

Book Reviews

WALTON, KENDALL. *In Other Shoes: Music, Metaphor, Empathy, Existence*. Oxford University Press, 2015, 295 pp., \$29.95 paper.

This volume brings together essays by Kendall Walton from 1978 to the present, presented in reverse chronological order and centered around the role of imagination in appreciating and understanding art, language, and other persons. For the most part, he extends the role he ascribed to imagination in the appreciation of representational art and literature in his now classic book *Mimesis and Make-Believe*. He expands on the working of imagination in areas such as sports, metaphor, and music. But in some cases he limits that role in comparison to what he previously thought and what others claim. The essays, some previously published in places somewhat obscure to philosophers, are consistently interesting, often ingenious, and very well written (Walton avoids the now common formulaic journalistic style). They are must-reads for those who seek a broader understanding of the philosophy of one of the most important and original figures in contemporary aesthetics.

I will focus my comments here on his central topic of imagination, although Walton has insightful things to say on other topics as well, including a very plausible and well developed essay on the relation of musical works to performances, which begins with an example of two musical works reminiscent of his well-known example of Guernicas versus Picassos in his famous article "Categories of Art." I must preface my remarks with the admission that I am a far less imaginative person than Walton is. This undoubtedly in part explains why his descriptions of the experiences of viewing paintings, listening to music, watching sports, and understanding metaphors do not fit my experiences well. But I cannot speak for others, and I know of no empirical research directly on these topics. Descriptions in the writings of others may well be influenced at this point by Walton's very well-known theories. And to the extent that his descriptions depart from my experience, they seem all the more ingenious and, needless to say, imaginative.

I begin, however, with essays in which Walton surprisingly limits or dismisses the role of imagination in relation to what he previously claimed and others might assume. In the first essay on empathy, he argues that it consists in propositional knowledge of how another person feels. It is not necessary that one imagine being the other person or even being in the same situation, although the latter is often a part of, or a preliminary to, empathizing. In some cases, one can actually be in a similar situation, or remember being in one. The crucial thing is that one then uses one's own resultant mental state as a sample whose salient property is attributed to the other person.

In a second essay Walton argues that we need not imagine narrators when reading fiction, and especially poetry; nor need we imagine personae in musical pieces who feel the emotions that the music expresses. Instead, real poets write words used by readers to express their thoughts, and composers write notes that listeners can use to express their emotions.

In a third essay Walton now admits that a prescription to imagine *x* is only necessary for it to be fictionally true that *x*, not sufficient as he previously thought. But the examples that convince him of this new limitation nevertheless ascribe imagination when it does not seem to operate in my experience. One such example is that of a picture of Cupid on a wall within a larger painting. Walton holds that recognizing the picture of Cupid involves imagining that he is real, although it is not fictional in the painting that he is real (only that there is a real picture of him on the wall). I do not think I need to imagine that Cupid is real in order to recognize a picture of him, and I do not think I do so imagine when viewing the painting. According to Walton, in viewing the painting I imagine two worlds: one in which I see a picture on a wall that depicts Cupid and another in which I see him really there in the depicted scene. And I keep these two worlds apart in my mind. Given my limited mental capacity, I think that if I were to do all that, I would lose appreciation of the formal and aesthetic aspects of the painting.

Another of his examples here involves reading a metaphor in a story which refers to a woman having a beast in her breast. According to him, in understanding this metaphor we imagine an actual beast in her breast, while again it is not fictionally true in the story that there is a beast inside the woman. Metaphors come up as a topic in other essays as well. Another example is plumbers' reference to pipes as male and female—male pipes being threaded on the outside (and therefore fitting inside female pipes). I'm not sure what it would be to satisfy Walton's claim that we imagine a pipe to actually be male. Perhaps I can imagine it being a penis, but I hope I do not have to do that in order to get the metaphor.

Walton admits that some metaphors must be understood without such imagining that they are literally true—for example, "time flies." Presumably we understand that time and things that fly share a common property of going by quickly. Walton offers counterexamples to the claim that we can understand all metaphors in terms of such similarities without engaging in games of imagination—for example, the metaphor of high and low musical tones. But as he notes, both higher tones and higher spatial positions generally take more energy to reach—a shared property, although a relational one. He also notes that metaphors are not reversible while similarities are: we say "Life is hell" but not "Hell is life." But that is because the property of badness is more salient in hell, not because they do not share this property.

I find his ascription of imagination in other areas yet more puzzling. In his account of experiencing emotions in listening to music, he admits that sounds are so different from emotions that we cannot imagine that the one is the other. But he claims that we do imagine that our experiences of the sounds, the auditory sensations, are experiences of emotions. Part of his case here is made in an interesting essay on the physicality of music in which he points out that emotions consist partly in sensations of muscles tensing and relaxing, and that vibrations in which musical sounds consist are felt as vibrations in our bodies that cause us to want to move in various ways. Clearly experiences of musical sounds give rise to emotions, but this causal relation does not help me to imagine that the one is the other. Walton sees such imaginings as helping to explain how mere sounds can give rise to what seem to be emotions, but to me his explanation creates a greater puzzle than it solves.

Finally, the impressive scope of these essays is evidenced by a discussion of spectator sports in which Walton seeks to explain why apparently normal people seem to care so much about their teams' winning or losing, while forgetting completely about the games almost as soon as they are over. By now, predictably, Walton's answer is that fans only imagine

that they care, just as a reader of a novel imagines that she cares about the characters. Sports fans feel real sensations of excitement and then imagine that these are full-blown emotions or concerns. I shall have more to say about the reality of emotional reactions to fictions in a moment, but I can point out here alternative explanations for the reactions of sports fans. I believe a large part of the explanation would appeal to deep-seated tribal instincts that also explain why people care so much about the flag, about immigrants speaking English, about gays not marrying, and so on. Sports teams represent communities, just as flags symbolize somewhat broader communities or tribes.

Having surveyed these different areas to which Walton applies his core theory, it is well to note the logical progression of his basic idea from one domain to another. He began with an incontestable account of children's games in which they imagine or pretend that various props are objects in their game worlds: the child's bed is a pirate ship, its sheet a sail, his pencil a sword, and so on. Walton then applied this picture to adults' reading of fiction in which they imagine the characters to be real, imagine themselves in the characters' situations, imagine empathizing and sympathizing with the characters, and imagine experiencing real emotions such as fear and anger. Whether imagination is as ubiquitous in reading as that, it is undoubtedly true that we play some such imaginative games in reading novels (again, I can speak only for myself). Walton then extends the model successively to claim that in viewing representational paintings we imagine seeing real scenes, in listening to music we imagine that our auditory sensations are emotions, in understanding metaphors we imagine that they are literally true, and in watching sports we imagine that we care about the teams. These claims become increasingly implausible to me.

Much of the previous criticism of Walton has centered on his claim that intentional emotions such as fear and anger in reaction to fictions are not real but only imagined. We imagine Jim in *Huckleberry Finn* escaping down the river, and we imagine fearing his potential captors. Walton bases his claim that such emotions are not real on the fact that they lack the usual behavioral dispositions and beliefs. I base my opposing claim that we do feel real emotions in reaction to fiction not simply on how they feel or on their intensity, but on an account of what emotions are that I have defended elsewhere. According to it, concepts of emotions are cluster concepts, and paradigm emotions have all of a cluster of properties including behavioral dispositions, beliefs, pleasant or unpleasant thoughts, focuses of attention, evaluative judgments, and sensations—none of which singly is, however, necessary or sufficient. If I have planned a picnic, I can fear a merely possible or imagined change in

the weather without believing it to be dangerous, without queasy sensations, and so forth. Space prevents citing countless other examples in which one or another of the cluster elements is missing from what still count as real, although not paradigm, emotions.

Probably much of the skeptical reaction of critics, including myself, rests not only on different experiences, but on a very different and more limited view of imagination. I see imaginings as distinct from dreams and as always conscious and most often deliberate. Walton has a much broader concept. For him, imaginings need be neither deliberate, active, or conscious, and they include dreams. Imagining need not be something one does. For him, it seems that virtually everything that seems to be the case, but is not so, is imagined. In music, one note or chord seems to cause another, and music seems to move. It does not, and so we imagine that it does. Since there is no such thing as absolute rest or motion, we only imagine that the train moves as it seems to, and the station is at rest. It seems that every time something looks different to me than it is, I imagine it to be so. Do I literally imagine something to be the case every time I get it wrong? Then I am far more imaginative than I thought.

If some of Walton's descriptions do not fit my experiences, I can certainly imagine that they do, and I imagine that according to Walton I do (or rather I imagine that they do not). Joking aside, the scope of these essays indicates how elegant and inclusive Walton's theory of representation is. This is not only a book of highly imaginative and original essays, but a fascinating book that everyone will enjoy the challenge of reading. I say challenge not because Walton's writing is obscure—it is a model of clarity—but because his interpretations are intricate and well worth deep scrutiny.

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LEVINSON, JERROLD. *Musical Concerns: Essays in Philosophy of Music*. Oxford University Press, 2015, viii + 173 pp., \$45.00 cloth.

