



A COMPANION TO

LITERARY EVALUATION

EDITED BY
RICHARD BRADFORD
MADELENA GONZALEZ
KEVIN DE ORNELLAS

WILEY Blackwell

A Companion to Literary Evaluation

Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture

This series offers comprehensive, newly written surveys of key periods and movements and certain major authors, in English literary culture and history. Extensive volumes provide new perspectives and positions on contexts and on canonical and postcanonical texts, orientating the beginning student in new fields of study and providing the experienced undergraduate and new graduate with current and new directions, as pioneered and developed by leading scholars in the field.

Published Recently

- | | |
|--|---|
| 78. <i>A Companion to American Literary Studies</i> | Edited by Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine |
| 79. <i>A New Companion to the Gothic</i> | Edited by David Punter |
| 80. <i>A Companion to the American Novel</i> | Edited by Alfred Bendixen |
| 81. <i>A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation</i> | Edited by Deborah Cartmell |
| 82. <i>A Companion to George Eliot</i> | Edited by Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw |
| 83. <i>A Companion to Creative Writing</i> | Edited by Graeme Harper |
| 84. <i>A Companion to British Literature, 4 volumes</i> | Edited by Robert DeMaria, Jr., Heesok Chang,
and Samantha Zacher |
| 85. <i>A Companion to American Gothic</i> | Edited by Charles L. Crow |
| 86. <i>A Companion to Translation Studies</i> | Edited by Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter |
| 87. <i>A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture</i> | Edited by Herbert F. Tucker |
| 88. <i>A Companion to Modernist Poetry</i> | Edited by David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald |
| 89. <i>A Companion to J. R. R. Tolkien, Second Edition</i> | Edited by Stuart D. Lee |
| 90. <i>A Companion to the English Novel</i> | Edited by Stephen Arata, Madigan Haley,
J. Paul Hunter, and Jennifer Wicke |
| 91. <i>A Companion to the Harlem Renaissance</i> | Edited by Cherene Sherrard-Johnson |
| 92. <i>A Companion to Modern Chinese Literature</i> | Edited by Yingjin Zhang |
| 93. <i>A New Companion to Digital Humanities</i> | Edited by Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens,
and John Unsworth |
| 94. <i>A Companion to Virginia Woolf</i> | Edited by Jessica Berman |
| 95. <i>A New Companion to Milton</i> | Edited by Thomas Corns |
| 96. <i>A Companion to the Brontës</i> | Edited by Diane Long Hoeveler and
Deborah Denenholz Morse |
| 97. <i>A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare, Second Edition</i> | Edited by Dymphna Callaghan |
| 98. <i>A New Companion to Renaissance Drama</i> | Edited by Arthur F. Kinney and Thomas Hopper |
| 99. <i>A Companion to Literary Theory</i> | Edited by David Richter |
| 100. <i>A Companion to Literary Biography</i> | Edited by Richard Bradford |
| 101. <i>A New Companion to Chaucer</i> | Edited by Peter Brown |
| 102. <i>A Companion to African Literatures</i> | Edited by Olakunle George |
| 103. <i>A Companion to the Global Renaissance, Second Edition</i> | Edited by Jyotsna G. Singh |
| 104. <i>A New Companion to Herman Melville</i> | Edited by Wyn Kelley and Christopher Ohge |
| 105. <i>A Companion to Children's Literature</i> | Edited by Karen Coats, Deborah Stevenson,
and Vivian Yenika-Agbaw |
| 106. <i>A Companion to American Poetry</i> | Edited by Mary McAleer Balkun, Jeffrey Gray,
and Paul Jaussen |
| 107. <i>A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture</i> | Edited by Sara Castro-Klaren |
| 108. <i>A Companion to J. R. R. Tolkien, second edition</i> | Edited by Stuart D. Lee |
| 109. <i>A Companion to Multicultural Literature of the United States</i> | Edited by Gary Totten |

For more information on the Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture series, please visit www.wiley.com

A COMPANION TO
LITERARY EVALUATION

EDITED BY
RICHARD BRADFORD
MADELENA GONZALEZ
KEVIN DE ORNELLAS

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2024
© 2024 John Wiley & Sons Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by law. Advice on how to obtain permission to reuse material from this title is available at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The right of Richard Bradford, Madelena Gonzalez and Kevin De Ornellas to be identified as the author of the editorial material in this work has been asserted in accordance with law.

Registered Offices

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at www.wiley.com.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Trademarks: Wiley and the Wiley logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty

While the publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this work, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials or promotional statements for this work. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. The fact that an organization, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and authors endorse the information or services the organization, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bradford, Richard, 1957– editor. | Gonzalez, Madelena, editor. | De Ornellas, Kevin, editor.

Title: A companion to literary evaluation / edited by Richard Bradford, Madelena Gonzalez, Kevin De Ornellas.

