attempts to focus on or suggest perceptual elements which contribute to the critic's general perception or interpretation of the work. They clarify and articulate the critic's interpretation to the critic himself in terms of further descriptions of aspects of that interpretation. Secondly, the critic may use these perception-focussing reasons as devices to clarify and convey his interpretation to his reader by inducing in the reader the desired view of the work. The interpreting critic is trying to get his reader to perceive the work in a certain way (it may be the true way, or only the right way, or even only an allegedly successful way), and the reasons he gives for his interpretation are devices to induce in the reader the desired perception of the work.

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[43] J. Smith, "Faustus as Allegory", in Farnham, op. cit., p. 27.

Wittgenstein apparently held this view, and a great many contemporary aestheticians maintain it in some form or another: Aldrich,[44] Osborne,[45] Isenberg,[46] and Ziff,[47] to name but a few. G.E. Moore describes Wittgenstein's position as follows:

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[44] Aldrich, op. cit.

[45] Osborne, op. cit.

[46] Isenberg, op. cit.

[47] P. Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism", in Margolis (ed.), op. cit.

> "Reasons, he said, in Aesthetics are 'of the nature of further descriptions': e.g., you can make a person see what Brahms was driving at by showing him lots of different pieces by Brahms, or by comparing him with a contemporary author; and that all Aesthetics does is to draw your attention to a thing, to place things side by side. He said that if, by giving reasons of this sort, you make another person 'see what you see' but it still doesn't appeal to him, that is 'an end' of the discussion."[48]

Here the relation between reasons and interpretative conclusion is not logical, nor is it causal in the sense that the reasons are causes of the critic's particular interpretation. Moreover, it is only the giving of these reasons, and not the reasons themselves, which may be a cause of the reader's accepting the critic's interpretation; for following the given reasons may help the reader to focus on the work so that he sees it as the critic does. An example may help clarify this point. Suppose that in presenting an interpretation of a love poem as harsh and insincere, the critic cites the predominance of voiced plosives and the similarity of its imagery to some bawdy song. Neither the plosives nor the similarity are themselves what cause the reader to perceive the poem as harsh and insincere, but the act of citing these reasons may focus attention on the work in a way that the perception of harshness and insincerity is induced.

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48. G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33", in H. Osborne (ed.), Aesthetics, Oxford, 1972, p. 88. I doubt that all the above cited perceptualists reached their views primarily through Wittgenstein.

Thus, the perceptualist sees the critic's use of reasons in justifying an interpretation not as logically confirming it by evidence, nor as recommending it through the motives which caused it, but simply as perceptually justifying it by creating in the reader the desired perception. Reasons are but "hints and directions for focusing the attention in the very difficult art of exercising and cultivating the skill to perceive."[49] The meaning of the critic's reasons "is 'filled in', 'rounded out' or 'completed' by the act of perception",[50] where the goal is "to induce a sameness of vision, of experienced content."[51] The interpreter's success is to get the reader to assent by bringing him to share the interpreter's perception or experience of the work.

There are critics whose arguments suit the perceptualist position. One aesthetician, John Casey,[52] has argued that Leavis employs such perceptualist reasoning and is consequently a superior critic. Leavis is indeed a master of this technique, and he seems to be aware that he uses it to induce sameness of vision or experienced content.

> "I hoped, by putting in front of them ... my own developed 'coherence of response', to get them to agree (with, no doubt, critical qualifications) that the map, the essential order, of

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49. Osborne, op. cit., p. 320.

50. Isenberg, op. cit., p. 148.

51. Ibid.

52. J. Casey, The Language of Criticism, London, 1966.

> English poetry seen as a whole did, when they interrogated their experience, look like that to them also."[53]

An excellent example of how Leavis tries to induce such sameness of vision in the interpretation of a single work is in his study of Othello[54] which is far too long to present here, but which consists of a series of excerpts from the text, where each passage is preceded by 'focussing instructions' of what we are to look for and see in it.

We have seen three different theories of the role of reasons in interpretation, and there is considerable controversy as to which of them is correct. None, one feels, is entirely convincing, but each seems to have some element of truth. Is it not reasonable to suggest that there are at least three different roles or kinds of reasons in interpretation? There are reasons which function as evidence towards an interpretative conclusion, reasons which are essentially motives or causes in a decision to take and recommend a particular view of the work of art, and reasons (often in the form of further descriptions and comparisons) which function as devices to clarify or induce a particular perception of the work. The diversity of reasons seems to stem from a diversity of interpretative aims. Do we want authorial intention, maximal enjoyment, or articulation and sharing of our own perception of the work?

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[53] F.R. Leavis, "Literary Criticism and Philosophy", in The Common Pursuit, p. 214.

[54] F.R. Leavis, "Diabolic Intellect and the Noble Hero".

Aestheticians often assume that this diversity of aims or functions is somehow misguided, that there must be only one proper aim, task, or object of literary interpretation, that we must choose among the diversity of "possible interpretative tasks or inquiries ... which of them is the proper function of the literary interpreter."[55] But there seem to be no real grounds for this assumption, outside of the equally questionable assumption that criticism is or should be simple and uniform.

Philosophers who seek a simple and uniform analysis of interpretation and critics who regard all but their own aims and practices as invalid might reject variant aims and practices as either 'non-aesthetic', hedonistically unobjective, or unsystematic and 'unscientific'. But one cannot reject them out of existence. They are interpretative enterprises that are pursued, often fruitfully, by qualified critics, and an adequate analysis of the logic of interpretation cannot ignore them.

## IV

Though the debate about the logic of interpretation seems to focus on the two aspects we have so far considered, one might perhaps conceive a third aspect to this issue. This would concern the general character or structure of interpretative argument, i.e., whether it is typically inductive, deductive, both, or neither. Controversy would no doubt arise were aestheticians called upon to adopt one of these answers, and I would like to avoid such controversy by briefly suggesting that different interpretative games differ also with respect to this third aspect. Some are typically inductive, some have distinctly deductive elements, while others seem to present a logic of an entirely different sort.

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[55] Beardsley, op. cit., p. 31.

Historical critics who see as their goal the revelation of the author's intention naturally tend to present interpretative arguments which are essentially inductive in character and which point to a probabilistic conclusion. Data may be gathered from dictionary meanings, from the author's life and other works, and from the conventions and beliefs of the author's audience, etc., to suggest and confirm an hypothesis regarding the meaning the author intended in the work. Such an interpretative program can indeed fall within a general inductive framework, as even its opponents, e.g., Stevenson, confess.

I know of no aesthetician who has argued that interpretative logic is deductive. Weitz, however, does speak of all interpretations as essentially being explanation in terms of a specific hypothesis which is derived from a general hypothesis and a theory "about which category or combination of categories of explanation is most effective",[56] and some of the interpretative arguments he examines do have a somewhat deductive character. For example, Caroline Spurgeon's interpretation of Hamlet[57] may be schematically presented as deducing its conclusion from two premises. (1) In Shakespearean drama the imagery is central and conveys the meaning. (2) Hamlet's imagery is predominantly that of disease and decay. (3) Therefore, Hamlet's meaning is that of man's condition of disease and decay. Of course, the premise that decay imagery is predominant would seem to be justified inductively, but still the argument appears to have a general deductive framework.

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[56] Weitz, op. cit., p. 255.

There are some interpretative arguments which seem neither inductive nor deductive nor some combination of the two, but which are often employed and with considerable success. Such arguments frequently consist of a complex arrangement of focussing remarks, leading questions, and suggested answers, which bring an often imaginary interlocutor to a certain desired conclusion. This type of argument might be called dialectical or rhetorical and may be found in philosophical writings as disparate as Plato's dialogues and Wittgenstein's Investigations. Some philosophers of art suggest that interpretative argument is essentially of this sort. Some critics, e.g., Leavis, confess that this is how they actually practice; putting their judgments in "the form: 'This is so, is it not?'" to invite "a collaborative exchange or commerce".[58]

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[57] Weitz, op. cit. p. 135-36.

There is no doubt that certain critics employ such dialectical arguments of suggestion, question, and comparison; treating the reader as an interlocutor and constantly appealing to and compelling his assent. Take the following example from Leavis's interpretation of Blake's poem, "Hear the Voice of the Bard".

> "In spite of the semi-colon at the end of the second line we find ourselves asking whether it is the Holy Word or the Bard that is calling the 'lapsed soul'. There is clearly a reference to the voice of God in the Garden calling Adam, but is it God who is weeping in the evening dew? And is it God that *might* control the starry pole? - though it could hardly be the Soul (an interpretation permitted by punctuation and syntax) that might? And surely 'fallen light' is Lucifer? ...
>
> Looking back at the first stanza we can see how Blake *uses* the Christian theme and subdues it completely to his own unorthodox purpose. The opening line is Druid and pagan in suggestion (how utterly remote from Gray's Bard Blake is!) and 'Present, Past, and Future' suggests Fates, Weirds, or Norns - suggests, in fact, anything but a distinctively Christian sense of Time and Destiny. ..."[59]

This sort of argument is neither deductive nor inductive, yet we cannot deny that it is argument, indeed powerful and effective argument. Thus, as we found no one logical status for interpretative statements and no single, uniform role of interpretative reasons, so there would seem to be no one general form of interpretative argument. Interpretative logic is a hodge-podge.

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[58] F.R. Leavis, "Mr. Pryce-Jones, the British Council and British Culture", *Scrutiny*, vol. 18, 1951-52, p. 227.

[59] F.R. Leavis, *Revaluation*, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1972, pp. 133-34.

## V

What conclusions may be drawn from our survey of the variant theories of the logic of interpretation and the variant practices on which these theories may be based and supported? Most simply, that interpretative logic is very complex and varied. There is more than one aspect to the analysis of the logic of interpretation, and even with respect to the same aspect there is more than one 'logic' to be analyzed. Theoretical pluralism seems to be the only position that an analyst can honestly maintain in the face of a pluralism of practice.

One should be wary of attempts to deny this pluralism by the use of notions whose ambiguity seems to embrace critical plurality and suggest a false unity. Thus Weitz tries to unite the multiplicity of interpretative practices under "only the one function of explanation".[60] But even if all interpretative practice could be characterized as explanation, fundamental plurality still remains, for as Hampshire remarks "there are very many types of explanation".[61] There even seem

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60. Weitz, op. cit., p. 246.

61. S. Hampshire, "Types of Interpretation" in S. Hook (ed.) Art and Philosophy, New York, 1966, p. 107. Hampshire also notes that the notion of meaning is "too broad" to be helpful here (ibid. 107-8).

to be many different types of explanation of meaning, given the enormous ambiguity of the notion of meaning. Certainly our study has shown that interpretative procedures do not conform to any one single explanatory model or function. Thus the common claim of different interpretative enterprises to explain the true meaning of the work should not be regarded as assurance of a common interpretative aim or program. We have seen that this common claim conceals a plurality of aims and methods.

The pluralism I maintain should be distinguished from a more limited pluralism which recognizes merely a plurality of valid objects and methods of interpretation. According to such pluralism, there are many approaches to and aspects of a work of literature with respect to which true (or plausible) interpretative assertions can be made. There can be true interpretation of what the work meant to its author and true interpretation of what it means to the reader, true interpretation of its contemporary social meaning and true interpretation of its archetypal meaning. Thus, we can have differing and often apparently conflicting interpretative assertions that are all true or plausible.

Such a position is on the right track, and unhappily too few critics and philosophers have recognized this plurality.[62]

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[62] The literary critics and theorists, R.S. Crane, E. Olson, and R. McKeon, who belong to the "Chicago school" of criticism, are among the few who maintain this pluralist position. See R.S. Crane (ed.), *Critics and Criticism* (Abridged Edition), Chicago, 1957.

I grant such plurality but go further by arguing that not all interpretations are assertions that may be true or plausible. Nor are all interpretations recommendations, nor are they all performances. Interpretative statements rather exhibit a plurality of logical status as well as a plurality of subject matter and viewpoint.

Interpretation is not _one_ game but a _family_ of games; and as in other families, there are sibling rivalries where the value and even legitimacy of certain members of the family are bitterly contested. It is not the job of the philosopher of criticism, as analyst, to award the birthright. Having identified and analyzed the various interpretative games, he must let them justify themselves, as they have justified and must justify themselves, in actual critical practice. Having distinguished between the different species, he must rely on the survival of the fittest.