This is a small, smart collection of twelve essays on music, marking Jerrold Levinson's fourth collection of essays in philosophical aesthetics. Nine of these twelve essays have been previously published, and many of them will be familiar to those in music philosophy and aesthetics in general. The range of Levinson's musical interests is deeply reflected throughout, beginning with the dedication: "To five giants: Cole Porter, John Coltrane, Billie Holiday, Gabriel Fauré, and Johann Sebastian Bach."

His meticulous defense of the importance of musical moment-to-moment connectedness in "Concatenationism, Architectonicism, and the Appreciation of Music" contrasts with the broader strokes of "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Music." In "Indication, Abstraction, and Individuation," he revisits and revises some of his earlier ontological thoughts, centering on the idea of musical works as *artistically* indicated structures. Later, he is perfectly willing to get his hands dirty sorting out some of what it is that jazz singers do, in "Jazz Vocal Interpretation: A Philosophical Analysis."

Several other writings are perhaps less well known but lovely: the beautifully simple "Philosophy and Music" (for the Italian journal *Topoi*), the simply beautiful "Musical Beauty" (for the Spanish journal *Teorema*), and the lightly but elegantly pitched "Values of Music" (for the *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*). The final gem, "What Is a Temporal Art?" composed with Philip Alpers in 1991, has become a classic.

Three essays included here have not been previously published: "Shame in General and Shame in Music," "The Expressive Specificity of Jazz," and "Instrumentation and Improvisation." Now, who can resist thumbing right over to "Shame"? After sketching some parameters of regular-old shame (we are all familiar with this), Levinson offers "a rough taxonomy" of musical shames. It seems there might be "Formative shame" ("I should have stuck with the piano lessons"), "Performative shame" ("Wow, I really screwed up that phrase"), "Creative shame" ("I can't believe I'm writing radio jingles"), and "Appreciative shame" ("I know I *should* like opera . . .").

This is all great fun. The musically meatiest part of the question comes only briefly, though, and last: Can shame be something that music *itself* might express? Levinson has a "guardedly positive" answer. He is willing to buy into a weaker condition, where "a suitably backgrounded listener who attends closely to the music can *comfortably* or *without forcing* hear the passage as the expression of shame," even if she does not hear it spontaneously (p. 97). He offers the opening of Richard Strauss's somber *Metamorphosen* for strings as one example. Levinson details its larger context, noting that it was composed by Strauss at the end of World War II, in Germany, with all of the incumbent political and personal shame that attaches.

One worries, of course, that one can seem to "hear" so many things once they are narrated and laid over musical materials. *Metamorphosen*'s chromatically minor musical mood might also seem to express sorrow, or love denied, or a reflective evening at the beach with a small bonfire, given the right backstory. Highly cognitive emotions are a difficult sell as expressive musical properties, and "shame" is not an easy way forward.

The four jazz articles are imbued with Levinson's own performance experience, and the newest ones offer exciting fresh ground. Grouped with his earlier "Jazz Vocal Interpretation," and "Popular Song as Moral Microcosm: Life Lessons from Jazz Standards" are two previously unpublished essays. The first, "The Expressive Specificity of Jazz," asks whether there is a "distinctive jazz expressiveness," as a way station toward the larger question: is there a distinctive jazz aesthetic? (The answer to both questions, by the way, seems to be "yes.") This is a new model of jazz specificity—not a rhythmic or cultural model, but rather a model of jazz's *expressive* specificity, which is "something like a penchant or propensity of jazz to be expressive of [or express a certain range of] certain emotions, moods, or other mental states. . . ." (p. 131). Levinson begins by summing up some of the distinctive musical features of jazz (such as "groove," "improvisation," blues inflection," "fragmented phrasing"), even including a "jazz gestalt"; that is, you know it when you hear it. A certain part of its essence, however, is distilled in a later assertion: a definitive characteristic of jazz is that improvisation must seem to be licensed, even if it is not enacted.

Interestingly, Levinson posits that although jazz can express negative emotion, it can never do so as intensely as classical music, which has a much wider range of expression (p. 138). He suspects that this might be attributable to that fact that "relaxation" often has a larger role than tension in jazz. Jazz can "float" expressively in a way that few musics can—and the ongoing "time" of the drum set flowing beneath only enhances this effect. Such might be some of the reason for the joyous expression Levinson finds characteristic of most jazz performances. He ends by tantalizing us with the thesis that "*all* musical idioms have limits to expressiveness," and that no single style or genre of music can express every mood or emotion, especially given that the expressiveness of music is closely tied to "the kind of human gesture that can readily be heard in it" (pp. 141–142).

The second new-to-print jazz article is a reflective paean to Philip Alperson's enlightening work on instrumentation and improvisation. In the first section, Levinson affirms Alperson's conception of instruments as *historicized* (his italics) objects, with "traditional uses, performing customs, and the traces of notable practitioners" (p. 147). Levinson also agrees with Alperson that the performance of a musical work has a twofold character, with two proper targets: "one is the work that is performed, and one is the performing of the work" (p. 148). These two targets offer quite distinct sorts of possible excellence.

In the second section, on improvisation, he spins Alperson's thoughts toward the wonderful notion of a "cogency of succession" in a good jazz performance, where improvised gestures are

unpredictable, yet they seem almost musically inevitable. Levinson also touches on the important ethical dimension of improvisation—it should never be premeditated, but rather conceived on the spot, and appreciated as such, with all of the foibles and "errors" that attach. In two too brief paragraphs, he also riffs on the differing etiquette and expectations of solo and group improvisation (in this case "solo" meaning performing alone, as opposed to "soloing" with group accompaniment).

Jazz features a truly distinctive concept of ensemble playing. In the classical world, stiff stylistic requirements rein in much of a group's interactions (and much of a soloist's, for that matter). While being a "good ensemble player" is highly prized in any group, orchestral give-and-take often occurs at a level of the smallest subtlety. Large musical thoughts and gestures played in reaction to one's colleagues in a string quartet would not only be ridiculous but even unprofessional.

Jazz, on the other hand, privileges these larger gestures, actually requiring significant, improvised musical replies within the style. Good jazz players have to be able to react musically to each other in the moment to a degree never seen (and never appropriate) in classical music, and they must continually "spur each other on," to use Levinson's phrase. This is a crucial feature, and he gets it absolutely right—jazz musicians not only need to listen to what the others are "saying," but they must help write the conversation. Unlike classical music, where there is a "script," in jazz the rules are much like those of improvisational theater: *listen*, then say "Yes, AND . . ."

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YABLO, STEPHEN. *Aboutness*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014, xi + 221 pp., \$45.00 cloth.

Aboutness is about aboutness. It is not about art or aesthetics. It is a study of language in the "high" tradition of analytic philosophy—concerned deeply with logic and metaphysics and possessed of an urge to formalize claims that seemed clear enough in plain English. It requires patience to read this book. But it is worth the effort. This is a book that needed to be written, and it has the air of an instant classic. The concept of aboutness should be crucial to philosophers of art as well as of language, though neither has paid sufficient attention to it in recent years (phenomenologists had a lot to say about it). The reader primarily interested in issues of meaning in art will have to read this book creatively, with an eye to ways

in which its claims can be imported to standing debates in our field.

Before getting to Yablo, a word about why aboutness should matter more to the philosopher of art. Crudely put, the concept of aboutness allows us to go where the mere concept of meaning often does not, and this can be important when we attempt to offer a philosophical account of the communicative interests of much art, especially art of the nonlinguistic sort. In aesthetics, we put a considerable burden on the concept of meaning, stretching it beyond its primary linguistic sense to explain a great many of the respects in which works of art make their points. To the part of us that thinks that sentences are the primary bearers of meaning, it will always feel slightly odd to ask what a work of absolute music, a non-representational painting, or even a poem of great modernist abstraction “means.” In the linguistic arts, the notion of meaning gets bent in odd and unnatural ways. The “meaning” of poems and novels, for example, almost always turns out to be strongly irreducible to the meaning of the language that constitutes them. If this sounds off, it sounds much less odd when one points out that “meaning,” when used at the level of *work*, is almost always better phrased as a question of what a work is *about*. And note that a work of literature can bear forms of aboutness that none of its lines do, not even when taken conjunctively. A poem, we know, can be about the challenged place of art in modern American culture, even though its individual lines speak only about Disney characters, *American Idol*, and garbage dumps. Of course, the “meaning” of a poem—what it is *about* at the level of work—bears crucial links to the meaning of its language, just as every work of art’s expressive and communicative properties are tethered in obvious ways to its compositional elements. But poetry, and art more generally, can produce aboutness in radical excess of the meaning of the material out of which it is made. A good part of art’s expressive significance consists in this, and until we have a viable theory of aboutness and the remarkable ways in which artworks can bear it, our accounts of the communicative interests of art will to this extent remain impoverished.