Description: Hoboken, NJ : Wiley-Blackwell, 2024. | Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023047951 (print) | LCCN 2023047952 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119409854 (hardback) | ISBN 9781119409878 (adobe pdf) | ISBN 9781119409892 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Criticism. | Literature—History and criticism—Theory, etc. | Literature—Philosophy. | LCGFT: Essays.

Classification: LCC PN81 .C7437 2024 (print) | LCC PN81 (ebook) | DDC 809.001—dc23/eng/20231031

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023047951>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023047952>

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: © miljko/Getty Images

Set in 10.5/12.5pt Garamond by Straive, Pondicherry, India

Contents

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	vii
Introduction <i>Richard Bradford</i>	1
1 Literary Values <i>Peter Lamarque</i>	8
2 Complexity as a Criterion for the Evaluation of Literature <i>Anja Müller-Wood</i>	42
3 Schooled Aesthetic Asymmetries: (Back)firing the Canon in Secondary Education <i>D.J. Howells</i>	57
4 Defining Literature: The Route to Aesthetic Evaluation <i>Paolo Euron</i>	76
5 Kathleen Raine: The Less Received <i>Andrew Keanie</i>	92
6 “Is (This) Translation Any Good?”: The Evaluation of Literary Translation <i>Giuseppe Sofo</i>	110
7 The Algorithm of Beauty: Aesthetic Judgment as a Science <i>Madelena Gonzalez</i>	120
8 Literary Value and the Question of Insight on Humanly Relevant Matters <i>Emanuela Tegla</i>	135
9 How Books Get Reviewed: Evaluation and the Freelance Journalist <i>D.J. Taylor</i>	150

10	A Lifetime of Evaluation <i>Penelope Stenning</i>	156
11	Evaluating Unfinished Novels: Octavia E. Butler and the Improbability of Justice <i>Rafe McGregor</i>	166
12	“How to Bring So Goode a Matter into a Better Forme”: The Value of the Horse in Early Modern Writing <i>Elisabetta Deriu</i>	179
13	Reading Performance for the Values Underpinning Production <i>Amanda Finch</i>	195
14	Bridging the Gap between Page and Performance Poetry <i>Karen Simecek</i>	212
15	Aesthetics and Efficacy in Applied and Community Theater <i>Dónall Mac Cathmbaoill</i>	226
16	Antonin Artaud Beyond Judgment: A Radio Reading of “To Have Done With The Judgement of God” with Local Prisoners <i>Gary Anderson and Niamb Malone</i>	243
17	“Chief of the Second Rate”: James Shirley and Dramatic Value <i>Heidi Craig</i>	259
18	“The Glories of our Blood and State” and <i>The Lady of Pleasure</i> : The Genius of [Counterfactual] Britain’s National Writer——James Shirley <i>Kevin De Ornellas</i>	271
19	Evaluating Literary Evaluation <i>Peter Barry</i>	287
20	The Horrible Legacy of Modernism <i>Richard Bradford</i>	299
21	Evaluating Poems <i>Amy Burns and Richard Bradford</i>	331
	<i>Index</i>	346

Notes on Contributors

Peter Lamarque is one of the most prominent aestheticians and philosophers of literature of our time. For the past twenty-three years, he has been a Professor of Philosophy at the University of York and prior to that he held the Ferens Chair of Philosophy at Hull University. He has published nine major books, including *The Philosophy of Literature* (2009) and *Word and Object: Explorations of the Metaphysics of Art* (2010). The latter won him the American Society for Aesthetics Outstanding Monograph Prize, and in 2018 the Italian Society of Aesthetics awarded him the “Premio Internazionale d’Esthetica.” From 1995 to 2008, he was Editor of the *British Journal of Aesthetics* and he has held Visiting Professorships at Cornell University and the Australian National University.

Anja Müller-Wood is Professor of English Literature and Culture at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz (Germany), which she joined after studying and working at the Universities of Marburg and Trier. The author of *Angela Carter: Identity Constructed/Deconstructed* (1997) and *The Theatre of Civilized Excess: New Perspectives on Jacobean Tragedy* (2007), she has extensively published on early modern and twentieth-century British literature and culture and (co-)edited several essay collections, most recently *Translating Renaissance Experience* (2020).

D.J. Howells was educated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he also did postgraduate research into twentieth-century English literature. He has been a classroom teacher and examiner of A level English, mainly in South Wales, for many years. In addition to contributing to various publications—including a previous Wiley-Blackwell Companion—on contemporary Welsh writing in English, he has published, among other subjects, on teaching methodologies in secondary schools, Christopher Marlowe and Keith Douglas.