# CHAPTER SIX

# THE LOGIC OF EVALUATION

One approaches the question of evaluation with considerable awe and apprehension. Perfectly capable philosophers of art, such as Wollheim,[1] explicitly refuse to deal with it. Moreover, in this age of critical uncertainty and tolerance, many literary critics would seem to hold that their primary task is the interpretation rather than the evaluation of literature. Yet, I think, the vast majority of critics, past and present, regard evaluation as a major, if not the major, critical activity.[2] The logical analysis of this activity has consequently been for centuries an important matter of aesthetic investigation and controversy, and indeed has received more attention than the study of interpretation.

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[1] R. Wollheim, Art and its Objects, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1970, p. 169.

> "It will be observed that in this essay next to nothing has been said about the subject that dominates much contemporary aesthetics: that of the evaluation of art and its logical character. This omission is deliberate." (ibid.)

See also G. Dickie, Aesthetics, New York, 1971, p. 147, for similar fears. Dickie, though he discusses evaluation, says such discussion "must be wary and tentative", and he confines himself only to examining the views of others and does not offer his own.

[2] Among contemporary critics, Yvor Winters, for example, holds that "the primary function of criticism is evaluation". Y. Winters The Function of Criticism, Denver, 1957, p. 42.

Many different accounts of the nature of evaluation have been offered, and there is very little agreement, though very much debate, as to which is the correct one.

This is perhaps to be expected when it is tacitly assumed, as it too often has been, that the activity of evaluation is, logically, a more or less simple and uniform activity. However, there is no such standard activity or function of critical evaluation, but rather the business of evaluation includes a great many different activities and jobs which do not reduce to one. Thus, the demand for the logic of evaluation is a spurious one, since the variety of evaluative practices displays a variety of logical behaviour.

I cannot claim to be the pioneer here, for Morris Weitz has, I think, successfully demonstrated this variety in his extensive study of Shakespearean criticism.[3] Examples of this criticism show that critics in evaluating "do many things: they praise, condemn, defend, extenuate, exhibit, judge, and revaluate."[4] For Weitz, though there are similarities among these activities, they are not reducible to one essence or formula, and thus:

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[3] M. Weitz, Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism, London, 1972.

[4] Ibid., p. 270.

> "It is simply a false description of the logical behaviour of critical evaluations to say that all of them recommend, guide our choices, grade, persuade, judge, counsel, or emote."[5]

Though much in sympathy with Weitz's view of the irreducible variety of evaluative activity, I think in some respects he has not gone far enough. We shall soon see that Weitz's own account of evaluation ironically contains an implicit but very definite suggestion of a logical common denominator for evaluation — non-descriptivism. Thus, though the path of logical pluralism has been pointed to, there is still considerable trail-blazing to be done.[6]

The variety of evaluative procedure is surely one of the reasons why a simple yet adequate account of the logic of evaluation has not been provided. But there is also another reason or element of complexity in the analysis of the logic of evaluation. For here, as with interpretation, we find three distinguishable though closely connected aspects to our problem of analysis. The first concerns the logical status

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5. Weitz, op. cit.

6. H.D. Aiken ("A Pluralistic Analysis of Aesthetic Value", in F.J. Coleman (ed.), Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics, New York, 1968) has also argued for a pluralistic account of evaluation, but all the three types of judgments he distinguishes are descriptivist. The first two (report of immediate satisfaction and expression of personal taste) fall under subjectivism, while relativism covers his 'relatively objective judgments of inherent value'.

of evaluative statements and relates to questions like the following: Do evaluative statements express propositions having truth value or rather merely express decisions, recommendations, attitudes, etc.? If the former, are these propositions really about the work of art itself or only about the critic's view of it? And if about the work itself, are they in principle determinable as true or false, or only relatively true or false, or perhaps, at best, merely justified or unjustified?

Evaluative judgments are typically supported by reasons. Thus, the second aspect of our present problem concerns the logical role of these reasons. Do they function as evidence or principles logically supporting an evaluative conclusion, or are they merely means of motivation to persuade the reader to adopt the critic's judgment? Are they perhaps but further descriptions of the critic's view of the work, or are they devices for focussing attention on the work in such a manner that its value may be readily perceived? Finally, the third aspect, closely related to the second, concerns the general logical form of evaluative argument. If such arguments are indeed logical, is their logic typically inductive, deductive, or rather something entirely different?

When we consider both the plurality of evaluative activity and the threefold dimension of its logical analysis, it is not surprising that analytic philosophers of art have proposed a wide variety of very different views as to the logic of evaluation. Even with respect to the same aspect, very different conclusions have been reached. Nor can this multiplicity of conflicting accounts be regarded as the proposal of different programs for evaluation, for these philosophers generally claim to be analyzing or describing the logic actually practiced, and not recommending or prescribing how critics should practice. Why then is there such wide divergence of analyses of evaluative logic, and why is it that despite extended study and debate, aestheticians seem to be getting no closer to resolving the issue of which analysis is the correct one?

The reason for this, as I have already suggested, is that the issue itself is a spurious one. There is no one correct account of evaluative logic, for there is no one evaluative logic to be accounted for. If we abandon the assumption that there is or must be, but rather 'look and see' or survey the actual logic of various evaluative activities, we shall find that there is not one logic of evaluation but rather many 'logics' of evaluation. Evaluating critics play different evaluative 'games' with different sets of rules or 'logics' implicit in the games they practice. These different games serve and reflect different aims, yet the diversity of these games, aims, and logics is concealed by the fact that they are not explicitly formulated and demarcated, and tend somewhat to overlap. Indeed, their frequent vagueness and flexibility strongly resist clear formulation and demarcation. The diversity of evaluative logics is further concealed by their employing much the same terms (e.g., "the novel", "the right evaluation", "great", "justify", etc.) though often using them in very different senses. Philosophers provide different analyses of evaluative logic, because they are analyzing different logics; they take as paradigms different evaluative games.

As in my study of interpretative logic, I shall try to substantiate my claim by briefly examining some of the major positions on the logic of evaluation and indicating the different critical games which they respectively portray. To a given philosopher or critic, one evaluative game may seem more appealing or profitable than others, and thus he is often brought to ignore those others or even to deny that they are 'true' criticism or 'literary' criticism. But the nature of true criticism or literary evaluation is, of course, neither given nor evident, but is rather essentially contested by critics. Thus we should be wary of aestheticians who present the analysis of their paradigm as the whole or essential truth on evaluation, and then defend it as such simply by rejecting all evaluative games which do not suit it as being sub-standard, aberrant, or just not literary evaluation at all. As practicing critics we may refuse to employ them, as literary theorists we may stress their limitations, but as analytic philosophers we cannot afford to ignore them.

## II

There appear to be three major positions on the logical status of evaluative statements, the very same we encountered with respect to interpretative statements: descriptivism, perscriptivism, and performativism. Again, for convenience in comparing these positions, we may employ a general formula, "W is E", as representing a typical evaluative judgment (e.g., "Moby Dick is a great novel", "Hamlet is an artistic failure"), where "W" takes works of literature as values, and "E" takes evaluative predicates. The three different theories on evaluative statements may then be concisely characterized by their different analyses of this basic formula.

However, in using such a formula (and I am not the only one to do so[7]), I must emphasize its dangers. The generality of its form may be misleading in that it suggests a simplicity or uniformity that does not really exist. In the first place, there are troubles with "W", since many evaluative statements do not have as their subjects particular works of art but rather authors (i.e., an author's work as a whole) or certain parts or aspects of particular works. In other words, evaluative judgment is often not of an individual work of art as a whole, but rather of a composite of such works (e.g., the author's corpus) or, instead, of particular parts or elements of such a work. We must remember that some of our most renowned critics, such as Johnson and Eliot, even express a preference for evaluating authors rather than particular works.[8] It is also worth noting that though there is an obvious connection between the evaluation of the author's work and evaluation of his particular works, it is far from one of simple correspondence. Our evaluation of an author can be very different depending on whether we reach it inductively from evaluation of his particular works or whether we instead evaluate him by viewing his work as a whole. Eliot's study of the differing valuations of Poe makes this point with unquestionable force.[9]

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[7] Stevenson, whose theory of evaluation will soon be discussed, employs a similar formula. See C.L. Stevenson, "Interpretation and Evaluation in Aesthetics", in M. Black (ed.), Philosophical Analysis, Ithaca, 1950.

Thus, there are problems in seeing particular works of art as the standard, much less the only, subjects of evaluative statements; and in this sense our formula may be misleading. But it is also misleading in the uniformity suggested by the variable "E", which seems to represent a simple and patently evaluative predicate or quality, such as "great", "beautiful", "good", "bad", etc. For much, if not most, evaluative judgment is not the ascribing of such simple and pristinely evaluative attributes. First, many typical evaluative statements are not such categorical ascriptions but rather comparative judgments of the form,

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[8] H. Gardner recognizes this preference in Eliot, but expresses her own preference for concentrating upon "the single work". H. Gardner, The Business of Criticism, Oxford, 1963, p. 23.

[9] T.S. Eliot, "From Poe to Valery", in To Criticize The Critic, London, 1965.

"$W_1$ is better than $W_2$"; and we often encounter also judgments of the superlative form, "$W_1$ is the best (or greatest) of the group of works, $W_{1-n}$"; e.g., "The Changeling is Middleton's greatest play"[10] or "On the Death of Mrs. Killigrew is undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language has ever produced".[11]

This last example might raise the question whether "noblest" here means something quite different from "best", "greatest", or even "most beautiful". Such a question points to the fact that not only is evaluative judgment not purely categorical, but it is neither purely evaluative in the sense of conveying wholly or primarily 'evaluative' as opposed to 'descriptive' meaning in the way in which Hare[12] and others have made this distinction. There is, at least in criticism, a continuum between the descriptive and the evaluative which the variable "E" may belie. Many descriptive terms are also strongly evaluative; e.g., "unified", "rich", "powerful", "moving", "insincere", "superficial", "mature", "penetrating", "incoherent", "enjoyable", etc. In many of the critic's evaluative judgments it is these rather than the purely evaluative predicates which serve as values of "E". Indeed, so much of the critic's language straddles in this manner the evaluative/descriptive distinction, that I think the many philosophers who wrestle with the problem of how the critic can move from a non-evaluative description to an evaluative judgment are concerned with a problem of their own creation and not one of actual critical argument. When the critic's initial description and interpretation already contain evaluative import or force, there is no need to ask how he can derive from it an evaluative judgment. The fact that the critic's description frequently carries evaluative force reinforces in yet another way the intimate link between description or interpretation and evaluation. Critics are probably more aware of this than philosophers. F.R. Leavis, for example, admits that in his study of Shelley "we feel our description merging into criticism ... passing, by inevitable transitions, from describing characteristics to making adverse judgments".[13]

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[10] T.S. Eliot, from "Thomas Middleton", in F. Kermode (ed.), Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, London, 1975, p. 189.

[11] S. Johnson, "Dryden as Critic and Poet", E.D. Jones (ed.), English Critical Essays (Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries), Oxford, 1943, p. 409.

[12] R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals, Oxford, 1964, chapter 7.

(a) Having pointed out the limitations of our formula, we can more comfortably employ it for our limited purpose of characterizing different aesthetic positions on evaluative statements, the first of which may be called descriptivism. Descriptivism regards evaluative statements as expressing propositions having some sort of truth value. Again, as with interpretation, there is more than one version, and we may begin with the descriptivist position of subjectivism.

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[13] F.R. Leavis, "'Thought' and Emotional Quality", Scrutiny, vol. 13, 1944-46, p. 60.

Here, "W is E" is analyzed as "W is E to me"; e.g., it is beautiful or valuable to me. Several critics and philosophers have held this subjectivist position. D.H. Lawrence, admired critic as well as novelist, tells us that "literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced in the critic by the book he is criticizing."[14] Pater also sees the question of evaluation as subjective:

> "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or a book to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence?"[15]

There is no doubt that much evaluation is of this sort, the relating of the valuable or unfavorable impressions or effects the work gives the reader and of his consequent attitude toward the work. Indeed we can even point to an entire stream or 'school' of criticism characterized by the dominant use of such evaluative statement and consequently termed "impressionistic criticism".[16] Moreover, even critics who claim to be giving objective judgments often speak in personal and affective terms which lend themselves to subjectivist interpretation; e.g., "The novel so amused and fascinated me that I was sorry to have finished it" or "The only impression the book left on me was boredom and fatigue". The evaluative import and subjective character of such typical statements are, I think, undeniable.[17] Thus, many evaluative statements are subjective descriptions, which, if the critic is sincere, are likely to be true. It might be argued that such truths are aesthetically unimportant, since they seem to be more about the critic than the work criticized. However, two defences of impressionistic evaluation may be made. First, with respect to its personal, subjective character, one can argue that even if the final goal is a shared objective judgment, a necessary step toward this goal is the formulating and voicing of one's personal impression or judgment. For unless expressed, it can never be confirmed or corrected into a more than personal, objective evaluation. As Pater argued for his impressionistic practice:

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[14] D.H. Lawrence, "John Galsworthy", in Phoenix, London, 1936, p. 539.