As Yablo puts it, “[a]ssertive content—what a sentence can be heard as saying—can be at quite a distance from compositional content” (p. 5). In a different manner, at the level of work, poems, paintings, or symphonies can speak in wild excess of the meaning of their compositional elements, and indeed, the aesthetician should add that they often produce aboutness even when their compositional elements in no literal sense bear meaning of the relevant semantic or linguistic sort (a splash of color, a musical phrase, and so on). Yablo again: “Aboutness is the relation that meaningful items bear to whatever it is that they are *on or of* or that they *address or concern*” (p. 1). In

the loose sense of “meaningful” Yablo intends here, aestheticians can grant that we all study “meaningful items” and so take seriously his call to see a theory of aboutness as required to make sense of this. Yablo’s *Aboutness* will not answer our questions about the ways in which works of art produce aboutness often despite everything, but it does offer an extremely attractive general way of thinking about aboutness, and so it sets the philosopher of art’s work on course.

About Yablo’s theory. Consider a once-popular view according to which a sentence is about whatever it happens to mention (p. 23). A headline that reads “Dog Bites Man” (p. 24), then, is about that which it mentions: a dog, a biting, and a man. But a headline that reads “Man Bites Dog” mentions exactly this, too, but it clearly conveys different information. The concept of aboutness explains the crucial difference between these two headlines, namely, that they possess different *subject matters*. One headline is about the doing of a dog, the other of a man, and to this extent they are about different matters, even if they each speak of the very same things. Another excellent example Yablo uses to motivate his discussion is his daughter’s cry: “you never take me out for ice-cream any more” (p. 7). Parents everywhere will know the tactic, and they should also know that they are, in a profound sense, ignoring their child’s point if they respond by enumerating all the times in the past they have procured ice cream. Despite semantic appearances, it is *about* the child’s desire to have ice cream perhaps *now* and certainly *more often*; this is its *point*. The parent who fails to see this fails to see what exactly the child is talking about.

In this respect we can see that for Yablo the notion of aboutness reframes an issue that is already familiar enough. In communication we often say too much or too little in respect to the actual point we wish to articulate, shrouding a truth in layers of falsity (the child’s plea), falsity in layers of truth (certain cases of innuendo), and much else besides. So the question for Yablo is how to offer a semantic theory that brings to clarity what a sentence is about in the face of all its verbal excess. The core idea of *Aboutness* is elaborated with great technical sophistication. To understand the particular route Yablo takes, think first of a question the notion of aboutness clearly raises: how can two sentences, with perhaps even radically different propositional content, overlap precisely in respect to their subject matters, their *aboutness*? Yablo enlists possible worlds semantics and a notion of truth-makers to account for this. For Yablo, a proposition is a set of possible worlds, and since aboutness is often a case of one proposition being contained in another (“you should buy me ice cream more often” contained in “you *never* take me out for ice cream”), isolating subject matters consists in determining “a system of differences, a

pattern of cross-world variation" (p. 27). Yablo clarifies this with reference to "world-partitions, which are how worlds are grouped" in respect to shared subject matters (for example, the subject matter of "Queen Victoria or the nineteenth century"; p. 26). In making logical, semantic, and metaphysical sense of this, the twelve chapters of *Aboutness* touch on a startling array of topics, from notions of pretense and presupposition, fictionalism, to a lovely turning of Ryle on his head in a discussion of the difference between *knowing that* and *knowing about*.

I have claimed that philosophers of art concerned with issues of meaning will most profit from this difficult but dazzling book. I trust that what I have said makes it clear that it might also bear significant gifts for metaphysicians of fiction, not least those concerned with the notion of truth in fiction. But this review is not about them.

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LEAR, JONATHAN. *A Case for Irony*. Harvard University Press, 2011, 210 pp., \$33.00 cloth.

"Just as philosophy begins with doubt," Kierkegaard tells us, "so also a life that may be called human begins with irony" (p. 185). In *A Case for Irony*, Jonathan Lear makes the case that something which we commonly take to be nothing more than a literary device (e.g., "saying the opposite of what one means") or personal style (e.g., one of sophisticated detachment) could bear the kind of weight that Kierkegaard suggests. The book is comprised of Lear's two Tanner Lectures on Human Value, followed by commentary from three philosophers (Cora Diamond, Christine M. Korsgaard, and Richard Moran) and one psychoanalyst (Robert A. Paul), along with Lear's responses to each set of comments. This conversational back and forth, Lear argues, is no accident. It is, rather, the form best suited to bring the particular phenomenon of irony most clearly into view "for a certain sort of reader" (p. 112).

Irony, Lear argues, is first and foremost an *experience*—something that we undergo rather than something we do. It is the breaking out of an anxious form of questioning that characteristically takes the form, for example, "Among all Christians, is there a Christian?" (p. 12). Learning to live well with and in the wake of such disruptive outbreaks, Lear argues, is constitutive of a "life that may be called human" (p. 185)—a form of human excellence that is manifest most powerfully and completely in the life of Socrates. In his second lecture, "The Ironic Soul," Lear explores the implications that

irony, so understood, has both for common philosophical understandings of the *self*—particularly of the kind of "unity" that is constitutive of and available to a self—and for common psychoanalytic understandings of the unconscious.

Although neither art nor aesthetics is the explicit focus of this volume, the exchanges frequently stray into topics that will be of considerable interest to many aestheticians and philosophers of art. To mention only a few, Lear prefaces the volume by drawing attention to the relation between its literary form and philosophical content. His exchange with Moran involves an extensive discussion of the concept of "expression," and his exchange with Cora Diamond presses Lear to clarify his account by introducing the writings of Leo Tolstoy and Henry James as objects of comparison. But rich as the discussion of aesthetically relevant topics may be, the importance of this volume for the philosopher of art lies elsewhere. Lear, in effect, gives us a new conception of "the examined life" by transforming our understanding of the *virtue* that Socrates so powerfully exemplifies. What is so intriguing, compelling, and surprising is that the Socrates that emerges bears a strong family resemblance not to a philosopher such as Descartes but instead to the *modernist artist*.

The examined life as it is exemplified by Socrates is, at least for philosophers, a familiar paradigm for the life well lived. Lear argues that we are less familiar than we take ourselves to be with what kind of human excellence Socrates is actually putting on display. It may obviously involve the capacity and willingness for questioning oneself, but everything hinges on how one understands the questioning at issue—its nature and its purpose. On a standard account, the figure hovering in the background is Descartes: Descartes alone in his room and determined to subject to the test of doubting all the received opinions that he had accepted as true. Lear takes Christine Korsgaard as an exemplary instance of this kind of account. By Korsgaard's lights, the task of self-constitution is a matter of stepping back not only from received opinion but also desires, ambitions, practical possibilities, and other sorts of material with which a person is confronted, both in virtue of her own inclinations and the particular world into which she was born. By engaging in ongoing rational reflection on such materials—exercising one's capacity for judgment by rejecting some of these materials while endorsing others as *mine*, and working to integrate them into the evolving whole of one's life—one *forms* or *authors* oneself. To take an example that is of special importance to Lear, one might step back from the possibility of becoming (or continuing to be) a teacher, thinking through what that involves, what it means, and what other possibilities it leads to or rules out. Perhaps the outcome of such reflection

is to leave the teaching profession; or perhaps it is to embrace it, committing (or recommitting) to the work of integrating the practical identity of a teacher into the evolving whole of one's life. Either way, one is engaged in the difficult task of authoring oneself.

If Kierkegaard is willing to cede that (modern) *philosophy* begins with the determination to step back and subject to the fire of doubt beliefs that have escaped examination, he is not content to conceive the task of forming oneself—the task of *becoming human*—along such lines. This task begins not with *doubt* but with *irony*, and the question is: what is the difference between them? How does this task differ from that of suspending endorsement of one's assumptions and "examining" them? If the principal virtue that Socrates exemplifies is *not* well captured by this picture, what on earth is he doing? And why call it an examined life? Lear's answer to these questions is complex and only partially clarified in the exchanges that comprise this volume. But it is as he strives to reawaken our capacity to distinguish between *doubt* (as it is ubiquitously pictured) and *irony* that the family resemblances between Socrates and the modernist artist begin to emerge.

The questioning that is constitutive of ironic existence, Lear argues, is less a matter of something one does than of something that happens to one; less a matter of "stepping back" than of "losing the ground beneath one's feet" (p. 19). Further, and to make matters even stranger, such disruptive questioning is not a manifestation of the *suspension* of one's commitments, pending further examination, but rather an anxious form of *expressing* them.

Suppose, for example, that such questioning breaks out and disrupts my practical identity as a teacher. When my busy, bustling existence as a teacher is disrupted by an experience of irony, the life suddenly goes out of the conventional forms—grading papers, going to faculty meetings, preparing lectures, etc.—that I have relied on as ways of living my life as a teacher. As Lear puts it, I have lost a sense of how "my past gives me any basis for what to do next" (p. 18). None of the conventions that I relied on in the past as ways of living as a teacher any longer strike me *as* ways of putting myself forward as a teacher at all. All of the conventions through which I have understood my commitment to teaching "have become signifiers whose content I no longer grasp in any but the most open-ended way. I no longer know who my 'students' are, let alone what it would be to 'help them to develop'" (p. 17). But this form of *disruption* of my practical identity is not a rupture with it, but a deep form of loyalty or fidelity to it. The challenge of living well in the wake of such disruption is that of discovering what *will* now count as my living up to an aspiration that has become as "inchoate"

as it is deep. In effect, I have to discover what will now count as my "next step" as a teacher, and that next step may be so different from those that came before it as to be, at least initially, unrecognizable *as a way of moving forward as a teacher at all*.