Paolo Euron received a Ph.D. in Aesthetics (University of Bologna) and was an Associate Professor of Aesthetics (Italian Ministry of University and Research); he taught at the University of Turin and then at the Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok), and he is now affiliated to the European International University. His publications include *Aesthetics, Theory and Interpretation of the Literary Work* (Brill, Boston/Leiden 2019), “Uncanny Beauty. Aesthetics of

Companionship, Love and Sex Robots” (“Artificial Life” Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT 2022), and “Uncanny Attraction. Intercultural Remarks on the Aesthetics of Gynoids and Sexbots in Pop Culture” (“Popular Inquiry” Aalto University, 2023). His fields of research are literary and intercultural aesthetics and intercultural studies.

Andrew Keanie is a Lecturer in English at Ulster University. He has published widely on the English Romantics. He is the author of *Hartley Coleridge: A Reassessment of His Life and Work* (2008), *Sprung From Divine Insanity: On the Harmonious Madness of Byron, Keats and Shelley* (2018), and *Genius Disregarded: Selected Poems of Hartley Coleridge* (2021). He is also a poet, and his first collection, *My Cave Art*, was published in 2020. He lives just outside Dungiven with his wife and near his grown-up daughter.

Giuseppe Sofo is a Tenure-track Assistant Professor (Rtd/B) in French Language and Translation at the Ca’ Foscari University, Venice. He received Ph.D. and Doctor Europaeus degrees from Avignon Université and La Sapienza, Rome. He has been a fellow of the Italian–French University and DAAD, and has taught at several universities in Italy, France, and the United States of America. He has published monographs on translation and has translated theater, fiction, and poetry from French, English, and German into Italian.

Madelena Gonzalez studied at the Universities of Birmingham, Aix-en-Provence, and Vienna before settling in France. She is currently a Professor of Anglophone Literature at the University of Avignon and the head of the multidisciplinary research group “Cultural Identity, Texts and Theatricality” (ICTT). She is also in charge of the Master’s program in English Studies. She has published widely on contemporary Anglophone literature, theater, and culture.

Emanuela Tegla is a literary critic and translator. She has published on various aspects on contemporary literature, including the volume on *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Power. Unsettling Complicity, Complacency and Confession* and translated Petre Solomon’s memoirs on *Paul Celan. The Romanian Dimension*, published by the Syracuse University Press in 2019.

D.J. Taylor is the author of thirteen novels, including *English Settlement* (1996), which won a Grinzane Cavour Award, and *Trespass* (1998) and *Derby Day* (2011), both of which were longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and most recently *Flame Music* (2023). His non-fiction includes *Orwell: The Life*, which won the 2003 Whitbread Prize for Biography, *The Prose Factory: Literary Life in England Since 1918* (2016), and *Orwell: The New Life* (2023). He lives in Norwich with his wife, the novelist Rachel Hore.

Penelope Stenning graduated in English as a mature student from Royal Holloway College, London University, following her decision to elope as a sixteen-year old from Lourdes Convent Grammar almost twenty-five years earlier. She then began doctoral research at the Sussex University and taught English there before deciding to move to France in 2000, where she still lives. She is able to bring to the volume the double perspective of having experienced teaching and researching literature within the academy, and noted the absence of evaluation as part of that environment and that of a voracious reader within the unbounded community of those who live with literature as unprofessional connoisseurs, variously admiring and censorious and always open minded.

Rafe McGregor is a critical theorist publishing on culture, policing, and climate justice. He is the author of *Literary Theory and Criminology* (Routledge, 2023) and *Narrative Justice* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018) and affiliated with Edge Hill University (Criminology), the University of Rijeka (Philosophy), and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (General and Comparative Literature).

Elisabetta Deriu completed her studies between Italy and France, where she obtained a doctorate from the University of Paris Est-Créteil and a qualification as a *Maître de Conférences* in History. Early modern courts, mobility/transfers, and horsemanship are at the core of her research. As far as equestrian topics are concerned, Deriu gained a John H. Daniel's Fellowship at NSLM and has recently published *BibliothEques*, a guide to the Vatican Apostolic Library and Archive's manuscript equestria. Deriu is also a translator and a teacher and currently works in Rome.

Amanda Finch is an early career researcher in Drama with a Ph.D. from Ulster University. Her current research explores the relationship between gender, violence, and comedy, using contemporary performances of Shakespeare as case studies. Her broader research interests include feminist and queer theory, gender and social justice, the representation of gendered violence in theater, and the role of costume in the performative representation.

Dr. Karen Simecek is an Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of Warwick. She is the author of *Philosophy of Lyric Voice: the cognitive value of page and performance poetry* (Bloomsbury). Her research focuses on the philosophy of poetry with particular emphasis on the value of reading and engaging with poetry in the live performance alongside issues in metaphilosophy, the emotions and the cognitive value of art, and, in particular, how art can enhance our moral education. She has published articles in the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, *Changing English*, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *Philosophy and Literature*, *Philosophy Compass*, and *Metaphilosophy* as well as appearing on BBC Radio 4's *Front Row*.