[15] W. Pater, The Renaissance, London, 1912, p. x. A more modern and philosophically argued defense of subjectivism is presented by Ducasse. His subjectivist theory can accommodate the impressionist brand of subjectivism but is far more general. See C.J. Ducasse, "The Subjectivity of Aesthetic Value", in J. Hospers (ed.) Introductory Readings in Aesthetics, London, 1969.

[16] Discussion of impressionistic criticism can be found in T.S. Eliot's "The Perfect Critic", in Kermode, op. cit., and in H. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, London, 1955, pp. 318-20.

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17. Some of Eliot's evaluative remarks about Shelley also lend themselves to subjectivism.

> "But some of Shelley's views I positively dislike and that hampers my enjoyment of the poems in which they occur; and others seem to me so puerile that I cannot enjoy the poems in which they occur. And I do not find it possible to skip those passages and satisfy myself with the poetry in which no proposition pushes itself forward to claim assent." (T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, London 1964, p. 91.

> "In aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly."[18]

A second defence of the aesthetic significance of impressionistic evaluation is its frequent power. Passionate personal confession is usually more potent and compelling than reasoned impersonal judgment. Thus, an eloquent impressionistic encomium of a literary work would be far more likely to encourage a potential reader to examine the work (or an unimpressed reader to peruse it more carefully), than would a dry and principled evaluation, no matter how logically valid. Perhaps the reason for this is that such encomiums, when well-written, more completely present or convey a sense of the value that the critic is impressed with. Whatever the reasons, however, the perlocutionary force of such evaluative criticism is undeniable, and even opponents of impressionistic criticism, e.g., Eliot,[19] testify to its power.

There are, then, many overtly subjective or impressionistic evaluations which are likely to be true, and such evaluative criticism has also been seen to be aesthetically significant and powerful. Moreover, we often find that allegedly objective evaluation may readily be seen as disguised subjective judgment. Thus, much evaluative practice

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18. Pater, op. cit., p. x.

19. Eliot, "The Perfect Critic", p. 52.

lends itself to the subjectivist position that critical evaluation is essentially subjective. Subjectivism seems to have the added virtue of neatly accounting for the great variety of apparently intelligent yet conflicting evaluations of a given work of literature, and for their being adamantly resistant to argument. For the fact that one critic is impressed one way does not contradict that a different critic be differently impressed; nor does a critic's having one attitude toward the work contradict another critic's having the opposite attitude. De gustibus non est disputandum, the subjectivist concludes, and hopes by his view to promote peace and tolerance among evaluating critics.

This is clearly not the program of the absolutist or strong descriptivist for whom "W is E" is simply "W is E" or "'W is E' is true". The absolutist holds that evaluative judgments are either true or false, and that conflicting evaluations are incompatible and cannot be accepted. We may never know or be certain of the true evaluation, but it is there to be known and renders those incompatible with it false. Though I just mentioned subjectivism's tolerance as an advantage, one might regard it as a disadvantage in that it seems to make evaluative debate quite pointless, if indeed possible. The subjectivist might explain such debate in terms of the critic's desire and exhortation that other readers share his attitudes and impressions, that others enjoy what he enjoys. Still the absolutist gives a far nobler justification of evaluative polemics — the search for impersonal, objective truth.

Philosophers (e.g., Jessop,[20] Osborne,[21] Beardsley[22]) have held positions which may be characterized as absolutist, where the value of "E" is conceived as designating an objective property of the work of art, such as beauty, expression, or aesthetic value (either intrinsic or instrumental). Certainly many critics seem to have seen their job as determining the truth, the true value or merit of a work. Johnson in the seventeenth century speaks of "the task of criticism ... to improve opinion into knowledge".[23] Eliot and Leavis speak of "the common pursuit of true judgment".[24] The American critic, Yvor Winters, is perhaps the most self-conscious and outspoken proponent of evaluative absolutism.

> "The theory of literature which I defend ... is absolutist."[25]
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> "The absolutist believes in the existence of absolute truths and values ... The relativist, on the other hand, believes that there are no absolute truths, that the judgment of every man is right for himself."[26]

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[20] T.E. Jessop, "The Objectivity of Aesthetic Value", in Hospers, op. cit.

[21] H. Osborne, The Theory of Beauty, London, 1952; and Aesthetics and Criticism.

[22] M.C. Beardsley, Aesthetics, New York, 1958.

[23] S. Johnson, Rambler No. 92, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, New Haven, 1969, vol. 4, p. 122.

[24] F.R. Leavis, The Common Pursuit, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1976, p. v.

[25] Y. Winters, In Defense of Reason, Denver, 1947, p. 11.

[26] Ibid., p. 10.

However, not only do the declarations and terminology of many critics demonstrate a theoretic commitment to the absolutist position, but their extensive attempts to prove the truth of their judgments by reasoned argument strongly suggest they practice evaluative criticism on absolutist presuppositions. Even Weitz, whose aim is to deny the validity of these assumptions, readily admits this.[27]

Is there any credibility to the assumption that evaluative statements may express true propositions, that they may state objective facts about works of art? Are there evaluative facts? Of course, if we decide on 'philosophical' grounds to distinguish sharply facts from values, the answer is no, and absolutism collapses. But if we are more sceptical of what Austin calls "the value/fact fetish"[28] and actually look at some of our evaluative statements, I think we may find some evaluative facts which give an element of truth to the absolutist position. The Iliad is a great work of literature. The Aeneid is excellent epic poetry. Sophocles was a great tragedian. The Divine Comedy is a masterpiece. Shakespeare is better than Beaumont and Fletcher. King Lear is superior to Love's Labour Lost. Would we not affirm these propositions as unmistakeably true? Are these statements not as true or factual as the non-evaluative "Saturn has rings" or "Caesar conquered Gaul"?

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[27] Weitz, op. cit., pp. 212-13, 269-70.

[28] J.L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words, Oxford, 1976, p. 151.

Of course, it is always possible to question the truth of such evaluative statements, but this only means that such statements are not necessarily true, but rather matters of fact. Like other a posteriori statements, their truth cannot be logically demonstrated, established necessarily or absolutely, but only more or less confirmed by experience. And this is very close to what Johnson seems to assert in comparing the truth of the Pythagorean theorem to that of Shakespeare's greatness.

> "To works, of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but speaking wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem".[29]

The sort of evaluative facts I have mentioned constitute a kind of common sense of criticism, and it is worth noting that attempts to refute them, such as Tolstoy's attempted proof of Shakespeare's mediocrity, greatly resemble the metaphysical refutations of our common-sense beliefs concerning the reality of time and material objects. We follow the arguments, but even if we have difficulty in refuting them, we are certain their conclusions are wrong. Thus, criticism seems to have some evaluative facts which give support to a strong descriptivist view of evaluative statements. The absolutist would then seem to argue that if some facts have been established, it is only a question of time and critical acumen for all evaluative statements to be determined as true or false.[30] Absolutism is thus not a baseless theory, but its actual base of evaluative facts hardly seems to make it a convincing position on the logical status of all evaluative statements.

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[29] W. Raleigh (ed.), Johnson on Shakespeare, Oxford, 1925, p. 9.

The relativists or weak descriptivists certainly find it unconvincing. They seem to be more impressed by the fact that competent critics have offered a wide variety of conflicting judgments and perhaps an even wider variety of standards or principles upon which these judgments are based. The evidence they bring of this variety is quite substantial. The relativist is ready to admit that some evaluative judgments are better than others, even that some are clearly wrong. However, he argues, there still remain several conflicting evaluations which are in some sense adequate and well reasoned, and he rejects the absolutist's move of assuming that only one can be true and hence the others must be regarded as false. The relativist's intermediate position between absolutism and subjectivism is to regard "W is E" as "'W is E' by (the adequate) standard S" or, more simply, "'W is E' is adequate".

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[30] Moreover, if like some critics and philosophers (e.g. Beardsley, op. cit.), we regard the value of a work of art as instrumental (e.g., to pleasure, aesthetic experience, truth, etc.), then it is clear that the question of its value in achieving the desired end will be a factual matter, rendering such value judgments empirical propositions or hypotheses.

Objectivity is saved by being rendered conditional upon standards, and diversity of judgment is saved by the fact that though some standards are clearly wrong or irrelevant, many different standards, yielding differing judgments, are acceptable, relevant, or adequate for evaluating literature.[31]

Such a position has been popular with aestheticians and critics alike. B. Heyl, who has given critical relativism perhaps its most extensive formulation, distinguishes between competent and incompetent judgments, and advocates

> "a relativism ... which recognizes the necessity for and justifies the existence of sound judgments of better and worse. These however cannot be considered absolute or final, for they depend both upon philosophic assumptions and upon empirical criteria which will vary somewhat from individual to individual, culture to culture."[32]

Similarly, the literary critic and theorist, E.D. Hirsch, after arguing against any one type of privileged evaluative criteria, still goes on to affirm relative objectivity:

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31. There are, of course, different sorts of relativism, e.g. relativity to culture, class, period, or psychological type. But relativity to standards seems most central since cultural, class, period, and psychological type differences may readily be interpreted in terms of difference of standards.

32. B. Heyl, New Bearings in Aesthetics and Art Criticism, New Haven, 1943, pp. 154-55.

> "For, if there is no privilege in literary evaluation there is nevertheless objectivity and accuracy, and these reside entirely in the judged relationship between literature and the criteria we choose to apply to it."[33]

Helen Gardner likewise seems to adopt a position of evaluative relativism.

> "I am not disturbed by the thought that many critics whose works I read with profit and pleasure, might if pressed, give a very different account of their beliefs and practices. ... Good taste is not absolute. Two persons of excellent taste and judgment may differ strongly on the relative merits of two works."[34]

Certain critics, then, express a commitment to relativism; but do critics ever make explicitly relativistic or conditional evaluations? We might return to an example provided by a critic whose affinities are not clearly relativistic. Eliot, we remember, shows that our evaluation of Poe is relative to whether we judge his work "analytically", poem by poem, or "take a distant view of it as a whole".[35] In the end, Eliot chooses the latter standard and a consequently higher evaluation of Poe, but the relative or conditional nature of such a judgment is obvious. Differing conclusions here can both be accurate and objective, relative as they are to different criteria.

Thus, we find critics who profess relativism and find also critical evaluations which are clearly conditional or relative to certain criteria, and which are reversed when other criteria are employed or more strongly emphasized. The relativist can bring an impressive list of examples to illustrate this, in order to support the validity of his position as reflecting the general nature of evaluative statements.[36] But the absolutist, aware of this arsenal of evidence, will reply, as Winters has, in kind: "that the best critics ... approximate accuracy fairly closely: by that I mean great men tend to agree with each other".[37] Winters continues:

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[33] E.D. Hirsch, "Privileged Criteria in Literary Evaluation", in J. Strelka (ed.), Problems of Literary Evaluation, London, 1969, p. 33.

[34] Gardner, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

[35] Eliot, "From Poe to Valery", p. 27.

> "I am more or less aware of the extent of the catalogue of disagreements that might be drawn up in reply to such a statement, but it is far less astounding than, let us say, the unanimity of the best minds on the subject of Homer and Vergil, particularly if we accept the doctrine of relativism with any great seriousness."[38]

Which indeed is more astounding? Do evaluative facts or conditional judgments more truly depict the logical character of evaluative statements? I believe that this loaded question must be exploded by affirming that both are truly representative of evaluative statements, as indeed are

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36. See Heyl, op. cit., and also the work of other relativists which he cites; e.g., E.E. Kellett, Fashion in Literature, London, 1931 and The Whirligig of Taste, New York, 1929.

37. Winters, In Defense of Reason, p. 76.

38. Ibid.

impressionistic judgments. Evaluative statements do not reduce to a logical quintessence or essential character. Thus far we have seen only the logical plurality within the descriptivist framework; but there are two other general positions which claim to be the model or correct analysis of all standard evaluative judgments, yet which depict, like descriptivism, only some of the many evaluative games that critics play.