The modernist artist who haunts Lear's account is characterized best by Stanley Cavell and Michael Fried. As Cavell and Fried understand it, "modernist" is not a term that picks out artists or works from a particular time period. "Modernist" picks out a *condition* that an art form enters when the "present practice" of that art and its history becomes problematic: when the conventions that could be relied upon in order to produce work that matters in the way that great painting (or sculpture or dance) matters can no longer be so relied upon. A sculptor like Anthony Caro, for example, discovers that he can no longer rely upon the convention of sculpting or "working" his material in order to make work that matters in the way that great sculpture of the past mattered and still does matter to us. Such a novelist or sculptor is in a difficult position. As Fried puts it, he needs to discover a way of making work that is now, in the present moment, "capable of convincing him that it can stand comparison with [sculpture] of the modernist and premodernist past whose quality seems to him beyond question" (Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* [University of Chicago Press, 1998], p. 99). For Caro, this involves making "sculpture" by *placing* his materials in relation to each other instead of "working on" them (carving, chipping, polishing, etc.). In other words, he makes work that prior to his achievement would not have been recognizable *as* sculpture. Such work does not represent a simple break with tradition but rather a continuation of it and fidelity to it that involves rethinking that tradition in fundamental ways.

Lear does not himself acknowledge the implications of the family resemblances that I have highlighted between ironic existence and the condition of the modernist artist. There are, though, several reasons to make the comparison explicit and to explore it more fully. For one thing, the comparison helps to clarify the importance and originality of the case Lear makes. It is not unusual to propose the artist as a figure for the life well lived. But this would most often involve conceiving the artist and Socrates as representing competing conceptions of such a life, or at least as representing different possible ways of living well. It is a much stranger and intriguing thought that instead the artist is perhaps the best *model* for the examined life, if such a life is properly conceived.

A second reason to explicate the close family resemblance between ironic existence, as Lear characterizes it, and the condition of the modernist artist is that doing so might offer Lear a powerful way of pushing further the account that he has

already done so much to develop. In the most puzzling and intriguing exchange in the volume, Cora Diamond introduces Gilbert Osmond, a character in Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*, as a possible counterexample to Lear's claim that irony, as he has characterized it, is in fact constitutive of a "life we would call human" in the way that he has claimed. I am not confident that I have fully understood Diamond's argument, but she is right, in my view, to press James on Lear's attention. James is a paradigm case of the modernist artist as characterized by Cavell and Fried and one that should be of special interest from Lear's point of view. For James is famous for nothing more than for perfecting a "warm irony" which is expressive not of his cool detachment from but instead the depth of his involvement and commitment. My wager is that if James were placed alongside Socrates as a new (competing?) paradigm case of ironic existence, significant new developments to this powerful, evolving concept would become both necessary and possible.

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CAME, DANIEL, ed. *Nietzsche on Art and Life*. Oxford University Press, 2014, 255 pp., \$74.00 cloth.

Came has set himself the task of assembling a collection of articles dealing with Nietzsche's prioritization of art and the aesthetic and how, once clearly recognized, this facilitates our understanding of Nietzsche's entire philosophical enterprise. This task he has fulfilled nicely. The book might be criticized for its brevity, but that would be unjust. The readings are all highly suggestive for further work. Of special note, over half of the authors delve into the important connections between Nietzsche's thought and that of Schopenhauer. The all too common opinion took his claims of a rejection of Schopenhauer at face value, but I have always sided with those who disagreed with this and found Nietzsche ending his writing as a more evolved version of a Schopenhauerian. The authors supply wonderful contributions to a reevaluation of the entire Nietzsche-Schopenhauer relationship. Indeed, the book might well be titled *Nietzsche and Schopenhauer on Art and Life*.

Came's introduction could easily stand alone as an article, and is quite intimidating in its insightfulness. He opens with what I believe to be an essential set of observations, focusing our attention on his central claim that Nietzsche's concerns with art are not isolated from his overriding project of questioning how we should value our experiences. Came quickly and carefully works through the

various ways that Nietzsche's writings have been evaluated; two standard patterns separate his ethics from his aesthetics or focus only on his earliest writings on aesthetics. This separation is faulty. Came and his authors point out not only that art is integral to Nietzsche's thought, from his earliest work to his last, but also that his thoughts about art and self-creation (self-narrative crafting I would call it, or developing "style") are surprisingly consistent.

I shall follow Came's order of authors, because it makes good sense. I find, as with his introduction, Came's ordering beyond quibble. The first two articles set up the theme of Nietzsche's interest in art; this is the relationship between art and life affirmation.

Bernard Reginster's "Art and Affirmation" opens with the claim that to affirm life requires us to see life as beautiful. Reginster limits his discussion to the subtle shifts that he finds from *The Birth of Tragedy* onward. Nietzsche moves from the veiling function of art which covers the terrifying aspects of life in the world to something more complex—an exciting veil that invites investigation and engagement. Reginster notes that Nietzsche's opening problem is derived from his adoption of Schopenhauer's life perspective: life is necessarily suffering. Affirmation of life, therefore, requires the production of illusions. Reginster works through Nietzsche's analysis of three stages of illusion, concluding with Greek tragedy as productive of illusion which yields a genuine affirmation of life. But, then there is said to be a shifting in his thought, and tragedy does not conceal but allows us to see the inevitability of suffering, the terrifying character of existence, and the value of resistance as affirmation. Beautiful appearance alone will not work for us, because it is avoidance. There is a complex interplay between Schopenhauerian beginnings and developments toward an affirmation of the pains of life and our reactions to them in a more life-affirming manner than Christian evasions in hopes of an afterlife. Reginster develops Nietzsche's move from a focus on the spectator to the artist: from a viewing of life to an active engagement with life.

Christopher Janaway's "Beauty Is False, Truth Ugly" follows on the shift from spectator to artist and canvases the relationship between truth and beautifying illusions to clearly present Nietzsche's position as a complex perspective on tragedy in which the audience is presented with the threats of life in an aesthetic manner which allows for an affirmation of life as it in fact is. In this, we can transpose the artist's work and manipulate our own raw material; this work will be a falsification. We thus have an unstable relationship between art and truth because of Nietzsche's increasing difficulties with passive and detached knowing. Janaway works through the separation between tragic artist, Apollonian artist, and Socratic "theoretical man," which yields a

triangle of attitudes to truth (p. 42). As this is developed, Janaway claims that the vital idea is that tragedy allows us to “live with the truth” (p. 45), not veiling it over, but turning the horrid thoughts about the meaninglessness and “absurdity of existence into ideas one can live with” (p. 45). Art may reveal ugly truths, but there is no stable distinction between so-called reality and appearance/illusion; hence, artists’ selective procedures open perspectives on ourselves. This is far more valuable to us than Socratism, which is the resistance to tragedy; Socratism denies any encounter with truth other than rational explanation and rejects the aesthetic confrontation with truth.

Christopher C. Raymond’s “Nietzsche on Tragedy and Morality” deals with Socrates’s questioning (or simply rejecting) the value of tragedy in *Republic, Book X*. The Socratic challenge is to justify tragedy as not only a source of pleasure but also as socially beneficial. Standard arguments against this Socratic doubt present tragedy as improving—supplying knowledge that will conduce to a rational life. Raymond’s Nietzsche totally rejects the Socratic challenge. The value of tragedy resides not in understanding but in the consolation which we derive from tragedy showing us that there simply are not any rational explanations for the randomness and absurdities of existence. Socrates calls for a moral defense of tragic art. Raymond claims that Nietzsche’s response is the radical position that the value of tragedy is its conflict with morality and that this conflict is central to all of his work on tragedy. While many writers have tried to find morally/ethically beneficial effects, Nietzsche “defends the value of tragedy on the ground that it does *not* have a moral aim” (p. 67).

Ken Gemes and Chris Sykes’s “Nietzsche’s Illusion” opens with their claim that there is “a deep continuity throughout Nietzsche’s intellectual career,” and that the relationship to Schopenhauer is more significant than a simple acceptance of his thesis of life as suffering. Rather than seeing the objection to suffering as primary, as found in Schopenhauer, Gemes and Sykes claim that lack of meaning is the fundamental objection to life, a lack especially obvious in modern times and leading to nihilism. Indeed, they have a section of their article devoted to Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and pessimism. The problem of finding meaning introduces Nietzsche’s ties to and divergences from Richard Wagner. The tragic myths allow us to achieve a “supra-individual perspective” (p. 83) which allows an escape from the limited and insignificant individual perspective. Wagner’s thesis that we need illusion to affirm life is significantly modified. The “utility for life” (p. 88) of myth is what is vital. If one is looking at Nietzsche as a philosopher dealing with traditional questions, then an emphasis on his relationship with Schopenhauer would be correct. But, if we are looking at him as a

critic of culture and modernity, then an emphasis on his engagement with Wagner would be most useful.