Dónall Mac Cathmhaoill is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at The Open University. His research interests are in identity, politics, and drama. He has published journal articles on Northern Irish theater and LGBTQ+ representation in theater. He is writing four chapters for the upcoming *Creative Writing Handbook* from Bloomsbury, and a monograph on Irish theater is due out in 2024 from the University of Exeter Press. As a writer-director, he has worked with major theaters, including Soho Theatre, London; 7:84 Theatre Company, Scotland; and Jagriti Theatre, India.

Dr. Gary Anderson, Associate Professor and Head of Drama, Dance, Performance at Liverpool Hope University, specializes in Spinozist readings of applied arts and coordinates with Dr. Niamh Malone *HMP to Hope*, a long-term project of inviting men living in prisons to consider university education, and has recently published "Odyssey on the Airwaves: A Journey from HMP to Hope," in *Sonic Engagement* (eds. Woodland and Vachon) Routledge, 2023.

Dr. Niamh Malone, Associate Professor and Head of International Relations at Liverpool Hope University's Creative Campus, specializes in applied theater and coordinates with Dr. Gary Anderson *HMP to Hope*, a long-term project of inviting men

living in prisons to consider university education, and has recently published “Odyssey on the Airwaves: A Journey from HMP to Hope,” in *Sonic Engagement* (eds. Woodland and Vachon) Routledge, 2023.

Heidi Craig is an Assistant Professor (CLTA) of English at the University of Toronto. She is the author of *Theatre Closure and the Paradoxical Rise of English Renaissance Drama in the Civil Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), and has published several articles and chapters on the production and reception of English drama during the theatrical prohibition of 1642–1660, on bibliography and digital humanities, and on rag pickers and textual culture.

Kevin De Ornellas lectures on early modern and modern drama at Ulster University. He has published a monograph, a pedagogical book, a co-edited two-volume collection of essays, over a dozen peer-reviewed essays in books and journals, a hundred reviews of books, plays, and exhibitions, and hundreds of encyclopedia articles. He serves on the Steering Committee of the Irish Renaissance Society; he is a member of the Management Committee of the Riverside Theatre, Coleraine; he is on the Committee of the Aberystwyth Bibliographical Group; he is a Judge for the Global Undergraduate Awards; he is a member of the Cambridge University Press Shakespeare Editions Panel; and he does academic consultancy work for Eton College, Windsor.

Peter Barry, FEA, FLSW, is an Emeritus Professor of English at Aberystwyth University. He co-edited *English for The English Association*, 1989–2007. His books include *Issues in Contemporary Critical Theory*; *New British Poetries*, co-ed. R.G. Hampson; *Beginning Theory*, 4th edn., with translations in Korean, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, plus pirates; *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*; *English in Practice*, 2nd edn.; *Poetry Wars*; *Literature in Contexts*; *Reading Poetry*; and *Extending Ecocriticism*, co-ed. William Welstead.

Richard Bradford has taught at Oxford, University of Wales, and Trinity College, Dublin. He is now Research Professor at Ulster University and Director of the Ulster Literary Biography Research Centre. His thirty-eight books cover topics from eighteenth-century Criticism through Formalism and Crime Writing to Contemporary Fiction; and he has produced sixteen biographies of major writers for trade presses, all well-reviewed and widely publicized. The latter have been serialized in the *Sunday Times*, the *New York Times*, and *The Mail on Sunday*, and have earned him appearances on BBC TV, Channel 4, Radio 4 “Front Row,” Radio 4 “Today” Programme, LBC, and other popular media platforms. His book most relevant to this volume is *Is Shakespeare Any Good? And Other Questions on how to Evaluate Literature*.

Amy Burns is the Director of the Food and Consumer Testing Suite (FACTS) and is an expert in sensory analysis. She completed a B.Sc. in Nutritional Sciences at University College Cork (1996), MSc Biomedical Sciences (1997), and a Ph.D. at Ulster University (2001) before taking up a post in the Ulster Business School at UU. Aside from lecturing and managing the B.Sc. Consumer Studies program, Amy has set up the Food and Consumer Testing Suite (FACTS) in Ulster University Business School. She has published widely on aspects of nutrition and consumer issues, and her monograph *Controlling Appetite* appeared in 2009. Her areas of expertise include nutrition and food innovation, and she has adapted her research skills in sensory evaluation to the evaluative scrutiny of poetry in this volume.

Introduction

Richard Bradford

Literary aesthetics, the artistic qualities and values of literature if you will, is a long-serving concept—as old as Plato, Aristotle, and Longinus—that has been so savagely dismembered and battered both by literary critics and philosophers to defy even the most liberal, capacious attempt at a definition.