(b) Prescriptivism holds that evaluative statements do not express true or false propositions, not even relatively adequate or conditionally accurate ones; they are instead taken as expressing decisions or recommendations as to how the work of literature should be regarded. The prescriptivist analyzes "W is E" as "W should be seen or taken as E", or, more simply, "Prize (Despise) W".[39] A work of art may be considered from many points of view, seen in different ways, and thus be differently evaluated. According to prescriptivism, the evaluating critic is expressing his own manner of regarding the work and recommending that we should adopt the same manner. His arguments to support his evaluation may then be construed as attempts to get us to accept his recommendation and thus take or evaluate the work as he does. This position, like its interpretative counterpart, is suggested in Wittgenstein's writings on aesthetics[40] and in his notion of 'seeing as'. But we can find still an earlier and stronger suggestion in A.J. Ayer's emotive theory of evaluative judgments:

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[39] The first formulation suits quasi-descriptivist evaluatives such as "graceful", "well-constructed", etc., while the latter is for more purely evaluative predicates, e.g., "good", "bad", etc. The first formulation, if taken as the analysis of all critical evaluations, runs the risk of infinite regress, like its interpretative counterpart, unless there is a non-critical meaning of "E" to which we can appeal to halt the regress.

> "They are pure expressions of feeling and as such do not come under the category of truth and falsehood.[41]... It follows, as in ethics, that there is no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgments. ... The critic, by calling attention to certain features of the work under review, and expressing his own feelings about them, endeavours to make us share his attitude towards the work as a whole."[42]

With such renowned progenitors, it is not surprising that prescriptivism still seems to be maintained by some contemporary aestheticians. Again, as with interpretative prescriptivism, Stevenson[43] provides the clearest and most rigorous presentation of the position, and indeed his evaluative prescriptivism is wholly parallel or isomorphic with his treatment of interpretation. Stevenson argues simultaneously for both and even employs the same formula or "general schema" for treating both interpretative and evaluative statements:

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[40] See his treatment of evaluative judgments as expressions of approval rather than as ascriptions of properties to objects, in L. Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations On Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief, Oxford, 1970, pp. 1-2.

[41] A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1971, p. 144.

[42] Ibid., p. 150.

[43] Stevenson, op. cit.

> "'The work of art is $Q_c$' has the same meaning as 'The work of art appears $Q_s$ when observed under conditions X', where $Q_c$ is to be replaced, initially, by any of our interpretative or evaluative terms, and $Q_s$ by the same term, used in its simplest sense."[44]

Thus, parallel to his treatment of interpretative statements, Stevenson likewise maintains that evaluative statements are essentially expressions of the critic's decision of how the work should be observed and "quasi-imperative" recommendations that others should regard it similarly.

> "Having roughly familiarized himself with the ways in which a work of art *can* be experienced, a critic must proceed to make a selection from among them - a *decision* about how he is to observe the work in the course of his subsequent appreciation. There is no doubt that interpretation and evaluation require such a decision."[45]

But the critic must decide not only for himself.

> "It is the task of the critic not only to dwell upon an aesthetic surface, but to make up his mind, and to help others make up their minds, which aesthetic surface is to be dwelt upon."[46]

For Stevenson, the critic's "decision" introduces the prescriptive or normative character of evaluative judgments; for such decisions are motivated and governed by factors that are not purely logical or cognitive. Stevenson thus argues

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44. Stevenson, op. cit. p. 348.

45. Ibid., p. 357.

46. Ibid., p. 380.

that behind their frequent guise of objectivity, evaluative statements really function as prescriptions or quasi-imperative recommendations. Thus, for example, when the critic asserts that a work is unified, he is implicitly, but essentially, urging that we observe it in that way; and our assent to this assertion may be compared "with the overtly imperative expression, 'Yes, let's observe it in the way that makes it appear unified'".[47] Now, though Stevenson treats "unified" as basically an interpretative term, the example is still valid for evaluation, since he assures us:

> "The same considerations arise, of course, not only for judgments about unity but for all judgments of the form, 'The work of art is $Q_c$'; and thus for all interpretative and evaluative judgments."[48]

The prescriptivist theory of evaluative judgment, as Stevenson formulates it, has some affinities with relativism. One could regard the relativist's question of a standard as involved in the prescriptivist's decision. Like relativism, it can account for the existence and relative tolerance of variant evaluative judgments and their typical challengeability and tentative nature. There are many ways of regarding a work of art, and one evaluation, i.e., the adoption and recommendation of one way, does not logically exclude other ways as false or fruitless. Yet prescriptivism must be distinguished from relativism in that it construes all evaluative judgments as non-cognitive and normative. They essentially express decisions and recommendations, and thus not even relative or conditional truths. Critical debate is explained and justified as controversy over which evaluative decision should be made, and though one can argue whether a decision is better or worse, or right or wrong, neither it nor the statement expressing it can be true or false.

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[47] Stevenson, op. cit., p. 374.

[48] Ibid., p. 376.

Prescriptivisim purports to analyze actual evaluative practice, and I think there are evaluative statements which suit the general prescriptivist model. Yet, before considering judgments which endorse prescriptivism, I ought to expose one very questionable element in Stevenson's formulation of it. I am not referring to the fact that he seems to reduce all interpretative and evaluative judgments to the form, "The work of art is Q". Our introductory remarks on the formula "W is E" should be sufficient criticism of this assimilation. My problem here is rather with Stevenson's conception of the evaluative process and critic's decision. Stevenson sees this as a process where:

> "a critic is attempting to become familiar with the *possibilities* that lie before him. He is sampling, as it were, the apparent qualities of a work of art, seeking to determine the various ways in which it *can* be experienced. For if he ignores some of the possible $Q_S$'s he will later ignore the corresponding $Q_C$ s; hence certain interpretations or evaluations, of a sort that he might wish to accept, will not even occur to him. So he observes the work under varying conditions, attending to this rather than that, weakening these associations and strengthening those, and so on. ...

> Having roughly familiarized himself with the ways in which a work _can_ be experienced, a critic must proceed to make a selection from among them - a _decision_ about how he is to observe the work in the course of his subsequent appreciation. ..."[49] "For a decision is a _process_, in which certain ways of responding to a work of art are accepted and others rejected."[50]

This hardly seems a happy or accurate account of how a critic goes about his business. For whether or not a decision is a process, and following Ryle, this might be contested, the extensive evaluative process Stevenson describes hardly seems to be generally practiced or even effectively practicable. Such a complicated process of sampling the various possibilities or ways in which a work _can_ be experienced and only then proceeding to make an evaluative decision, might, if conscientiously undertaken, never be completed, since there would seem to be innumerable ways of experiencing a work. Do critics really perform such demanding experimentation? Their frequent expressions of surprise and disbelief at other, differing judgments of the work do not suggest that they have extensively sampled the ways in which the work may be taken. And when they admit they were totally unaware of a particular evaluative (or interpretative) view which seems to them absurd, they do not appear to be apologizing for taking short cuts in the critical process. Does the impressionistic critic patiently sample and then judiciously select? I think not. Nor do other

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49. Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 356-57.

50. Ibid., p. 359.

critics indicate that they practice by this process, but some instead suggest that the critic is struck by or surrenders to an immediate view of the work, which he then seeks to articulate, elucidate, and confirm.[51] Stevenson's strangely complicated account of the evaluative process, if at all acceptable, is surely not true of all critical evaluation.

However, this criticism of Stevenson does not, I think, damage the general prescriptivist position with respect to evaluative statements. That certain critics are aware that a work or author may be differently evaluated if taken in different ways or observed in light of different standards, is clear from our account of relativism. Is there also evidence for the prescriptivist tenet that the critic is essentially deciding and urging that of the many possible ways of seeing the work, his way should be adopted and that the evaluative statement is in this sense normative and quasi-imperative? Some of the remarks of F.R. Leavis might seem to provide such evidence, for Leavis himself confesses that sometimes his evaluations "aim at little more than to suggest coercively the reorientation from which revaluation follows".[52] This program certainly fits the prescriptivist model as does his appeal for a higher evaluation of Wordsworth. "A poet who can bring home to us the possibility of such a naturalness should today be found important."[53] There is another type of prescriptive sounding evaluative statement which Leavis borrows from Henry James to praise George Eliot's characterization of Gwendolen Harleth.

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[51] T.S. Eliot, for example; see Kermode, op. cit., pp. 13-16.

[52] F.R. Leavis, Revaluation, Harmondsworth, U.K., 1972, pp. 68-69.

[53] Ibid., p. 160.

> "And see how the girl is known, inside out, how thoroughly she is felt and understood. It is the most intelligent thing in all George Eliot's writing; and that is saying much."[54]

Such quasi-imperative recommendations to see or appreciate value in a literary work are surely not atypical, and thus it would seem that prescriptivism is a just account of some evaluative statements. Prescriptivism, however, asserts not only that there are such overtly prescriptive evaluations, but that all critical evaluation is essentially prescriptive, where allegedly descriptive statements are merely disguised prescriptives. Some no doubt are, but many, we have seen, are not, and prescriptivism is thus unsatisfactory.

(c) Performativism presents yet another view of evaluative statements. Evaluations are neither descriptions nor mere prescriptions but rather performances or 'performatives'. The performativist construes "W is E" as "W is rendered E" or "W is presented as E". This theory would seem to derive from Austin's work on performative utterances and speech acts, and particularly from his alleged sharp distinction between the performative and the constative or descriptive. By virtue of this dichotomy (which Austin probably never really held and ultimately rejected[55]), the act of evaluating — praising, condemning, etc. — cannot be identified with describing, and thus evaluative predicates cannot function as descriptive predicates. There are many kinds of evaluative performatives or speech acts, but description cannot be one of them. The performativist likens critical evaluation to other kinds of performance, particularly to that of the judge rendering a verdict, the executant artist displaying and in some sense creating aesthetic value, and the counsel creating a client's case. This is in contrast to the scientist or logician who merely describes, and, say, the 'pushy' salesman who merely urges.

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[54] F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition, London, 1962, p. 91.

Performativism, like prescriptivism, can account for and justify evaluative debate. The variety of differing evaluations can be explained in terms of the variety of ways the work of art may be presented or performed, or the variety of judicial judgment, where the differing verdicts may oppose but neither refute or falsify one another. Particularly in terms of the former analogy, evaluative debate may be seen as positive and enlightening. Moreover, as the prescriptivist, in assessing evaluations, may employ the normative labels "right" and "wrong" correlative to the descriptivist "true" and

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55. Austin first expounds and then rejects this dichotomy in How to Do Things with Words. J.O. Urmson ("Performative Utterances", Midwest Studies in Philosophy, vol. 2, 1977) has argued that Austin never really held it, but rather expounded it for polemical purposes in developing his theory of speech acts.

"false", so the performativist may characterize or grade evaluations as adequate or inadequate, convincing or unconvincing, justified or unjustified.

Versions of evaluative performativism have been propounded by at least two prominent philosophers of art, Margaret Macdonald and Morris Weitz. As with interpretation, Macdonald provides the most explicitly performativist view. The evaluative statement "This is good", she argues, is not like the description "This is red", but rather like the verdict "He is guilty".[56] The critic's judgment is like a judicial verdict, which does not describe the accused, the jury, or the judge, but "affirms a decision reached by a definite procedure but unlike that of relating evidence to conclusion in deductive and inductive inference."[57]

> "By calling a work 'good' he places the hall mark on an artistic performance. But he does not describe it or himself. So that to affirm a work good is more like bestowing a medal than naming any feature of it or of the status of its creators or audience. Verdicts and awards are not true or false. They may be reversed but not disproved. But they can be justified and unjustified."[58]

The critic's task is also likened to that of executant artist in that he presents or actualizes, and thus contributes to, the work's value. Macdonald continues to elucidate the nature of evaluative performance by analogy.

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[56] M. Macdonald, "Some Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts", in W. Elton (ed.), Aesthetics and Language, Oxford, 1954, p. 121.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., pp. 212-22.