Stephen Mulhall’s “Orchestral Metaphysics” picks up on the Wagnerian theme and develops the implications of Wagner’s intimates referring to him as Aeschylus. The mode of writing developed in *The Birth of Tragedy* is said to entail a conversation staged by Nietzsche among Wagner, Aeschylus, and Schopenhauer. This is said to result in a mode of discourse allowing equal coverage of philosophy, tragic drama, and opera. Mulhall develops Apollonian and Dionysian complementarity as productive rather than oppositional. Mulhall works through the implications of the chorus in the tragic presentation. The structuring of Nietzsche’s presentations and their revisions are seen as a series of unmaskings, with no total rejection of their predecessors. Genuine selfhood involves the constant overcoming of predecessor stages, and so too in Nietzsche’s very writing from text to text. This is the only article in the collection that gives me pause. I am simply too unfamiliar with the approaches used: all other contributors I nodded in agreement with and silently clapped my hands.

Came’s “Nietzsche on the Aesthetics of Character and Virtue” finds a desire in Nietzsche’s work, from early to late, to extend aesthetic judgments into traditionally ethical areas of concern, action, motivation, and character, and to have the aesthetic adopted “as the predominant terms in practical reasoning” (p. 127). The individual can be considered an artist shaping him- or herself into an artwork. Thus nobility and goodness are not fixed by standing rules but by selection, contravention, and invention of new rules. This will involve rejection of common morality with a discourse of authenticity. My own long-standing take on this is in perfect harmony with Came; the value of art achieves its full potential as a guide, signposting the future. Good artists will focus on human activities as did the Classical Greeks: sculpting, remodeling, and idealizing life. Art will not imitate the world but will develop a beautiful image of man. Nietzsche notes the dangers of bad art pulling upon the lower passions and inflaming them. For Nietzsche, good art is didactic art which will, in its creation of images of the beautiful soul and life, excite emulation. We must take from art what we cannot get from life—a goal and a ground for hope.

Adrian Del Caro’s “Zarathustra vs. Faust” links well with the preceding article on the value of good art, giving us Nietzsche’s rejection of the decadent, life-negating form of art: romanticism. The classical/romantic or Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy is a “major fault line of the modern psyche” (p. 143) which Nietzsche raised to consciousness. The insistence that he had discovered a new, Dionysian classicism as part of his rejection of romanticism is worked out in an analysis of Goethe’s *Faust* and

Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Both works are said to compete for the honor of being most life affirming and both reject romanticism, yet Nietzsche increasingly found fault with Faust. Very importantly, Del Caro lays out Nietzsche's and Goethe's notions of the *Übermensch*, with the origins of the term and concept clearly credited to Goethe, as indeed is the classical/romantic distinction. If only for this explanation I would find the article compelling.

A. E. Denham's "Attuned, Transcendent, and Transfigured: Nietzsche's Appropriation of Schopenhauer's Aesthetic Psychology" presents Nietzsche's ideas on aesthetic transfiguration of life as "essentially continuous with" (p. 164) Schopenhauer's. The "key features" (p. 166) of Nietzsche's aesthetic transfiguration of human experience derive from Schopenhauer. Both posit value to be found amid the pain, suffering, and pointlessness of life. Contrary to most who find passivity in Schopenhauer, Denham works through the ways that intellect and imagination are highly active. The "aesthetic reevaluation of our own natures" (p. 199) seems a joint project. Denham also provides a splendid analysis on the varieties of distancing in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's aesthetic responses.

Sabina Lovibond's "Nietzsche on Distance, Beauty, and Truth" continues the exploration of distancing in much of Nietzsche's writings. Standing back from phenomena is essential. This approach extends to ourselves and others; character as such looks better from a distance, and connection is only workable with the "right objects (or persons)" (p. 218). In all of this is a rejection of democratic ideals and a presentation of truths as available only to a few—a profoundly nonegalitarian stance. Lovibond's presentation of the aesthetically motivated reshaping of one's character is especially clarifying.

Aaron Ridley's "Nietzsche and Music" opens with an overview of Nietzsche's own compositions and finds his tastes to be rather of their era. This is important for Nietzsche's criticism of his culture: he is of it and knows whereof he speaks. His strongest objection to modern life is its continuing captivation by life-denying values, most obviously those rooted in Christianity. Music of the future would cure us of this pathological inheritance. Ridley not only deals with the impact of music on character and value reformation, but also investigates Nietzsche's claims about wanting to write philosophy as music: prose that would be musical, working directly upon the auditor's soul. This owes a debt to Wagner, who wanted us to know through feeling, rather than through a synthesizing intellect. The importance of music as an enhancer of positive valuations lies in its nonreferential nature. Music has an intimate and direct connection to our inner life.

Roger Scruton's "Nietzsche on Wagner" continues Nietzsche's rejection of cultural sickness, especially in music, and also considers his musical compositions. A true replication of the achievements of Greek civilization would not be through philosophy but through music. Throughout his life, a central feature in aesthetic judgments is given to distinguishing "between healthy and decadent forms of human life" (p. 239). Music is said to be "nothing but a kind of applied physiology" (p. 239). This is the first sustained focus on the distinction between health and disease in aesthetics. Nietzsche's objections to Wagner's music consider it as both "the cause and effect of a bodily sickness" (p. 239). The Wagnerian hero's redemption is conceived in overly life-denying ways. However, Scruton claims that ultimately Nietzsche simply does not supply enough of a philosophical base for his objections to withstand scrutiny.

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HARRISON, BERNARD *What Is Fiction For? Literary Humanism Restored*. Indiana University Press, 2015, xxvi + 593 pp., \$85.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.

Bernard Harrison is a fine example of an increasingly rare breed: a scholar whose work is genuinely transdisciplinary. Over the course of his distinguished career, he has made valuable contributions both as a literary scholar and as a philosopher. *What Is Fiction For?* combines philosophy and literary criticism to defend a renovated conception of literary humanism according to which literature and humanistic literary studies make a distinct and valuable contribution to human understanding.

Traditional humanism has faced robust challenges from a number of fronts in the last half century. On one hand, continental theorists, ranging in orientation from Marxist to poststructuralist to psychoanalytic, have challenged the autonomous cognitive value of literature, treating literary works as manifestations of underlying forces—economic, ideological, psychological—that should be the ultimate objects of investigation. On the other hand, anti-cognitivist moves in analytic aesthetics and philosophy of language have challenged the very possibility that something as fictional as, well, fiction can have any genuine purchase on reality.

Harrison accepts that these challenges are indeed quite damaging to literary humanism as advocated by earlier generations of critics such as Arnold and Leavis, Trilling and Brooks and that literary humanism needs to be reimagined rather than just defended.

Central to Harrison's reimagining is an argument about the nature of meaning that he draws primarily from the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. He dubs this approach the "Practice-Based Model" of meaning. Rather than treat meaning as an external relation, linking words referentially to entities in the world, or as an internal relation, linking words definitionally to other words, Harrison urges us to see meaning emerging from socially maintained practices. Words have meaning by being put to use in activities that are themselves essentially connected to other activities in the broader weave of life. In effect, Harrison urges us to think of knowing the meaning of expressions not in terms of knowledge-that, but knowledge-how: our knowledge of the truth conditions of a sentence is a consequence of our prior knowledge of how to put that sentence to use in an assertion.

This Practice-Based Model of meaning allows literature to make a distinctive contribution to human understanding. The cognitive value of literature lies not in its ability to provide facts of any distinctive sort, but rather in its ability, in the hands of gifted writers, to turn language back in on itself and help us to see "the living origins of meaning in the conventions, practices, social arrangements, and associated beliefs that define and give shape to otherwise inchoate human passions and potentialities in the process of continuously creating and maintaining one or another form of human life" (p. 71). Harrison gives the example of Dickens's exploration of "Chancery" in *Bleak House*. Dickens puts this word in play against others and gradually uncovers "the web of legal institutions and practices in which it finds a role. . . . [H]e is interested in the play of those institutions in human life, the way lives might come to be influenced, structured, for good and ill, by the kinds of delay, of obsessive hope endlessly deferred, that such an institution is capable of generating" (p. 71). In doing so, Dickens renders perspicuous what Wittgenstein might call the "grammar" of the word, helping us to apprehend the way this and other words are embedded in the set of practices that constitute human life. And not only that: because literature gives us a kind of self-knowledge—it helps us to see the shape of our lives and social world more clearly—it has the power not just to inform us but also to transform us by renovating the conceptual architecture that shapes our lives.

One of the strengths of this book is that Harrison develops his claim about the cognitive role of literature in far greater detail than the brief example given above. The book contains a number of chapters in which Harrison offers extended readings of texts that give flesh to his claims about what literature can teach us by exemplifying what he calls "reactive critical inquiry." The aim of such criticism is not, *per impossibile*, to gain access to the unique, definitive

meaning of a work, but rather to explore what Harrison calls its *bearings*: to explore sensitively the way in which the words and concepts in the text play off one another and provide unexpected illumination.

For example, in a brilliant chapter on Woolf, Harrison argues that the alleged "stream of consciousness" in *To the Lighthouse* does not reveal a hidden, inner realm of a Cartesian self—the novel is not engaged in such a representational project. On the contrary, *To the Lighthouse* reveals a self that is socially constituted: the "true self" of these characters is not revealed simply through inner monologues, but through the juxtaposition of these monologues with the characters' public words and actions. Their self-conception sits uneasily with the demands and compromises of their social world: the "triumph of the novel lies in the extraordinary way it 'pans back' from these private groupings to reveal the structure of social accommodations that limit the characters' efforts at self-definition and obstruct their attempts to understand their condition" (pp. 224–225).