Longinus, for example, was responsible for the concept of the sublime: he argued that sublimity is a supplement to the persuasive power of rhetoric, something that transports the reader's emotions to a state of exaltation. Burke and Kant had doubts about the value of this linguistic drug; Pater and Wilde worshipped it irrationally; Adorno and Lyotard ridiculed it as proof of the limitations of bourgeois thinking. Had these been simply differences of opinion then the matter might in itself be interesting, but when we read these thinkers we encounter not so much disagreement as a lack of consensus on what they are discussing. No one seems clear on what the sublime actually involves, and even if some thread of continuity can be traced back to Longinus's original thesis, a question remains. Did he argue that the sublime was a defining characteristic of literature? If so, what is literature supposed to do for us? Does it make us feel better?

For those who did debate the function and purpose of literature, their exchanges resemble a conversation between figures speaking in different languages, each with only a slight knowledge of what the others are saying.

Plato treated poets as superfluous to the proper functions of the state; Shaftesbury and Hobbes, in the eighteenth century, treated them as shifty chroniclers of the harmony or, otherwise, of the society they represented and wrote about. Friedrich von Schiller, conversely, considered the instability of literary works as part of a dialogue between art and the

undercurrents that society tried to disguise; in this, he anticipated such Marxist critics as Lukacs and Jameson.

My point is that whenever we start to follow a trail that will, we hope, lead toward a conclusive principle of literary aesthetics, all we will encounter are byways, unanswered, and seemingly unanswerable questions about what literature is and what it does. There is no easy remedy to this dilemma, but it will be the purpose of this collection to provide signposts to how seemingly divergent routes sometimes overlap.

If the most frequently cited contributors to the sub-discipline of literary aesthetics have anything in common, it is a collective reluctance to say anything specific about literature. Instead, poems, plays, and novels become an adjunct to their pursuit of other agendas, usually far more elemental and philosophically profound. Matthew Arnold, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Friedrich Nietzsche appear to disagree on virtually all elements of literature and art, but look closer at their writings and a common feature emerges. They are not really interested in literature per se at all. Coleridge uses it as a model for his faintly bizarre ideas regarding perception; Arnold sees it as a substitute for the decline in Christian belief; and Nietzsche treats it as symptomatic of what Arnold fears that nineteenth century society is about to become, a delusional empathy with high emotion as a substitute for thinking. As for hard-nosed "Theorists" from Barthes onward, it is a given assumption that the overriding principles of "text" or "discourse" have long overridden our expectation of being able to distinguish between "literary" language and everything else. We abolish notions of literary art and therefore also rule out an ability or inclination to make basic aesthetic distinctions between good and bad writing. The hypothesis is too absurd to merit a response. We know the difference between literary and non-literary works much as we know the difference between a refrigerator and a motor car: our ability to make this distinction involves a facility generally referred to as common sense.

Since the advent of Theory it has been a common assumption within universities that literature cannot be defined and academia has therefore absolved itself from addressing the question of literary quality. If we do not know what it is we cannot evaluate it, cannot compare this novel or that poem with another in terms of its stylistic execution and general significance. However, some contributors to this *Companion* take the view that literature can be treated as something recognizably different from other forms of language and set forth a methodology that demonstrates this. Others take for granted that particular genres and authors are discernible as literary by their very nature and treat this as the epistemological premise for their chapters.

The principal purpose of this book is to build bridges between instinctive judgments and reasoned assessment. It will not attempt to impose upon readers a standard formula for the rating of literary texts—in the end personal preference will play an important part in this—but it will encourage readers to articulate and formulate arguments.

The opening chapter by Peter Lamarque offers a critical survey of some of the main issues concerning the values of literature from a broader perspective of analytical aesthetics and the philosophy of literature. The topics are wide ranging, covering a variety of literary value judgments, the idea of an "institution" of literature, general reflections on the nature of value itself, including the relativity of values, intrinsic and instrumental values, subjectivity and objectivity, David Hume's notion of "true judges," the idea of a literary canon, the relation of literary interpretation and value, and finally

questions about how ethical and literary values might intersect. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a broad-based intellectual framework to help contextualize many detailed and fine-grained debates that arise across the board about literary evaluation.

In Chapter 2, Anja Müller-Wood considers the evaluation of literary narratives from the perspective of their “complexity.” To extend the meaning of this term beyond the sense of “intricacy” in which it is habitually used, she draws on recent work in narratology inspired by scientific attempts to understand, predict, and model complex systems in the real world. This interdisciplinary field connects well with contemporary process-oriented notions of narrative, strengthening their claim that a sense of complexity, rather than constituting an integral and persistent feature in literary texts, is apprehended in the course of their reception. Her discussion of Thomas Middleton’s play *The Revenger’s Tragedy* and Joseph Conrad’s novel *The Secret Agent* sheds light on evasive “emergent” qualities underneath the overt structural intricacies of these texts, which might be considered tokens of their complexity and hence markers of their distinction, indeed “value.”