> "Another fruitful comparison might be that of a good Counsel. The Counsel, too, has the 'facts' but from them he 'creates' his client's case. So the critic must present what is not obvious to casual or uninstructed inspection, viz. a work of art. Of course, he is not to be identified with an actor, executant, or Counsel. He differs from these in one very important respect, in being also a judge of what he presents. That a critic is creative is not very revolutionary doctrine and most great critics have been great showmen of their subjects. ...
>
> To judge a work of art, therefore, is to give a verdict on something to which the judge has contributed and this also 'justifies' the verdict."[59]

On this last matter, Macdonald is careful to point out that not all judgments are of equal value; there are "'better' and worse' judgments" which "are generally appraised in relation to qualities of the critic".[60] Miss Macdonald thus concludes:

> "So to affirm that a work of art is good or bad is to commend or condemn, but not describe. To justify such a verdict is not to give general criteria as 'reasons' but to 'convey' the work as a pianist might show the value of a sonata by playing it. ... Criticism is, therefore, an indefinite set of devices for 'presenting' and not 'proving' the merits of works of art. ... Criticism and appraisal, too, are more like creation than like demonstration and proof."[61]

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59. Macdonald, op. cit., pp. 127-28.

60. Ibid., p. 130.

61. Ibid., pp. 129-30.

Though its performativism is not as obvious as Macdonald's, Morris Weitz's view of evaluation could also, I think, be characterized as performativist.[62] Weitz does not go so far as to liken evaluative judgment to the 'exercitive'[63] performative of bestowing a medal or award. Nor does he explicitly compare the evaluating critic with the executant artist as in a sense creating or contributing to the value of the work of art evaluated. However, Weitz does liken the critic to a counsel (with Pope and Coleridge) and a judge (with Johnson) and stresses the logical multiplicity of performance involved in these jobs.[64] The critic, as counsel, may refute or also extenuate charges, and as judge, he may weigh the evidence presented for others to judge or may himself deliver the verdict.

At the beginning of this chapter we acknowledged Weitz's insight in recognizing the irreducible multiplicity of evaluative activities; but here we must critically emphasize that he strictly excludes description from these activities, so that evaluative predicates "do not function as descriptive predicates".[65]

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[62] Weitz, op. cit., pp. 269-84.

[63] For the notion of exercitives see Austin, op. cit., pp. 155-57.

[64] Weitz, op. cit., pp. 154-56, 168, 270.

[65] Ibid., p. 275.

> "'Great' is not a term that critics use to describe or to explain, but primarily to praise; 'Hamlet is a great drama' is not a sentence that critics employ to state a fact, it, too, functions primarily to praise."[66]

Perhaps it is rigid adherence to the fact/value dichotomy or to the performative/constative distinction which prevents Weitz from recognizing that some evaluations are descriptively or factually true and that some descriptions are highly evaluative. Whatever the cause, Weitz rejects the possibility "that critical evaluations are true (or false) descriptive reports on the merits or demerits of works of art or on our responses to them", a thesis which he thinks "misrepresents the role of evaluation in criticism."[67]

Though incapable of being true or false, evaluations may be, for Weitz, 'more or less adequate', and he gives "five different tests or criteria for the adequacy of evaluative criticism"[68] which I shall not pause here to investigate. What is important at present is that "we cannot ... rank these criteria of adequacy so that particular critics can be graded."[69] Thus, though elsewhere rejecting the executant artist analogy,[70] Weitz seems to conclude that we are free to choose our favorite of many adequate evaluations of a work of art just as we might choose a favorite of many adequate performances of the work.

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[66] Weitz, op. cit. pp. 279-80.

[67] Ibid., p. 280.

[68] Ibid., p. 283.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., p. 278.

> "Once the question of the truth (or falsity) of evaluations is repudiated, as it must be, the reader can choose his favorite evaluative critic, giving as the reasons for his choice any of these criteria of adequacy".[71]

This explains that while "few today accept Johnson's or Coleridge's ... evaluations as defensible", they are still highly regarded "because they speak clearly, empirically, and for the most part richly" about the works they evaluate and "constitute permanent orientations" toward them.[72]

The performativist view of evaluation has been presented. Is there evidence for it in the statements or practice of critics, evidence that they praise or condemn rather than describe? There is, I trust, little doubt of this. Criticism abounds in exclamations of praise like that of Coleridge praising Shakespeare's art: "How admirable, too, is the judgment of the poet!"[73] Though the descriptivist will try to see this as a disguised act of describing, and the prescriptivist as an urging to see something admirable, it is, I think, clear that such exclamations in their typical contexts function primarily as acts of praise rather than descriptions or prescriptions.

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71. Weitz, op. cit. p. 283.

72. Ibid.

73. T.M. Raysor (ed.), Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, London, 1960, vol. ii, p. 150.

There is also evidence for the view that critics assess evaluations in terms of power and creativity rather than truth. T.S. Eliot and Helen Gardner (the latter of which regards criticism as a 'minor art') praise Coleridge as perhaps the greatest English critic, despite his alleged "critical aberrations"[74] because his evaluations "permanently affect our own reading" of the works he criticized, because what he has to say "enlarges our conception of their value or gives them a fresh relevance".[75] Oscar Wilde has also advocated this view of criticism in The Critic as Artist;[76] and we even find Johnson, hardly a performativist critic, praising Dryden's criticism for being "a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction and where the critic proves his right of judgment by his power of performance."[77] Moreover, it does seem that the eloquent and imaginative ways that critics have tried to reveal or enhance a work's value often indeed contribute to the value accrued to the work in time. There is an institutional aspect of critical evaluation which performativism seems aware of.

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[74] See T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet", in Kermode, op. cit., p. 45, for "critical aberrations"; and "The Perfect Critic", p. 50, for praise of Coleridge as "perhaps the greatest of English critics". See Gardner, op. cit., p. 6, for criticism as a minor art, and pp. 10-11, for praise of Coleridge as a critic.

[75] Ibid., p. 11.

[76] O. Wilde, The Critic as Artist, in The Works of Oscar Wilde, London, 1969.

[77] See Johnson, "Dryden as Critic and Poet", p. 383.

However, even if such evidence of performativist criticism is discounted, there is one type of evaluative statement which can surely claim to be performative rather than descriptive or prescriptive. When the critic, as reviewer, tells the reader "This book is highly recommended" in the sense of "I highly recommend this book", he is not describing it as such nor urging that we should regard it as such. He is rendering it such in his official capacity. Surely the critic is evaluating here, but he is doing so by exercising his power as an authorized agent of the artworld. By recommending the work he renders it recommended. In such cases, performativism clearly seems to be right, and perhaps Miss Macdonald was thinking of such cases when she advanced her theory. But have we not seen other kinds of evaluative statements which seem to justify not performativism but its rival theories?

T.S. Eliot tells us:

> "the more usual reason for the unsatisfactoriness of our theories and general statements about poetry is that while professing to apply to all poetry, they are really theories about, or generalisations from, a limited range of poetry";[78] "we are generalising from the poetry which we best know and best like; not from all poetry, or even all of the poetry which we have read."[79]

These remarks on poetic theory are, I think, strikingly pertinent to the situation in critical theory or aesthetics, and I hope that my discussion of the theories of descriptivism, prescriptivism, and performativism has demonstrated this. Each, I have argued contains more than a grain of truth, but they all err by generalization. An adequate account of some evaluative statements will be an inadequate theory of all evaluative statements, because evaluative statements often differ greatly in what they logically express or perform.

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[78] Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 141.

[79] Ibid., p. 139.

## III

When we turn to the second aspect of the logic of evaluation and consider the role of reasons in evaluative argument, we again find three major positions. They are related though not wholly parallel to the positions we examined on the logical status of evaluative statements. The first position on this second aspect regards the critic's reasons for his evaluation as evidence or principles which logically support his evaluative conclusion. It admits that the reasons may be insufficient to verify fully or demonstrate the truth of the evaluation, but asserts that such reasons at least logically strengthen or help to confirm the evaluation as probable or adequate. Thus, though the critic's reasons may be inconclusive, their relation to his evaluative conclusion is seen as a logical one, reasons having the logical role of confirming evidence or validating principles.

This view, of course, is quite congenial to descriptivism, and it is only natural that some descriptivists adopt it. Beardsley, for example, who conceives aesthetic value in instrumental terms of "the capacity to produce an aesthetic experience of some magnitude",[80] clearly regards reasons as evidence. For Beardsley, "This has aesthetic value" is a dispositional statement of fact which is confirmed to some degree by the reason "This is unified". The logical relation, he argues, is similar to that between "This food is dangerous" and "It is crawling with salmonella bacteria".

> "Here, the presence of the bacteria is evidence that the food will probably produce ghastly effects if it is eaten, just as the presence of unity is evidence that the work will produce an aesthetic effect if it is perceived with attention".[81]

Reasons relating to complexity and intensity are likewise evidence, though not necessary or sufficient conditions, for judgments of evaluative merit, since objects possessing these qualities tend to produce aesthetic experience of some magnitude.

As Beardsley's instrumental standard of value is linked with reasons having the role of confirming evidence, so the many literary theorists and philosophers who accept the validity of intentionalist standards of evaluation would seem compelled to accept reasons relating to the artist's intentions and his success in achieving them as evidence for or against a given evaluative judgment.[82] Moreover, even an evaluative non-descriptivist like Weitz accepts that some reasons logically support or in his term "validate" evaluative utterances of praise or condemnation. Such "good reasons" do not merely present the verdict but rationally support it and render the evaluation adequate. One important criterion of a good reason is its logical "unchallengeability" in that it makes no sense to question its aesthetic relevance (e.g., unity); other criteria are clarity, concrete application, and consistency.[83]

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[80] Beardsley, op. cit., p. 533.

[81] Ibid., p. 535.

Thus, aestheticians of very different persuasions advance the view that reasons logically support evaluative judgments, and indeed it seems clear that in the evaluative 'games' of many critics reasons do have this role. When critics engage in intentionalist criticism, as they often do, they seem committed to some use of reasons as evidence, either in establishing intention or establishing success. But the evidential role of reasons in evaluation is far more extensive than intentionalist criticism. It is implicit in Johnson's famous and widely-recognized test of literary merit, "no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem". That a work is highly valued by the minds of several generations is, for most critics, undeniably strong evidence (though perhaps not proof) that it has merit or value. Thus, for example, Lionel Trilling, in arguing for the form and style of The Great Gatsby, first brings the fact that the work "after a quarter century ... has even gained in weight and relevance",[84] and then reasons that "if the book grows in weight of significance with the years, we can be sure that this could not have happened had its form and style not been as right as they are."[85] Even if we deny that Trilling proves his case, we can hardly deny that he is giving evidence or reasons which logically support his conclusion. Another contemporary critic, Graham Hough, similarly argues:

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[82] See Beardsley, op. cit., pp. 489-90, for reference to such aestheticians.

[83] Weitz, op. cit., p. 277.

> "It is not really open to anyone to say 'Yes, Dante's works exist, but they are not of any importance.' This is contradicted by a large body of indisputable evidence. And it would be a very strange position to hold that Dante's fame and influence were no evidence of literary merit."[86]

Here it is worth noting that not only merit but importance itself may be considered an evaluative predicate.

One could, I think, bring many additional examples of critics employing reasons as evidence logically confirming or justifying their evaluative judgments, and thus there seems to be an element of truth in the position that reasons play a logical role of support. Some philosophers, no doubt, would regard such reasons as irrelevant or not constituting real logical justification. Here we must point out, after Wittgenstein, that the nature of justification, like that of certainty, depends on the language game played, and that entrenched language games, like forms of life, are the philosopher's given and require no philosophical justification.[87] Thus, with respect to whether reasons function as supporting evidence or logical justification, we must recognize: "This language gam is played."[88]

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[84] L. Trilling, "F. Scott Fitzgerald" in The Liberal Imagination, New York, 1950, p. 251.

[85] Ibid., p. 252.

[86] G. Hough, An Essay on Criticism, London, 1966, p. 176.

This, however, does not mean it is the only game played in evaluative argument; perhaps evaluative reaşons have another role. Stevenson, who rejects the logical view of reasons, suggests they do. It is interesting that Stevenson rejects both the standard that 'time will tell' and that of realization of intention as criteria of evaluation, chiefly because they are in principle challengeable.[89] For by the open-question argument, judgment by neither standard seems to be equivalent with 'proper judgment', and, moreover, these standards are in fact challenged by the 'aesthetic pessimist' and anti-intentionalist respectively. But Stevenson's argument only proves here that neither of these evaluative standards (within which reasons have a logical role) is the only authoritative one that may be employed; it does not

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87. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Oxford, 1968, pp. 137, 220, 224, 226.

88. Ibid., p. 167.

89. Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 349-52.

prove that such standards are unjustifiably or illogically employed in the evaluative games or frameworks in which they do function, nor that these games or frameworks are themselves unjustified.