One great virtue of the book is that Harrison's marriage of philosophy and literary criticism does genuine and novel work. It takes someone of Harrison's philosophical training to articulate the theoretical basis for his defense of literary humanism, and it takes his gifts as a critic to show what this humanism looks like in practice. The philosophical and literary-critical aspects of the work do not always merge smoothly—Harrison's readings sometimes feel more like autonomous exercises in literary criticism that connect only tenuously to the central claims of his book—but to the extent that they do, Harrison has produced a book that very few other scholars would even be qualified to produce.

Unfortunately, the news is not all good. *What Is Fiction For?* is a big book that often feels undisciplined and haphazard in the arguments it engages in and the engagements it passes by, and this reader found the experience of reading it alternately dazzling and frustrating. Harrison's range of reference is impressively broad, but also oddly out of date. In a nine-page bibliography, I counted nine entries for works of philosophy published in the twenty-first century. Two of these are co-authored by Harrison himself. As a result, the book has a strangely anachronistic feel: Harrison's main interlocutors are primarily figures who were central to debates in the seventies and eighties. When he talks about "the immense recent popularity of Quine's way of looking at things" (p. 526), I'm genuinely uncertain whether by "recent" he means the last two decades or the two decades before that. Another of his nine works of twenty-first century philosophy is a short article published in the *Times Literary Supplement* by Gregory Currie. It is emblematic of the seeming arbitrariness of Harrison's critical engagement that he treats at

some length this short article written for a nonspecialist audience, but does not once acknowledge that Currie has also written two books on fiction and narrative.

Where he does engage, Harrison is at times admirably rigorous and at times disappointingly uncharitable. He presents the case against humanism in his first chapter with such vigor that its prospects seem genuinely dim, and the consequent rescue job he performs is all the more thrilling for the strength of the opposition he presents himself with. But his characterizations of his opponents occasionally slip into caricature. If Foucault's conception of power is "a generalized, unspecific notion," that is precisely because he sees it operating in a diverse range of interconnected ways, and does not simply use it as a blunt tool for protesting the subjection of a "wide diversity of 'victim' groups" (p. 419). And Currie—not to mention Barthes—sees literature as more than just "a relatively harmless form of play" (p. 22). Some of this, I think, stems from a desire to bring his opponents under a single tent. One problematically broad brush that Harrison deploys is what he calls "Cartesian individualism": "the doctrine that *everything of human significance is internal to the individual mind*" (p. 75; his italics). This confused idea is so pervasive, according to Harrison, that figures as diverse as Currie, Kermode, Russell, Sartre, and Derrida (!) all fall into it. It is hard to think of a movement in twentieth-century philosophy that does not in some way fashion itself as anti-Cartesian and fashion its opponents as closet (or not-so-closet) Cartesians. It is not just that this move feels tired and overgeneralized, but I also doubt it can do the work Harrison wants it to do. He celebrates Polanyi for rejecting the idea of clear and distinct perceptions, but then Williamson's anti-luminosity argument does the same thing without abandoning a conception of language that I expect would be deeply antipathetic to Harrison.

Despite these frustrations, I think Harrison has something deep and valuable to say. But I also worry that his desire for schematic clarity papers over some deep ambiguities in the subject he treats. Let us begin with the title of the book. Saying that the book is about what *fiction* is for both overdescribes and underdescribes the material Harrison treats. Although he purports to deal with fiction generally, almost all of his examples draw on the tradition of the European realist novel between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, and what he says often seems to have this more restricted focus. When he says that works of literature "express what is most particular and unique in the character and outlook of their authors" (p. 46), he cannot be thinking of Homer. This claim is one manifestation of a sharp contrast that runs throughout the book between a "natural world" treated by science and a "human world" treated by literature.

One need not be a disciple of Kuhn to find this contrast problematic.

Harrison focuses on a limited range of fiction, but also his subject is not merely fiction: he explicitly includes lyric poetry and drama in his argument. Maybe it would be more accurate to title this book *What Is Literature For?* This alternative title corresponds more closely to Harrison's emphasis on language as the site of literature's distinctive cognitive contribution. But this very emphasis on language downplays the word Harrison in fact chooses for his title: he has very little to say about the fact that so many works of literature—and in particular the novels he treats in great detail—are *fictional*. If Dickens wants to explore the deep ramifications of the meaning of "Chancery," why does he do so by telling a story? Because he has so little to say about the importance of storytelling, it is hard to say how Harrison might account for forms of storytelling that rely on media other than words, such as film. To the extent that prose fiction does what it does in part because it tells *stories*, then many of those achievements should be transferable to film. But Harrison's case for the distinctive value of fiction rests heavily on writers' manipulation of words.

Harrison comes closest to explaining the importance of fiction to his subject when he explains that fiction releases language "from its ordinary, everyday engagement with the practical lives of its users" and deploys it "in a context that allows us to reflect upon it not as a vehicle of truth, but as a vehicle of meaning" (p. 94). But then this detachment from "practical" life is not the exclusive domain of fiction. Wittgenstein's grammatical investigations seem to do similar work, as does a great deal of phenomenology. Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein* involves the kind of investigation that Harrison describes, uncovering the deeper web of interconnected practices that animate our shared world. Harrison acknowledges this point, distinguishing philosophical writing from literature by saying that the former is schematic and the latter more concrete (p. 196). But this distinction seems inadequate in both directions: there is no limit to how concrete philosophical descriptions can be and no limit to how abstract poetry can be. Are Wittgenstein's builders presented with greater abstraction than Larkin's "To Put One Brick Upon Another"?

In talking about the value of fiction in terms of its manipulation of words, I fear that Harrison does not account, on the one hand, for the close resemblance of literary fiction to other forms of storytelling that do not rely primarily on manipulating words and, on the other hand, for the fact that this power to reflect on language as a "vehicle of meaning" is not the exclusive domain of literary artists. In essence, I think that, despite his admiration for Wittgenstein,

Harrison is in some ways not Wittgensteinian enough. Although his argument captures something important about a wide range of literature, he might have been safer to acknowledge that fiction, literature, and storytelling share a family of resemblances; and his argument picks out an important thread—and one he unspools with subtlety and depth—but not one that runs cleanly throughout.

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PETERS, JULIA. *Hegel on Beauty*. New York: Routledge, 2015, 161 pp., \$145.00 cloth.

Julia Peters has produced a substantial contribution to the scholarship on Hegel's theory of beauty and its relevance to his philosophy of art. With insightful use of relatively neglected texts like Hegel's "Anthropology" in the *Encyclopedia* and recently recovered student transcripts of his aesthetics lectures, Peters argues for conceiving of beauty as an "aesthetic human ideal" that is most perfectly represented in Greek art and culture.

According to Peters, Hegel conceives this ideal as an "actual soul," or a unity of inner soul and outer body that is preeminently manifested in the human organism's ability to acquire habits (p. 25). Human beings can, through habituation, infuse their natural existence with a purposiveness that transforms and "spiritualizes" nature (p. 23). The body, so transformed, takes on an expressive quality; but what it expresses is the signification of "inwardness" that has become wholly fused with the outward movements of the body, or a "self-signifying sign" (p. 26). The relative obscurity of this brief sketch does not do justice to Peters's detailed and extremely lucid explication of Hegel's view. Still, one might justly wonder what any of this has to do with beauty.

Peters needs to show how the Hegelian notion of an "actual soul," or unity of inner and outer manifested by the human body is (1) constitutive of Hegel's notion of beauty and (2) a plausible account of at least some of our core pre-philosophical intuitions about beauty. In regard to (1), Peters makes a convincing textual argument that when Hegel calls beauty an "ideal," this should be taken in the sense of "self-signifying sensuous spiritual sign" (p. 41). One might think, however, that *this* "sign" cannot be the spiritualized human body, since Hegel regards beauty as an exclusive possession of art. Against this, Peters cites material from the *Encyclopedia* that appears to commit Hegel to the position that

it is only insofar as art imitates spiritual material *in nature* that it can possess beauty (p. 41). The unity of inner and outer in art, as Peters construes it, is merely an "imitation" of unified human nature (p. 42). Hence, not only is beauty not restricted to art; nature is actually an "essential element" of beauty (p. 42).

If this reading is correct, one must next ask about the purpose of art, or why it is necessary at all. Peters explains that art's role is to "purify," "complete," "perfect," "perfectly actualize," or "fully idealize" the unity of inner and outer that is found in "actual, living human individuals" (p. 45). The implication seems to be that, although art needs spiritualized human bodies as its material, this material is deficient in beauty as it stands, for it is not yet a "perfect sign and manifestation of the inner spirit" (p. 45). If beauty is to function as an *ideal* (which belongs to its essence), it must be a type of *perfection*. But perfection in the bodily unification with (and consequent expression of) spirit is not found in any natural individual. In fact, Peters notes that "Hegel expresses skepticism concerning the potential presence of genuinely beautiful exemplars among actual, living human individuals" (p. 68). Hence, even though artistic beauty is dependent upon natural beauty for its initial material, art is the true *standard* or "normative ideal" of all beauty (p. 70). This standard is exemplified, according to Peters, in the *hero*, a "beautiful character" whose "will manifests itself in her actions, mediated through habit, or for whom it has become second nature to act in accord with her deliberate choice" (p. 78).