After Oxford, D. J. Howells taught English up to “A” Level in a number of state schools in South Wales, and his “Schooled Aesthetic Asymmetries” looks at how various methodologies behind the notion of the inspirational teacher have skewed the way literature is studied at this level. Tracing its origins in the post-war Romantic reaction to the formulaic teaching of evaluation earlier in the century, the chapter explores the aversion to non “life-affirming” literature and rational analysis in general in questioning the canon. In addition to focusing on how Theory and philosophy have influenced classroom practice and exam-board criteria, it argues that reasoned subjectivity is unavoidable in how we read and evaluate and, given that it is disagreement that gives literary criticism its meaning, individual judgement should be at the heart of an approach encouraging contention.

In Chapter 5, Andrew Keanie defines literature on the basis of the self-reflective character of the literary work. From this perspective, knowledge about the poetic origin of the text turns out to be a constitutive part of literariness, and the awareness of this specific essence becomes a condition of the full aesthetic fruition. This chapter reveals a sort of continuity between independent positions, dating from the beginning of aesthetic reflection to the present day. Aristotle emphasized the relationship between art and knowledge, and the poets of Early German Romanticism defined the essence of poetry by its self-reflective character and pointed out artifice as one of the constitutive elements of the literary work. Since then, reflection on the poetic character of a work has become a constitutive part of modern literary creation, which necessarily encompasses criticism and creativity. From Wilde to Rilke and from Borges to Calvino, reflection on the definition of the literary work also turns into reflection on the sense of existence. Such a philosophical perspective presents the literary work as what opposes everyday life and, at the same time, paradoxically, as what reveals possible, unexpected meanings of life.

Kathleen Raine’s poetry has no allegiance to the nineteenth century, twentieth century, or any century, and it is never a reaction to the news or a description of the environment. For more than half of the twentieth century, Raine wrote her poems, essays, and scholarly books out of the conviction that life is sacred and that the only “originality” in writing which has any value is a return to the lost knowledge of the Imagination (as promulgated by Plato and Plotinus). This kept her totally at odds with the Marxism, modernism, postmodernism, social realism, and other materialistic critical attitudes of the time; so too

did the fact that she championed William Blake and the Romantics, Edwin Muir, and other unfashionable or obscure writers.

In comparing her writing with a number of her culturally streetwise contemporaries (such as T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, and William Empson), this chapter offers a reassessment of Raine's achievement, including a sympathetic understanding of her vulnerability to the criticism and faint praise coming from reviewers who considered themselves more suitably down to earth and among the less deceived. Keanie revisits in some detail two reviews of Raine's poetry, including a complimentary piece (at first glance) by the unlikely Philip Larkin.

In Chapter 6, Giuseppe Sofò's contribution focuses on the evaluation of translation. Translators and translations are in fact constantly evaluated at every stage and in all fields of translation. However, the process of evaluation is as crucial—both for translation practice and the establishment and evolution of translation theory—as it is complex and multifaceted. Even if we restrict the field to the evaluation of literary translation, leaving aside all other forms of translation, we still have to deal with an extremely heterogeneous set of approaches, all of them struggling to turn evaluation from a subjective form of interpretation of a translator's work into an objective method of observation of the final product. Sofò highlights two distinct directions in the evaluation of translation: on the one hand, the value of literary translation as a whole, the merits and faults that have been attributed to this practice of transmission and transformation of literary works, which has at times been deemed impossible and very often an imperfect tool of the reproduction of the original, at its very best; on the other hand, the merits and faults of each unique instance of translation, how individual translations have been and can be evaluated, and how this evaluation has changed over the years, following the shifts in translation theory and practice.

Madelena Gonzalez attempts to see whether the principle of an algorithm or automated system can be applied to the concept of beauty and to aesthetic judgment. The chapter uses examples from contemporary fiction and culture to test the hypothesis that aesthetic beauty and its evaluation can be explained by the application of a method. It explains how certain discernible formulaic elements and distinctive patterns can be identified in art and judged systematically. This being said, and despite the well-known example of the Portrait of Edmond de Belamy, a work of art produced by an algorithm, the digital systematization of beauty seems a long way off. This chapter concludes with the contention that human beings are still, for the present, considerably more productive as artists than machines.

The chapter on "Literary value and the question of insight on humanly relevant matters" by Emanuela Tegla explores the question of the importance of maintaining clarity of values in the evaluation of literary works as opposed to the current tendency toward extreme relativization and subjectivism. To this end, it appeals to philosophers and critics who, with lucidity and common sense, emphasize the paramount relevance of content, style, and the human dimension of literature. A brief but careful analysis of Buzzati's novel, *The Tartar Steppe*, included in it, is meant to illustrate such aspects that need to guide literary creation, as well as evaluation, in order to offer the reader the possibility for better knowledge and human understanding.