How, then, does Stevenson regard the role of reasons? Here, as with interpretation, he is a non-cognitivist, holding that the relation of reasons to an evaluative conclusion "is not a logical but only a causal, psychological relation".[90] The evaluative judgment expresses the critic's decision to regard the work in a particular way; and his reasons for such a decision are not purely cognitive in nature. This is because one's aims in art appreciation are not purely cognitive, and also because "like any psychological process, the critic's decision has a great many causes",[91] among them "the critic's personal sensibilities".[92] Thus, the relation of evaluative reasons "to the quasi-imperative judgment they support ... is causal rather than logical".[93]

Do critics in fact employ reasons which essentially function as causes or motives in a not purely cognitive evaluative decision? There certainly seem to be cases where they do, and one striking case is Eliot's evaluation of

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[90] Stevenson, op. cit., p. 364.

[91] Ibid., p. 359.

[92] Ibid., p. 370.

[93] Ibid.

Milton as it appears in two essays, dated 1936 and 1947.[94] The first essay, though beginning by conceding Milton's 'puzzling' greatness, proceeds to devaluate him with derogatory criticism. He is "blind", i.e., lacks "visual imagination".[95] "Milton writes English like a dead language";[96] one does not find that "appreciation of Milton leads anywhere outside of the mazes of sound."[97] Thus, "although his work realizes superbly one important element in poetry, he may still be considered as having done damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered."[98] Milton's poetry "could only be an influence for the worse upon any poet whatever", "an influence against which we still have to struggle."[99] Milton, then, may be 'great'; but "it is more important, in some vital respects, to be a good poet than to be a great poet",[100] the implication clearly being that Milton is not the former.

Both Milton and Eliot's criticism of him are re-examined in the essay of 1947, where Eliot modified some of his derogatory remarks but does not (as some have mistakenly supposed) repudiate his earlier criticism.[101] Indeed, one of the aims of the essay is to defend or justify this criticism by revealing its causes. Eliot supports his evaluation by trying "to make clearer the causes, and the justification, for hostility to Milton on the part of poets at a particular juncture."[102] Justifying reasons appear as causes or motives, here the motives of twentieth century poets in revolutionizing English poetry.

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[94] Both appear, though the second not in full, in Kermode, op. cit.

[95] Ibid., p. 259.

[96] Ibid., p. 261.

[97] Ibid., p. 263.

[98] Ibid., p. 264.

[99] Ibid., p. 258-59.

[100] Ibid., p. 259.

> "It inevitably happens that the young poets engaged in such a revolution will exalt the merits of those poets of the past who offer them example and stimulation, and cry down the merits of those poets who do not stand for qualities which they are zealous to realize. This is not only inevitable, it is right. ... Milton does, as I have said, represent poetry at the extreme limit from prose; and it was one of our tenets that verse should have the virtue of prose. ... And the study of Milton could be of no help here: it was only a hindrance."[103]

Here we see the reasons a critic bring to support his evaluation functioning as causes or motives, and when these motives are weakened, by the success of the revolution, the evaluative censure is weakened. Thus, Eliot ends his later essay by pointing out that by now "poets are sufficiently liberated from Milton's reputation to approach the study of his work without danger".[104] Stevenson has stressed the non-cognitive nature of our aims and reasons in art appreciation. Surely Eliot's aims and reasons in his evaluation of Milton are not purely congitive in nature. The use of such reasons in evaluative argument of this sort gives Stevenson's causal theory of reasons considerable credibility.

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[101] Eliot himself confirms that those who took the second essay as a recantation of his earlier opinion have misunderstood it and that it is rather a 'development' of his earlier view. See To Criticize the Critic, p. 23-24.

[102] Kermode, op. cit., p. 272.

[103] Ibid., p. 272-73.

After considering the logical and causal views of reasons, we turn to the third position which might be called perceptualism. Here again, theories on evaluation run remarkably parallel to their interpretational counterparts, so my account of perceptualism in evaluative reasoning will be more or less a translation of the perceptualist view of the role of reasons in interpretation. Perceptualism regards evaluative reasons as having two different but complementary roles. First, they may function as verbal attempts to focus on or clarify the perceptual elements or qualities which contribute to the critic's general evaluative verdict on a work of art. A critic may be struck with a work's value, but his impression may initially be quite vague and general. The reasons the critic then brings to explain or support his favorable verdict serve to clarify and articulate this verdict to the critic himself in terms of further description of the meritorious aspects of the work as he perceives it. His reasons, his pointing to alleged merits of the work, clarify and articulate what he values in the work but do not logically justify this value. Still such focussing may reinforce and intensify his initially vague impression of value and in this sense support or justify the evaluative verdict it delivered.

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[104] 104. Kermode, op. cit., p. 274.

Thus, according to perceptualism, one of the critic's use of reasons is to clarify his evaluation and perhaps thereby justify it to himself. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, these perception-focussing reasons convey the critic's evaluation to his reader by inducing in the reader the desired perception of the work. Like the interpreting critic, the evaluating critic is trying to get his reader to perceive the work in a certain way (which may be the strong descriptivist's true way, the prescriptivist's right way, or even only the performativist's adequate way); and the reasons he gives in justifying his evaluation are devices to induce in the reader the desired perception of the work, a perception which he feels should appeal to the reader and should issue in the reader's assenting verdict.

The perceptualist view of reasons is very popular among contemporary philosophers of art. Aldrich,[105] Osborne,[106]

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[105] V. Aldrich, _Philosophy of Art_, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963.

[106] Osborne, _Aesthetics and Criticism_.

Isenberg,[107] Sibley,[108] Ziff,[109] and Macdonald[110] all seem to maintain it in some form or another. This position goes back to Wittgenstein whose views on the matter, as described by Moore, are worth repeating:

> "Reasons, he said, in Aesthetics are 'of the nature of further descriptions': e.g., you can make a person see what Brahms was driving at by showing him lots of different pieces by Brahms, or by comparing him with a contemporary author; and that all Aesthetics does is to draw your attention to a thing, to place things side by side. He said that if, by giving reasons of this sort, you make another person 'see what you see' but it still doesn't appeal to him, that is 'an end' of the discussion."[111]

By this account, the relation between the critic's evaluative judgment and his reasons for it is not a logical one in terms of evidence or principles, nor is it causal in the sense that the reasons are causes of his verdict. Moreover, it is only the giving of these reasons, and not the reasons themselves, which may be a cause of the reader's accepting the critic's evaluation; for following the reasons given may enable the reader to focus his attention on the work so that he comes to see it as the critic does and evaluate it accordingly. This difference between the citing of reasons and the reasons cited was explained in my account of interpretative perceptualism with the aid of an example which may be modified here to clarify this distinction in its evaluational context. Suppose that in justifying an unfavorable evaluation of a love poem as harsh and crude, the critic cites the predominance of voiced plosives and the similarity of its imagery to some bawdy song. Neither the plosives nor the similarity themselves may be what causes the reader to perceive the poem as harsh and crude, but the act of citing these reasons may direct attention to the work in such a way that the perception of harshness and crudity is induced and assent to the negative verdict is achieved.

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[107] A. Isenberg, "Critical Communication", in J. Margolis (ed.), Philosophy Looks at the Arts, New York, 1962.

[108] F. Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts", in Margolis, op. cit.

[109] P. Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism", in Margolis, op. cit.

[110] Macdonald, op. cit.

[111] G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33", in H. Osborne (ed.), Aesthetics, Oxford, 1972, p. 88.

Thus, the perceptualist regards the role of reasons in justifying an evaluative conclusion not as logically supporting it by evidence or principles, nor as recommending it through the motives which caused it, but simply as perceptually justifying it by evoking in the reader the desired perception. One perceptualist, John Casey,[112] goes so far as to assert that inducing the desired perception of the work of art logically entails the desired evaluation, that we cannot see a work the same way but evaluate it differently. But others[113] allow this possibility, and I think with good reason, for even critics sometimes claim to see things the same but value them differently.[114]

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[112] J. Casey, The Language of Criticism, London, 1966, p. 172.

[113] For example, Isenberg (op. cit.) and Wittgenstein (according to Moore, op. cit.).

On the main points, however, there is general assent among perceptualists. Reasons are but "hints and directions for focusing the attention in the very difficult art of exercising and cultivating the skill to perceive."[115] The role of reasons is to "direct or guide one in the contemplation of the work, a 'reason' that failed to do this would not be worth asking for, not worth giving".[116] The meaning of reasons "is 'filled in', 'rounded out', or 'completed' by the act of perception", where the goal is "to induce a sameness of vision, of experienced content."[117] A critic's reasons successfully justify an evaluative judgment when they get the reader to assent to it by bringing him to share the critic's perception or experience of the work.

The popularity of perceptualism may derive in part from the influence of Wittgenstein, but it can also be explained and justified by the prevalence of critical reasoning which suits the perceptualist model. We can go all the way back to Dryden for the following fine example. To justify his praise of Shakespeare's admirable suiting of the manner to the matter or passion in drama, Dryden asks us to focus on what he considers an incomparably excellent example of Shakespeare's passionate description. Moreover, he helps us to perceive the merit of this particular description by directing our attention to the poignancy of the scene described and then invoking us to feel the power of Shakespeare's lines which he proceeds to cite. But the perceptualist nature of Dryden's reasoning speaks best for itself.

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[114] See, for example, C.S. Lewis's remarks about his disagreement with Leavis over the value of Paradise Lost. "It is not that he and I see different things when we look at Paradise Lost. He sees and hates the very same that I see and love." C.S. Lewis, Preface To Paradise Lost, London, 1942, p. 30.

[115] Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 320.

[116] Ziff, op. cit., p. 162.

[117] Isenberg, op. cit., p. 148.

> "I cannot leave this subject, before I do justice to that divine poet, by giving you one of his passionate descriptions: 'tis of Richard the Second when he was deposed, and led in triumph through the streets of London by Henry of Bullingbrook: the painting of it is so lively, and the words so moving, that I have scarce read anything comparable to it in any other language. Suppose you have seen already the fortunate usurper passing through the crowd, and followed by the shouts and acclamations of the people; and now behold King Richard entering upon the scene: consider the wretchedness of his condition, and his carriage in it; and refrain from pity, if you can -
>
> As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
> After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
> Are idly bent on him that enters next,
> Thinking his prattle to be tedious:
> Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes
> Did scowl on Richard: no man cried, God save him
> No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home,
> But dust was thrown upon his sacred head,
> Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,
> His face still combating with tears and smiles
> (The badges of his grief and patience),
> That had not God (for some strong purpose) steel'd
> The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,
> And barbarism itself have pitied him."[118]

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[118] W.P. Ker (ed.), Essays of John Dryden, Oxford, 1926, vol. i, pp. 226-27.

Dryden thus argues for the greatness of this passage by so focussing our reading of it that we are induced to share his way of seeing it and consequently his high evaluation of it. Indeed, it seems that we are similarly to focus on and see Shakespearean description through the lense of this particular passage and thus feel the justice of Dryden's general valuation, rather than view this one example as sufficient evidence in an inductive argument.

Perceptualist reasons also play a significant role in Addison's evaluation of "Chevy Chase", where his argument consists of focussing instructions — what merits we should see — and then citations from the text and complementary allusions to induce in the reader the desired perception. The following example is typical of Addison's use of reasons here:

> "Earl Piercy's lamentation over his enemy is generous, beautiful, and passionate: I must only caution the reader not to let the simplicity of the style, which one may pardon in so old a poet, prejudice him against the greatness of the thought.
>
> Then leaving life, Earl Piercy took
> The dead man by the hand,
> And said, Earl Douglas, for thy life
> Would I had lost my land.
>
> O Christ! my very heart doth bleed
> With sorrow for thy sake;
> For sure a more renowned knight
> Mischance did never take.
>
> That beautiful line, Taking the dead man by the hand, will put the reader in mind of Aeneas's behaviour toward Lausus ..."[119]

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119. J. Addison, "Chevy Chase", in Jones, op. cit., p. 273.

There are also contemporary critics whose evaluative reasoning suits the perceptualist position. Casey has lengthily argued that Leavis is a superior critic because he fully and rigourously employs such reasoning.[120] There is no doubt that Leavis does argue in the perceptualist manner, and he even seems to aim consciously at the perceptualist goal of inducing sameness of vision. For Leavis avows that in presenting before his readers his view of the essential order of English poetry (which for him includes relative valuations of individual poets), he "hoped ... to get them to agree ... that the map, the essential order of English poetry, seen as a whole, did, when they interrogated their experience, look like that to them too."[121] Leavis similarly confesses on one occasion, "I can aim at little more than to suggest coercively the reorientation from which revaluation follows".[122] Leavis's power of suggestive reasoning in perceptually orienting and guiding the reader towards the desired verdict is superbly exemplified by his criticism of Shelly in Revaluation and his praise of Hardy's "After a Journey".[123] Brevity prevents me here from presenting these long and powerful arguments, and their very nature prevents adequate summary; the reader is best referred to the arguments themselves, in full, as Leavis compellingly delivers them.