Two obvious objections immediately present themselves. First, one might object that Hegel's account is implausibly anthropocentric. Second, one might wonder whether the "actual soul" is really an *aesthetic* ideal at all, for to be an aesthetic ideal would seem to at least require some role for the spectator. In fact, Peters observes that, for Hegel, "the value and significance of embodying a self-signifying sign comes into view only when and insofar as this quality is being perceived or intuited by a subject" (p. 64). Indeed, this perception involves the experience of pleasure that one commonly associates with beauty. According to Peters, Hegel relies heavily on our intuition that beauty is expressive of spirit, for he posits that our satisfaction in perceiving beauty is explained by a sense of self-recognition and consequent reconciliation with "otherness." In Peters's account, "we, as spiritual creatures, feel satisfied when we perceive a self-signifying sign, as it immediately reflects our own spiritual nature" (p. 66). We feel a sense of "satisfaction," "liberation," and "being at home" in the experience of the beautiful (p. 66). Presumably, this feature excuses what would otherwise seem to be an objectionable anthropocentrism: the

satisfaction in the experience of beauty—*classical* beauty at least—is explained in terms of overcoming a distinctively *human* form of alienation and hence requires a distinctively human form of beauty.

Still, one could ask of Peters more by way of a discussion of what this state of alienation is, and whether and how the mere perception of a self-signifying sign can overcome it. One important, yet under-analyzed, issue is whether this “overcoming” is real or “merely aesthetic”—that is, vicarious and imaginary. Peters indicates that there is a self-reflective form of satisfaction that is enjoyed by the beautiful figure herself, who becomes subjectively self-aware of her “state of reconciliation with [her] own natural body” and therefore is “sensuously blissful in [herself]” (pp. 64–65). Clearly, this is a *real* satisfaction, for it is rooted in her actual state. Peters goes on to say that the experience of the spectator is a “similarly pleasant experience” (p. 65). But, on the assumption that the spectator is not necessarily a beautiful figure himself, it is unclear how it can be strictly the same. Perhaps it is a vicarious pleasure derived from an imaginary identification with the beautiful figure? In that case, would not the reconciliation be a kind of illusion? It might be open to Peters to argue that the pleasure is instead the *cognitive* satisfaction that comes from intuiting a “true” human ideal. This is a distinct accomplishment, however, from overcoming otherness (and, hence, it is not clear that Peters would accept it). Further, as we will see below, the “truth” of this ideal is itself problematic.

The second part of Peters’s overall aim is to apply Hegel’s theory of beauty to elucidate his “end-of-art” thesis. According to Peters, the logic of Hegel’s position is straightforward: since the relevance and value of art depends upon its beauty, and beauty in turn is relevant and valuable because of the (classical Greek) ideal it embodies, then, because this ideal is unsustainable in modernity, art has lost its relevance and value. Hegel reads the post-classical history of art as a series of dialectical developments that consist in rational attempts to resolve an inherent conflict in the ideal of classical beauty, but at the cost of attenuating the link between art and the beauty that belongs to it essentially. In the end, Peters argues that it is unclear for Hegel what relevance and value art can have in modernity.

Peters elaborates on these ideas in the concluding three chapters of her book. Her discussion there is very rich, including a provocative—mostly critical—engagement with much of the recent commentary that attempts (overly optimistically, in Peters’s view) to put forth a Hegelian account of the relevance and value of modern art. Her critique of these attempts is highly cogent and will have to be reckoned with by their defenders. However, I shall pass over this material and focus instead on the core issue, which

is Peters’s view of the flaw inherent in the ideal of beauty itself.

Peters argues that the classical Greek ideal is unsustainable because it “fails by its *own* standards” due to “an inherent tension” between the two main parts of this ideal (p. 10). Specifically, there is a conflict between the ideal serving both as an “aesthetic” and a “human” ideal (p. 11). As we have seen, for Peters’s Hegel, natural beauty is a sort of unity or identity of soul and body; however, Peters observes that, for Hegel, “spirit cannot stay at rest in this identity with the appropriated body” (p. 29). The full realization of spirit requires that it “distinguish itself again from the identity of inner and outer” and adopt the attitude of a subject over against an objective world, including its own body (pp. 29–30). Therefore, “where the human individual embodies a perfect unity of spirit and nature, she is lacking a dimension of subjectivity” (p. 80). For this reason, natural beauty is deficient as a human ideal. Likewise, the complete unity or identification of the “beautiful character” with her ethical habits makes her a “problematic figure [who] almost inevitably gets involved in tragic conflicts” (p. 81).

Peters insists that the deficiency in the ideal of beauty be manifested *within* classical beauty itself, for, in her view, only in this way can beauty be subject to an appropriately Hegelian *immanent* critique. In her words, “within a Hegelian account it should be possible to explain why beauty is *inherently* flawed or problematic, and not just relative to the historical, cultural, or political circumstances in which it is practiced” (p. 123). In short, the only alternatives Peters seems to acknowledge here are an internal conflict within the ideal itself or some un-Hegelian form of historical relativism. Furthermore, Peters believes that only by seeing beauty as “inherently flawed” can we avoid the possibility of “nostalgia” for the lost ideal and “regret” that it is no longer possible (p. 123).

However, these may be false alternatives. Moreover, it seems disconcerting, or at least awkward, that the defining paradigm of the ideal would simultaneously present it as self-undermining. I believe Peters’s account would be strengthened had she kept the exemplifying definition of this ideal (through its paradigm) separate from its critique. Her requirement of immanent critique is, I suspect, what leads Peters to select the Sophoclean tragic hero, particularly Antigone, as the prime example of the classical ideal. In Antigone, we can simultaneously discern the features that make a character beautiful and the tensions that undermine the ideal of beauty. The beautiful character, according to Peters’s Hegel, is an exemplification *both* of the perfection manifested in a unity of inner and outer *and* of “precisely the kind of tension inherent in the aesthetic human ideal in general” (p. 80). While Peters acknowledges

that Hegel “finds the most striking examples of heroes in Greek myth and art,” she alleges that the hero is found “most particularly” in Greek tragedy (p. 81). With her exclusive focus on the latter, Peters strongly implies that the aesthetic ideal is most *perfectly* exemplified in the Greek tragic hero. However, it is not clear that Peters should rely exclusively upon the tragic hero as *both* the epitome of the classical Greek ideal *and* the prime example of how this ideal fails. In fact, there are indications that, for Hegel, the epitome of the hero is rather to be found in Homeric epic. At least, Homeric characters are, according to Hegel, more “total,” if not as “particular” and “individual” (*Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Volume 1, trans. T. M. Knox [Oxford University Press, 1975], p. 238). Further, it is unclear that the Homeric ideal must be viewed as inherently conflicted or tragic.

As mentioned, Peters seems to be motivated to use the same example for the ideal of the hero and the demonstration of its inadequacy because she believes this is necessary to satisfy the demands of a genuinely Hegelian critique of beauty. However, Peters overlooks the possibility that beauty may simply be left behind in the dialectical historical process by factors that are *dialectally necessary*, yet *external* to the ideal of beauty itself. These would be factors that, for modern consciousness, strip beauty of the attraction it had for the Greeks and hence make it impossible as an ideal for us. The obvious candidate for the chief among such factors (probably sufficient in itself) is precisely the rise of theoretical and dialectical self-consciousness that Peters correctly points to as the essence of subjectivity for Hegel. But there is no reason to think such self-consciousness must *originate* within the ideal of beauty—that is, within art—itself. There are, after all, other histories going on parallel to the history of art that are capable of impinging upon the possibilities available to art at any given time. The rise of Greek philosophy is the obvious factor that would, quite independently of the ideal of beauty embodied in the “naïve” Homeric hero, have made that hero increasingly *implausible* to an increasingly philosophical public. The “beautiful” hero comes to be seen—quite rightly, in Hegel’s view—as a stunted and, therefore, unattractive representation of human nature. Thus, it ceases to be capable of serving as an ideal.

Nevertheless, Peters’s basic point—that the ideal of beauty is “flawed”—remains valid. All in all, Peters’s interpretation is presented with great clarity and care and admirably combines the virtues of comprehensiveness and concision. In her efforts to unearth the key elements of the Hegelian definition of beauty and open new avenues for assessing

beauty’s relevance for art, she has made a significant contribution to the discussion.

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DAVEY, NICHOLAS. *Unfinished Worlds: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics and Gadamer*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, viii + 190 pp., 1 b&w illus., £70.00 cloth.

At the heart of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *oeuvre* one finds a riddle: how do silent images speak? It is a riddle that in all its simplicity cannot but perplex the reader. If images are silent, as indeed they are, how, then, can they speak to us? In what language? And how are we addressed by this speech? In his *Unfinished Worlds: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics and Gadamer*, Nicholas Davey sets out to unpack this riddle, not by “reconstructing” or “re-experiencing” Gadamer’s philosophy, but rather by “thinking with” him. It claims to do so in bold terms. Davey’s study promises “a thorough-going reevaluation of the theory-practice relationship within art and the humanities,” a “remarkable hermeneutics,” and a “major philosophical reworking of the nature of aesthetic attentiveness” (p. 2). And all of this by virtue of one example, namely, the case of visual arts.