D. J. Taylor has taught in universities, but he makes his living as a freelance writer, producing widely acclaimed fiction, biographies, and studies of cultural history. He also appears regularly in the non-printed media discussing books and other aspects of society. Every week he will write a review or review article for a national newspaper or magazine,

and in his chapter, he makes use of his experience in this last area to look at evaluation outside academia and how it underpins the persistent and sometimes brutal treatment of literature in the book pages.

In Chapter 10, the reflections of Penelope Stenning are featured. She read English at the University of London and went on to teach the subject for a while at the University of Sussex. Before and since her experiences of literature in the university, she has treated it as a point of comparison for her impressions of the world as a whole—she is an enthusiastic traveler—her political beliefs, her friendships, and her role as mother and grandparent. In this regard, her piece merits comparison with Taylor's. She has much to say on the notions of valuing and enjoying literature, but she does so from outside the constraints of academe.

Rafe McGregor's chapter is about the value of unfinished novels. Most unfinished novels that receive critical attention are of either sufficient quantity or quality to be evaluated like any other literary work, as either a novel or a fragment. Where neither of these approaches is appropriate, unfinished novels can be evaluated for their unique biographical significance, their poetics of process, or both. McGregor argues that Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Trickster* demonstrates the rewards of the poetics of process as a distinct type of literary evaluation.

In Chapter 12, Elisabetta Deriu shows that in the early modern period, assessments of horses and horse-related activities can be found not only in treatises on horsemanship but also in other kinds of documents, especially if produced by or relating to a princely household. Whatever the textual source may be, not only the content but also the writing itself, vehiculating various equestrian topics, is often subjected to scrutiny. For the writing, foreign terminology in particular may prove challenging if the target language is not as equinely nuanced as the source. For the content, its quality and scope are strictly linked to and enhanced by the notions of nobility and usefulness (of the horse, of the master, and of horsemanship itself) and constantly appraised: accepted, dismissed, or further debated and developed over the years within the international koine of connoisseurs.

Amanda Finch begins by exploring the reasons for evaluating theatre in performance and what is meant by the values that underpin production. She continues with an overview of key processes that are available for the analysis of performances, including a consideration of theatre semiotics, materialist aspects of production, audiences and reception theory, and the relationship between politics and form. The second half of the chapter puts these processes of analysis into practice with a discussion of Emma Rice's 2016 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Shakespeare's Globe. Drawing together so many analytic processes makes reading performance for the values underpinning production complex, but this chapter makes a case for why it is important in order to explore the cultural work that these performances do.

In "Bridging the gap between page and performance poetry," Karen Simecek highlights the need to consider diversity in the writing and performing (and therefore reception) of lyric poetry. This is not only important in appreciating the full range of aesthetic potential of poetry, but it also paves the way to more inclusive poetic criticism and understanding of poetics. In making her case, Simecek argues that we ought to view the poem as an event rather than an aesthetic object.

In Chapter 15, Donall MacCathmhaoill makes the case that issues of literary evaluation can be explored by focusing on works that are made at the outer edge of literary acceptability and prestige: community and applied theatre.

Applied theatre magnifies problems of literary evaluation: it does not do (and does not intend to do) what other forms of literature—and theatre—do. The form is therefore apt to trouble dominant ideas of quality in theatrical production. This work is primarily defined by its instrumentality, judged as worth doing (and worth funding) for the ability to address social issues and make audiences think differently about the target of the funder's concerns.

In order to achieve this, it relies on affective power: the ability to move an audience and to create a transformative emotional experience. It indicates a set of values or conditions that obtain quality and imply it—instrumental purpose, ideology, affective power, aesthetic value, and authenticity—and conditions that, in combination and in contingent relation to the work, might enable quality to be identified.

Gary Anderson and Niamh Malone describe *Beyond Judgement*, a critical community engagement project with local prisoners who facilitated a performed reading of Antonin Artaud's seminal final radio work, on its 75th anniversary, "To be Done With the Judgement of God (1947)." This represents a UK premier (perhaps even a world first) of Artaud's work in a prison setting, by and for prisoners.

The main concern was co-inventing a workable radio performance with prisoners while playing with the paradox of delivering "judgment" culture (taking in definitions from criminology through to Deleuzian and Braidottian philosophy) to a prison population who have suffered multiple deprivations in terms of formal education.

Working with Artaud in prison settings presents the almost ideal conditions with which to leave our cultural judgments, literally, at the prison gate in the hope of more affirmative, even joyous cooperation with incarcerated men—something they believe Artaud was already convinced of 75 years ago.

In Chapter 17, Heidi Craig considers James Shirley's middling reputation in seventeenth-century dramatic criticism, linking it with his status as the "last" major professional dramatist before the theatres closed in 1642. She performs a close reading of Shirley's last play, *The Court Secret*, whose theatrical debut was thwarted by the prohibition on performance issued on 2 September 1642. *The Court Secret* is heavily indebted to the Fletcherian tragicomedy and amplifies the narrative complications (without necessarily amplifying value). "Chief of the Second-Rate" argues that Shirley's belated position and imitation of his dramatic predecessors all but ensured he would be compared with them and come up slightly short.