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[120] Casey, op. cit., pp. 153-77.

[121] F.R. Leavis, "Literary Criticism and Philosophy", in The Common Pursuit, p. 214.

[122] Leavis, Revaluation, pp. 68-69.

[123] F.R. Leavis, "Reality and Sincerity", Scrutiny, vol. 19, 1952-53.

Having examined the three positions on the role of reasons in evaluative argument, how are we to resolve the controversy as to which is the correct one? Each can appeal to actual critical practice for some degree of confirmation, and perhaps for that very reason we find none entirely convincing as providing the whole or essential truth. Once again it seems reasonable to make a move toward pluralism and suggest that there are at least three different roles or kinds of reasons in evaluative argument, parallel to the roles or kinds of interpretative reasons. Some function as evidence toward an evaluative conclusion, others are essentially causes or motives in a decision to take and recommend a particular evaluative view of the literary work, and still other reasons, often in the form of further descriptions and comparisons, serve as devices to clarify or induce a particular perception of the work which should issue in the desired evaluative verdict.

This logical diversity of reasons reflects a variety of evaluative games and seems to derive in part from a diversity of evaluative aims. We may wish to determine whether a book is likely to produce an aesthetic experience of some magnitude or, more simply, whether it makes good reading. We may want to show that some poet was a major or important poet. Evidence surely functions here. However, we may wish instead, like Eliot, to stress the faults of a certain poet or style of poetry in order to forward the practice and acceptance of a new style antithetical to the former. Or perhaps we merely wish to articulate and deepen our appreciation of a work of literature and have others share our appreciative experience.

All these are aims that practicing critics try to realize in their evaluation of literary art. There are no doubt many more. All the three kinds of reasons (and again there may be many more) which serve these aims are consistently and unabashedly used by practicing critics. The philosopher who claims to describe the logic of evaluation must accept these different forms of criticism as a given, and he must recognize their difference. They do not seem reducible to a general formula or essence, nor will the philosopher achieve uniformity by trying to demonstrate by abstract reasoning the illegitimacy of certain aims, reasons, or practices which do not fit his formula. Critical legitimacy is having practicing critics, not philosophers, for fathers.

## IV

The third aspect of the logic of evaluation is intimately related to, though I think distinguishable from, the question of the role of evaluative reasons. It concerns the general character or structure of evaluative argument, i.e., whether it is typically inductive, deductive, or neither. The issue here has aroused more interest and controversy than its counterpart in interpretational logic. The major positions all find their advocates among aestheticians, but more importantly each can find critical practices which suit and thus support it.

The view that evaluative argument is inductive is advanced by Beardsley, who begins with the premise that "there are only two fundamental kinds of argument, deductive and inductive".[124] Evaluative argument, Beardsley contends, cannot be deductive because there are no universal canons of criticism to serve as a major premise from which (with an additional premise) we could deduce our evaluative conclusion, e.g., All literary works having unity are good; this literary work has unity; therefore, this literary work is good. Instead we only have general canons reflecting merely statistical generalizations as to what has a tendency to make a work good; e.g., works having unity tend to be good. From such tendencies no evaluative conclusion necessarily follows, so we must "understand critical arguments as elliptical induction, justified ultimately by the general principles of inductive reasoning".[125] Reasons, we remember, function as confirming evidence in this inductive framework.

There should be little doubt that critics sometimes reason inductively. Our discussion of the use of reasons as confirming evidence has hopefully made this clear. Certainly, the question of the importance or greatness of an author is inductively argued. Moreover, as far back as Longinus, critics seem to accept inductive frameworks for evaluating individual works of art.

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[124] Beardsley, op. cit., p. 471.

[125] Ibid., p. 472.

> "In general we may regard those works as truly noble and sublime which always please and please all readers. For when the same book always produces the same impression on all who read it, whatever be the difference in their pursuits, their manner of life, their aspirations, their ages, or their language, such a harmony of opposites gives irresistible authority to their favorable verdict."[126]

Behind the universal terminology, the view seems to be that the more, and more various, readers a work manages to please, and the more constantly it manages to please them, the more likely it is to be noble and sublime; and this likelihood approaches certainty when all readers are always pleased. When in supporting a favorable evaluative verdict, the critic points to a work's popularity, to the approval it has won from other qualified critics, to its having so far stood the 'test of time', he is most likely arguing inductively.

Evaluative arguments have also been held to be deductive. Among contemporary aestheticians, Harold Osborne appears to maintain such a view, where the critic's value judgments are deducible from his norms of judgment and description of the work.[127] Osborne seems to regard these norms as constituting for the critic necessary and sufficient criteria of aesthetic

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126. From On The Sublime, in A. Sesonske (ed.), What is Art?, New York, 1965, p. 77.

127. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism.

value, and indeed as fixing the very meaning of "good" in aesthetic contexts. He thus declares:

> "unless the critic defines his norms of judgment clearly and without ambivalence, either by verbal description or ostensively, the judgments which he utters will be strictly devoid of meaning, they will be no more than empty ejaculations."[128]

Believing that all works of art share a common property, and that to the degree that they share it they have aesthetic value,[129] Osborne himself proposes a definition of the work of art from which particular value judgments are deducible, given certain descriptions of the works to be evaluated. For Osborne, "a work of art is an organic whole of interlocking organic wholes";[130] and if a particular work of literature could be correctly described as such, then it would follow deductively that it was good. But, as Osborne points out, "The qualities of organic configuration are, however, necessarily extremely difficult to describe and demonstrate in particular works of art."[131] Thus, for Osborne, all other evaluative reasons have the mere perceptualist role of inducing our perception of organic wholeness.

Pepita Haezrahi has also suggested a deductive framework for evaluative reasoning where aesthetic goodness is of a "technical mode" and essentially predicated in the form "a is a good x".[132] Judgments are objective and are validated simply and solely by "grounds, criteria, and principles internal, inherent, and formative of the group"[133] or genre to which the work belongs. In some respects her view is similar to Hare's account[134] of moral reasoning, where justification of a particular evaluation leads to more and more general principles of value until we reach the highest order principles, which cannot be further justified but which are simply decided upon or assumed.

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[128] Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 35.

[129] Ibid., pp. 43-44, 209, 294.

[130] Osborne, The Theory of Beauty, p. 203.

[131] Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 293.

> "Thus, let us assume that our argument runs: 'a is a good x, the Lac d'Annecy is a good Cezanne.' Why? Because 'Cezanne is a good painter and the Lac d'Annecy is a good painting.' Why? ... we should have to answer, 'because painting is an art, and art is good.' Why? Because, 'it is beautiful.' Here having reached an ultima thule the argument has to stop. The basic proposition 'Beauty is good because it is beautiful', tautologous as it is, is the underlying basic assumption which from a psychological point of view is most necessary to all aesthetic enquiries. If we did not care about beauty there would be no theory of beauty and no aesthetics."[135]

Some philosophers, then, represent evaluative argument in terms of a deductive framework. But do critics argue deductively? Can they? Oddly enough, Morris Weitz denies that evaluative argument can be deductive yet admits that many critics clearly practice evaluation as if it were deductive argument. He shows how Johnson and Coleridge try to deductively justify their evaluations of Shakespearean drama in terms of its possessing the necessary and sufficient properties of dramatic greatness.[136] Why, in light of this empirical evidence, does Weitz deny that evaluative argument is sometimes deductive but rather assert that "critical evaluation ... is not, and more important, cannot be, true (or false) deductive argument"?[137] Simply because the conclusions of deductive arguments are typically true or false statements, while Weitz regards evaluative statements as expressions of praise lacking truth value. For him, the recognition of "deductive evaluative argument ... entails that evaluative criticism does not praise (or condemn) but describes."[138]

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[132] P. Haezrahi, "Propositions in Aesthetics", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 57, 1956-57.

[133] Ibid., p. 179.

[134] Hare, op. cit.; Casey, op. cit., p. 57, has noted this similarity.

[135] Haezrahi, op. cit., p. 186.

Weitz seems to be very confused here. Deductive arguments are first of all neither true nor false but valid or invalid. Evaluating critics argue no less deductively because their premises are not unchallengeable and their conclusions thus not unchallengeably true. But secondly, and more importantly, some evaluative statements have been seen to be descriptive and factually true. Though describing is not identical to

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136. Weitz, op. cit., pp. 157-64, 178-87, 272-74.

137. Ibid., 275.

138. Ibid.

praising, it is not incompatible with praising. To hold as Weitz that describing precludes praising or, more generally, evaluating is to be enslaved by a philosophical picture — the fact/value dichotomy. This picture compels him to deny the possibility of deductive argument when he is fully aware that such argument is practiced. Freed from his confusing denial, we are left with Weitz's illuminating account of how deductive evaluative argument is in fact practiced in Shakespearean criticism.

Though some critics[139] seem to argue deductively from universal principles of literary value, deductive evaluative argument is perhaps most evident in genre criticism, where the work's value is justified by its satisfying the rules or demands of the genre. However, such justification by rules can be practiced even when the work does not clearly fall under a given genre. Addison, for example, in his argument for the excellence of Paradise Lost, waives the controversial question of whether this poem is an heroic poem, on the reasonable assumption that praise of the work will be justified merely if the work shares the excellence of epic poetry. "It will be sufficient to its perfection, if it has all the beauties of the highest kind of poetry".[140] Addison proceeds to "examine it by the rules of epic poetry, and see whether it falls short of the Iliad or Aeneid, in the beauties which are essential to that kind of writing."[141] Following Aristotle's rules or conditions for good epic poetry, Addison argues that Paradise Lost satisfies all the rules (rules concerning the fable, the characters, the sentiment, and the language) and satisfies some of them more fully than the two great epics, the Iliad and Aeneid. From the premise that a poem meeting the rules or having "the beauties which are essential" to epic poetry is a great poem, Addison can conclude that Paradise Lost is great.

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[139] Casey, op. cit., pp. 120-39, describes how Winters tries to work deductively from the general evaluative principles of rationality and morality.

[140] J. Addison, "Criticisms on Paradise Lost", in Jones op. cit., p. 280.

Addison's deductive argument from the rules of epic poetry also contains, in its use of the Iliad and Aeneid, the suggestion of another type of evaluative argument — argument which relies heavily on analogy. Analogical argument is usually considered inductive argument, but the use of analogies and contrasts in the evaluative arguments of literary critics is characteristic not of evaluative induction or deduction but rather of a third form of argumentation which for want of a better term I have called "dialectic".[142] The notion of dialectic argumentation might be illustrated and even legitimatized by the kind of arguments often found in Plato's dialogues and in Wittgenstein's Investigations.[143]

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[141] Addison, "Criticisms on Paradise Lost", p. 280.

[142] J. Wisdom seems to use the term "rhetoric" somewhat as I use "dialectic". See J. Wisdom, "Gods", in Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, Oxford, 1957, pp. 154-55.

[143] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations.

Such arguments frequently consist of a complex arrangement of focussing remarks, leading questions, and suggested answers which bring an often imaginary interlocutor to a particular desired conclusion. Analogies, or rather both comparisons and contrasts, play a crucial rôle in the focussing remarks.

These dialectic arguments do not seem reducible to deductive or inductive argument, or a combination of the two. Nor do they have formulated rules of validity but rather seem to be assessed in terms of their power to illuminate and compel assent. Dialectic arguments of this sort are frequently employed with considerable success in literary evaluation. In such aesthetic contexts, these arguments rely heavily upon inducing certain perceptions of the work of art in order to illuminate and compel assent to a desired verdict. It is therefore not surprising that many who hold the perceptualist position on the role of reasons (e.g., Sibley, Isenberg, Macdonald, and Casey) argue that evaluative reasoning is essentially of this dialectical variety. Though they may differ as to whether the evaluative verdict is a true or false statement, these aestheticians agree that the critic cannot justify his value judgments by deductive or inductive inference, but rather supports his judgment by 'conveying' or 'presenting' the value of the work, by inducing "a sameness of vision, of experienced content",[144] by getting us "to see what he has seen".[145] Among the prominent methods of inducing perception (Sibley lists as many as seven[146]) are the use of comparisons and contrasts, and the suggestion of the very qualities we are asked to perceive often while pointing to other qualities whose perception is unquestionably given.