The book comprises seven meditations on the same issue, namely, the relationship between speech and image or, to be more precise, between rational understanding and sense perception. Approaching the problem of the image’s mute speech from both directions leads, ultimately, to a conjunction of the two. Gadamer’s true originality could only be understood, so Davey claims, when one reads his *oeuvre* as a form of hermeneutical aesthetics. Where traditionally hermeneutics is seen as the discipline that is concerned with the apprehension of meaning and where aesthetics oftentimes is conceived as dealing with sensual experience in all its particularities, Gadamer brings them together and reverses the two: “aesthetics comes to dwell on the visual apprehension of meaning whilst hermeneutics starts to reflect on the singularities of experience” (p. 2). Gadamer’s work promises a truly different approach to aesthetics. And the novelty of the work of the German philosopher resides in the fact that he hints at the role of hermeneutics within the aesthetic experience. But where did this need for a new approach come from, and why did it have to be a hermeneutical one? This, Davey observes acutely, had to do with the status of aesthetics at the time of Gadamer’s writing.

For a long time, Kant's critical edifice had cast a shadow over the discipline. In the wake of the Old Jacobin, aesthetics (Davey calls this "traditional aesthetics") was oftentimes seen as a detached, autonomous domain. Though Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* had incisively altered the notion of *sensus communis* (no longer in that sense that, in the form of the inner touch, it united all the five senses, but from now on in that sense that it is shared by all human beings), Kant had reached that point by building his argument from the experience of the individual subject. Crucial, in this respect, is that the aesthetic judgment is first and foremost a disinterested judgment, not influenced by any worldly desires or interests. And, thus, Davey argues that the separation of the work of art from the experience of the world leads to a situation in which art loses all its importance. This results in the trivialization of art and in a subjectivism that revolves around disinterestedness, detachment, and pleasure. Against this subjectivism of the aesthetic judgment, Gadamer proposes a Heideggerian-inspired critique of Kant. By moving away from the individual's aesthetic experience toward the "taking place" of the work of art, Gadamer's hermeneutical aesthetics contributes to a reorientation of at least three key notions: taste or aesthetic judgment, appearance, and the rational status of aesthetic experience.

One of the consequences of Kant's insistence on the disinterestedness of the aesthetic judgment is the autonomization of the aesthetic domain. To be sure, many an artist or theorist has claimed that it is precisely in this aesthetic autonomy that a political potentiality—the promise of a new sensuous community—could be found. Davey, however, is much more pessimistic and believes that this detached aesthetics leads directly to a "marginalization of aesthetics" (p. 22). In separating the experience of a work of art from all other forms of experience, traditional aesthetics cancels out the relationship between art and the experience of the world. Hermeneutics, to the contrary, starts from the premise that aesthetic experience takes place against the background of "inter-subjective participatory structures of language and tradition" (p. 23). The experience of a work of art never happens in a vacuum. Hence, there is all the need for a new grounding of aesthetics, this time firmly rooted in that discipline best suited for the study of those inter-subjective structures of intelligibility: hermeneutics. The promise of Gadamer's hermeneutical aesthetics is that it offers a different understanding of the subjective response to a work of art.

In traditional aesthetics, Davey maintains that the individual experience of an artwork revolves around pleasure. Without a doubt, pleasure is an important aspect of the aesthetic experience for Gadamer, too. However, in Davey's reading of Gadamer, pleasure

only functions at a secondary level. The primary issue for him is that a work of art has the power to challenge the linguistic and cultural horizons against which human beings come to conceive of their own existence. There is, so to say, a primacy of meaning in Gadamer's experience of art. But that does not mean that the process of challenging one's cognitive and historical framework can come to a closure. The work of art is "an unfinished world" always characterized by a "speculative openness" (p. 150), and thus the spectator is constantly drawn in a back-and-forth movement, moving from a part (e.g., a symbol) to the whole (such as language) and back again. Eventually this will lead Davey to a somewhat daring claim, namely, that an emphasis on the cognitive content of art will help to "reveal, explain and defend the cognitive content of the humanities" (p. 168). Apparently, in *Unfinished Worlds* the experience of a visual work of art functions as the example of how meaning is conveyed in the humanities in general. It is an interesting point that deserves careful consideration, but Davey only touches upon it occasionally and without a more precise elaboration on how one could move from the aesthetic experience to the humanities (and their "cognitive content") as a whole.

The second consequence of Gadamer's move away from Kantian aesthetics concerns the ontological status of aesthetic appearance. Here Gadamer's intervention reaches a "Promethean proportion" as Davey has it (p. 29). But in more prosaic terms, one would say that Gadamer offers an anti-Platonist approach to aesthetics. In Plato's critique, the work of art is two steps removed from the Idea, the *eidos*, and hence forms a distortion of reality. In his *Truth and Method*, Gadamer famously inverts this claim and argues that a work of art does not offer a *Vorstellung* (representation) but a *Darstellung*: it literally places something there. As such, it creates a "new event of being" in which the being of subject-matter is presented. Davey offers his readers an example: within an aesthetics of presentation one is not interested in the veracity of a portrayal of Hamlet, but in what and how this portrayal adds to the historical efficacy of the dramatic figure of Hamlet. In other words, artworks quite literally work. And they do so linguistically.

Gadamer grants the nonverbal a linguisticity, too. In fact, Being is language-like in that it is all self-presenting: "Things, looks, artworks and gestures are *readable* not in the sense that they are translatable into spoken or written form but because they have a *language of their own* in the sense that, like spoken language, their different patterns bring something into being" (p. 32). Davey's whole argument rests on the premise that meaning is linguistically (not verbally) mediated. If artworks have a language of their own, then aesthetic experience is not simply a matter

of private pleasure but of the articulation of meaning as well. And thus Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* no longer suffices to explain the meaningfulness that is at stake in the aesthetic experience.

The third consequence flows directly from the previous two. The particularity of aesthetic experience seems to escape scientific reason with its search for generalities. Gadamer's hermeneutical approach to art, however, shows that the aesthetic judgment may indeed evade any methodological approach while still being reasonable. The linguisticity of a work of art consists of more than the mere expression of statements. It communicates communicability or, in Gadamer's terms, *Sprachlichkeit*, itself. As such, artworks appeal to the spectator's embeddedness in linguistic and historical traditions. But those traditions themselves are not historically fixed. Every work of art opens up new worlds of possibilities that could become actualized, thereby challenging and sometimes changing the traditions against which they are perceived.

Throughout *Unfinished Worlds*, Kant gradually emerges as the archfoe not only of Gadamer but of Davey as well. His reading of Gadamer depends on, to a large extent, Gadamer's reading of Kant. But one could wonder if this reading of Kant through Gadamer does full justice to the work of the philosopher from Königsberg. It is certainly true that Kant's aesthetic theory starts from the individual subject's experience. However, this does not mean that the aesthetic experience is really a purely individual experience of pleasure. In his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Kant indeed argues that this experience transcends the individual subject and appeals to the *sensus communis* that is shared by all human beings. Many a (political) philosopher has sought to tease out the political implications from this postulate. And to dismiss this political potentiality as "the Kantian kingdom-to-come" (p. 49) as Davey does is perhaps too easy a way of setting the communal aspects of his philosophy of aesthetics aside. But then again, Davey emphasizes that he is not concerned with grounding a community in aesthetic experience, but that aesthetic experience itself is always already situated

within a hermeneutic and thus communal "anterior" (p. 78).

As the book opens in bold terms, so it closes as well. In the final chapter, a somewhat messianic tone is adopted, and the image or the visual work of art becomes a "redemptive image." Once more the transformative nature of the work of art is brought to the fore. If in the aesthetic experience meaning is also always experienced, this experience, in turn, gives a glimpse of a more fundamental experience. It is, in fact, the "transformative experience of meaningfulness, a fusion of horizons whereby the horizons of a spectator are significantly altered" (p. 176). One wishes, of course, for an example of such a significant alteration of the spectator's horizon. Davey provides his readers with few examples, and even in the most elaborate of those—such as in a short discussion of Ian Hamilton Finley's *Arcadia*—one is confronted with a brief but interesting reading, however not with such a significant transformation. The point here is not that such a transformation would not be possible. One could perfectly imagine a work to have a truly shocking impact by which all previous assumptions and horizons were shaken. What matters is that after reading *Unfinished Worlds* the reader is left with the impression that the author promised more than the bounds of this book allow for and that this promise pushed the work, with all its emphasis on the transformative power of art, into a direction that was perhaps somewhat too idealistic and speculative. Nevertheless, Davey's study offers an admirable attempt to tease out the implication of a promise found in Gadamer's work, namely, the promise of a reconciliation of aesthetics and hermeneutics. What this means for the humanities as a whole is left for another study. In the meantime, readers of Gadamer would be wise to consult Davey's *Unfinished Worlds* to find out how the riddle of the image's mute speech can be resolved.

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