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[144] Isenberg, op. cit., p. 158.

[145] Sibley, op. cit., p. 74.

Critics as well as philosophers strongly affirm the use of dialectic reasoning. Graham Hough tells us that with the decline of deductive "argument from general principles",

> "another kind of argument has correspondingly increased. That is argument by analogy or comparison; and it is today probably the most versatile and serviceable tool that criticism has at its disposal. It is used both in interpretation and in value judgment."[147]

Hough goes on to describe the nature of this analogical or dialectic reasoning in terms highly reminiscent of Wittgenstein's account of philosophical reasoning in his Investigations (Part I, pp. 49-50).

> "Often the actual process of literary discussion is carried on not by adducing new knowledge, but by reminding hearers or readers of what they know already - the existence and nature of works relevant for comparison; obvious descriptive features; moral commonplaces. ...The critic's task is often to recall to mind things that everybody knows at the right time and in the right context."[148]

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146. Sibley, op. cit., pp. 81-83.

147. Hough, op. cit., p. 170.

148. Ibid., p. 174.

Compare Wittgenstein's: "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose." (p. 50).

Thus, it would seem that critics often employ such dialectic argument of suggestion, question, and comparison where the reader is seen as a collaborator whose assent is appealed for and hopefully induced. F.R. Leavis clearly regards his own evaluative practice as dialectic rather than deductive "measuring with a norm".[149] It is in the form of a collaborative, if highly coercive, dialogue, "in terms of concrete judgments and particular analyses: 'This — doesn't it? — bears such a relation to that; this kind of thing — don't you find it so? — wears better than that', etc."[150] Evaluative judgments can be demonstrated, and the criterion of successful demonstration is the satisfying or convincing of its readers; e.g., "for such readers the superiority [of 'After a Journey'] can, I think be demonstrated; that is established to their satisfaction."[151]

Leavis uses this dialectic style of argumentation with tremendous power in his attack on Shelley, who is said to be "almost unreadable"[152] when we "bring the critical intelligence into play".[153] Brevity requires me to select only two typical passages which illustrate this style. Examining the poem, "When the lamp is shattered", to show that Shelley's verse is sloppily vague and "unexacting about sense", Leavis first quotes the work in full and then argues:

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[149] Leavis, "Literary Criticism and Philosophy", p. 213.

[150] Ibid., p. 215.

[151] Leavis, "Reality and Sincerity", p. 91.

[152] Leavis, Revaluation, p. 192.

[153] Ibid., p. 194.

> "The first two stanzas call for no very close attention - to say so, indeed, is to make the main criticism, seeing that they offer a show of insistent argument. However, reading with an unsolicited closeness, one may stop at the second line and ask whether the effect got with 'lies dead' is legitimate. Certainly, the emotional purpose of the poem is served, but the emotional purpose that went on being served in that way would be suspect. Leaving the question in suspense, perhaps, one passes to 'shed'; 'shed' as tears, petals, and coats are shed, or as light is shed? The latter would be a rather more respectable use of the word in connection with a rainbow's glory, but the context indicates the former. Only in the vaguest and slackest state of mind - of imagination and thought - could one so describe the fading of a rainbow ...
>
> The critical interest up to this point has been to see Shelley, himself (when inspired) so unexacting about sense, giving himself so completely to sentimental banalities. With the next stanza it is much the same, though the emotional clichés take on a grosser unction and the required abeyance of thought (and imagination) becomes more remarkable. In what form are we to imagine Love leaving the well-built nest? For readers who get so far as asking, there can be no acceptable answer. It would be unpoetically literal to suggest that, since the weak one is singled, the truant must be the mate, and, besides, it would raise unnecessary difficulties. Perhaps the mate, the strong one, is what the weak one, deserted by Love, whose alliance made possession once possible, now has to endure? But the suggestion is frivolous; the sense is plain enough - enough, that is, for those who respond to the sentiment. Sufficient recognition of the sense depends neither on thinking, nor on realization of the metaphors, but on response to the sentimental commonplaces: it

> is only when intelligence and imagination insist on intruding that difficulties arise."[154]

Leavis relentlessly continues his attack on Shelley by comparing Shelley's dramatic verse in The Cenci to its unacknowledged Shakespearean source. After showing Shelley's 'echoes' or plagiarisms of Shakespeare, Leavis gets us to see Shelley's weakness through comparison to Shakespeare's strength; first by quoting parallel speeches from The Cenci (Beatrice's speech, V, iv, 48-62) and Measure for Measure (Claudio's speech, III, i, 117-131) and then appealing to our perception for assent to Shelley's marked inferiority, and then further compelling that assent through comparative evaluative analysis of the texts (which I shall only partially present). Beatrice's speech is cited first:

> O
> My God! Can it be possible I have
> To die so suddenly? So young to go
> Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
> To be nailed down into a narrow place;
> To see no more sweet sunshine; ...

Claudio's speech is immediately brought for comparison:

> Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
> To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
> In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice; ...

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[154] Leavis, Revaluation, pp. 204-5.

Leavis then argues:

> "The juxtaposition is enough to expose the vague, generalizing externality of Shelley's rendering. Claudio's words spring from a vividly realized particular situation; from the imagined experience of a given mind in a given critical moment that is felt from the inside - that is lived - with sharp concrete particularity. Claudio's 'Ay, but to die ...' is not insistently and voluminously emotional like Beatrice's ('wildly')
>
> O
> My God! Can it be possible ...
>
> but it is incomparably more intense."[155]

Leavis's argument for the devaluation of Shelley is neither deductive nor inductive, but it is argument with a vengeance — cogent, compelling, effective. Some of criticism's most powerful evaluative argument is of this dialectic form, but this should not blind us, as it has blinded some advocates of critical dialectic, from the fact that critics can and do argue effectively within inductive and deductive frameworks.

There is thus no one general form of argument that is standard in evaluative reasoning. I have shown three typical forms, but there may be others. This plurality of logical form in evaluative argument should not surprise us, since we saw similar plurality with respect to the logical role of evaluative reasons and the logical status of evaluative statements. An empirical and non-partisan investigation of the actual practice of literary critics reveals a multiplicity of evaluative enterprises which defy reduction to a uniform logic. Such an investigation should reveal that evaluative logic, like interpretative logic, is a logical motley.

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[155] Leavis, Revaluation, p. 211.

## V

Our conclusion that evaluative logic is pluralistic was perhaps suggested and is surely reflected in the plurality of 'monistic' philosophical accounts of evaluation. More important, however, this pluralistic position is confirmed by the logically variant practices of evaluating critics which may be brought as evidence to support the variant meta-critical accounts. Thus, if to some readers the logical multiplicity of evaluation was obvious from the outset, I can at least hope to have shown how certain prominent aestheticians have been insufficiently aware of the obvious. To such readers previously convinced of evaluation's logical complexity, I hope also to have added grounds for their conviction by showing some of the forms in which this complexity is manifested. In arguing that the analysis of evaluative logic has more than one aspect and that with respect to each aspect more than one logic to analyze, I have distinguished three aspects and with respect to each aspect three philosophical positions supported by three kinds of evaluative practice. However, I must stress here that my aim was to demonstrate plurality, and not triplicity or my own power of systematization. More, and more discriminating study may reveal more aspects and logics.

The logical pluralism I advocate should not be confused with more limited brands of pluralism that have sometimes been proposed by literary critics and theorists under the titles "Pluralism" or "Relativism".[156] Such limited pluralism recognizes a plurality of different methods or criteria of evaluation, as well as different objects of evaluation. But given the method, the criteria, and the object, the evaluative judgment can be seen to be true or false, accurate or inaccurate. As Hirsch has formulated it:

> "The critic's choice of criteria depends upon the purposes he has in view and ultimately upon his own protestant inward light. But his evaluations upon those criteria can be absolutely accurate."[157]

This pluralism with its emphasis on truth or accuracy stays within the confines of the descriptivist position, but I have tried to advocate a pluralism which finds a place for evaluative statements which demand a prescriptivist or performativist interpretation. Even critics must accept that much of their evaluative statement consists not of accurate description but of motivated urging and institutional

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156. See, for example, B. Heyl, op. cit.; and R.S. Crane, E. Olson, and R. McKeon, in R.S. Crane (ed.), Critics and Criticism (Abridged Edition), Chicago, 1957.

157. Hirsch, op. cit., p. 33.

rendering. Moreover, the pluralism I maintain not only accepts the use of different standards or general criteria in evaluative argument, but it also recognizes that critics may argue quite effectively without the use of such standards. It is a pluralism dictated by a plurality of evaluative practice, and philosophers who have not recognized this apparently suffer from what Wittgenstein regarded as "a main cause of philosophical disease — a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example."[158]

Does my pluralism entail that all evaluative games are equally valid or adequate? This is an ambiguously loaded question. Surely, assuming some evaluative aim (and we always seem to, no matter how vaguely and implicitly), certain methods or practices are clearly more adequate than others. However, evaluative aims are no more uniform than the evaluative methods which serve them; besides, more often than not, they are vague and unformulated. Evaluative games can be played without strict rules or methods and without clear aims.

Does my position absolve all evaluative practice from philosophical criticism? Again the question is ambiguous. Certainly the philosopher or critic is free to point to the difficulties or limitations of a particular evaluative

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158. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, p. 195.

procedure, for no one would deny that every evaluative game has its limitations. He is also free to stress the advantages of the evaluative practice which best serves the evaluative aim he thinks most worthy. However, the aesthetician should neither imagine nor imply that the program he prescribes is a true and adequate description of how qualified critics evaluate. He misleads if he present it as the true or essential logic of evaluation. There is none.

# CONCLUSION

In dissertations of this sort a 'Conclusion' is *de rigueur* and typically reviews summarily the major points made. My already lengthy dissertation on literature and literary criticism must be brief in complying with this convention. My conclusion might be expressed in one word: complexity.

After justifying my concentration on a single art by appealing to the complex multifariousness and questionable unity of the arts, I discussed literature's problematic position in the classification of the arts and showed that its complex verbal (rather than essentially oral) nature makes it more a performable than an essentially performing art. My examination of the concept of literature showed it to be essentially complex, but also ambiguous, vague, open, essentially contested, non-observational, and non-functional. All these logical features point to the complexity of applying and defining this concept.

When we proceeded to the four major issues of this dissertation: the identity and ontological status of the literary work and its interpretation and evaluation, we were continuously made aware of very basic and important complexities. Indeed these four issues were shown to be linked by a complex network of close conceptual interrelations. These interrelations were traced in chapter two, and we saw how positions on one issue consequently influence positions on the other three. Finally, our individual studies of these four issues each yielded conclusions of complexity.

We found that the literary work was ontologically complex in at least three different ways. Its two standard forms of manifestation are ontologically different; it involves a variety of aspects which cannot all be subsumed under the same traditional ontological category; and it is typically treated both as a manifestation and as something which may be multiply manifested and may not be reduced to any manifestation or group of manifestations. We saw that all these ontological complexities could be accommodated by the ambiguous notion of the work as a verbal formula.

The identity of the literary work yielded similar conclusions of complexity. Not only were we shown the complexities of our practices of identifying and individuating literary works, but we found three different concepts of work-identity. We saw that our judgments of work-identity and authenticity of manifestation were not governed by and could not be explained by one simple standard or set of necessary and sufficient criteria, but rather by a complex network of weighted criteria which can be satisfied in different ways and to different degrees and which are used differently in different contexts.

Finally, we saw that the interpretation and evaluation of literary works revealed not only a multiformity of approaches and standards, but also logical complexity. There are at least three distinguishable aspects both to the logic of interpretation and to the logic of evaluation. And with respect to each of these aspects we found a variety of 'logics' or 'games' that are fruitfully practiced by qualified critics. This variety of interpretative and evaluative logics reflects the complex variety of our aims and interests in the criticism of literature. Here, too, the object of literary criticism is seen to be complex and essentially contested.

Let me close by suggesting that recognition of this complexity may provide the key to the stubbornly controversial question of whether literary criticism is an art or a science. Some of criticism's (interpretative and evaluative) procedures seem clearly scientific, while others clearly do not. We cannot say that literary criticism is simply art or simply science, because it is both. Indeed, given the complexity of literary works and critical practices, one wonders whether there is anything simple we can say about the object of literary criticism.

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