James Shirley is, of course, the centrally important figure in the (alternative) literary history of the Kingdom of Britain and Ireland, declares Kevin De Ornellas in Chapter 18. As the national dramatist and the national poet of these happily united lands, he is as revered by the infinitely durable, centuries-old Stuart monarchy as much as he is by popular audiences. Lapped up by children in school, studied in immense detail by researchers, constantly performed in state-sanctioned arts institutions such as the Royal Shirley Company, and subject to unwavering hagiography in contemporary media, Shirley has truly been shown to be *the* writer for all times. This chapter simply pays tribute to the Shirley phenomenon: it explains the rise of Shirley by explaining both the cultural and historical factors that have caused the Stuarts' favorite writer to be adopted so willingly by their loving subjects. With particular reference to Shirley's humanity-defining poem, "The Glories of our Blood and State," and to his endlessly popular comedy, *The Lady of Pleasure*,

there is a demonstration of the glorious efficacy of Shirley's mastery of both finessed verse and universally appealing storytelling and theatricality.

Peter Barry's chapter is difficult to summarize because it is more like a conversation than a "discourse" focused on a given element of criticism, evaluation or aesthetics, and it is all the better for that. Most of the first part involves Siegfried Sassoon, who Barry brings to life, in the same way that real people are by varying degrees present, emotionally active yet enigmatically elusive. This sets the move for Barry's reflections on the condition of literary studies as an academic discipline through the past few decades of its history, notably the reverberations caused by the retreat of Theory from the front line of academic criticism. He reaches no overarching conclusion. Indeed, he refuses to accept that evaluation can be tied to an impersonal, formal methodology but suggests that individuals should be allowed, encouraged to allow their estimate of the value of a work or its author to come from their private interface with both.

In Chapter 20, Richard Bradford, on Modernism, embodies Barry's injunction. Bradford looks at the conflicts between avant-garde writers of the early twentieth century and those who treated their work as impenetrable and self-indulgent. At the time, the latter came close to representing an evaluative consensus, but within ten years the anti-Modernists had become a footnote in literary history. Bradford urges us to consider why exactly the doubters were opposed to Modernism, a question hardly ever addressed by those who now write about and teach the period. Were their objections based on an aesthetic rationale or were they simply intractable reactionaries who refused to accept the new? Bradford takes their side and argues that Modernism has seriously damaged literature. Is he playing devil's advocate or promoting his own evaluative convictions and findings?

The closing chapter on evaluating poetry, by Amy Burns and Richard Bradford, contemplates how we can assess a poet's skill as a craftsman in his ability to control the relationship between the formal structures of verse and the undertow of ordinary language. It also looks at how poets deal with matters involving history and morality and considers why academic critics debase themselves by pretending that popular music is comparable with serious verse: Bob Dylan is mentioned.

1

Literary Values

Peter Lamarque

The philosophy of literature, as developed by analytical philosophers, places the values of literature, implicitly or explicitly, at the center of its core debates. Is literature an honorific (value-laden) concept or a descriptive one? What is literary interpretation if not primarily the uncovering of deeper significance and interest in works of literature? What about the pursuit of truth and knowledge? Is it not one of the most valued aspirations of literature? Can readers of novels not sharpen their moral sensibility, their empathy, or their understanding of human weakness, desires, and follies by engaging with the lives of fictional characters? Can the great works of fiction or poetry or drama not offer enduring psychological rewards, not just in the pleasures of literary artifice but in having the imagination stretched through immersion in worlds and possibilities well beyond the banalities of everyday life? These are some of the debates, even if no final resolution has emerged.

Are there such distinctive literary values as implied in these debates? Is it possible to generalize across literary genres or are there only, at best, values of poetry, drama, the novel, the short story? How are individual works to be evaluated? Are there objective values or only values relative to individual readers or “communities”? Is there a canon of great works, and if so, how is it constructed? How do moral values relate to literary values? Can great works be immoral? These are live issues for the philosopher of literature.

The Varieties of Literary Value Judgments

It would be wrong to think that our only interest in literary value judgments resides in simple judgments to the effect that such-and-such is a good novel or a beautiful poem. Bald value claims of this kind have little intrinsic interest. Such interest as they have, and

this is true of all value judgments, lies in the *reasons* offered in their support. A judgment that cannot be backed up is worthless. Those who are inclined to dismiss literary values as merely “subjective” or “personal opinion” are probably supposing that the only support for such judgments is of the form “because I like it.” However, although there is a place for personal preferences and likes and dislikes, these cannot be the sole basis for considered critical judgments.

Literary criticism, as the term suggests, is inescapably connected to judgments of value, but these need not surface in a summative form (X is good, and Y is bad); they might emerge, even implicitly, through a detailed analysis. With well-established works—canonical works—a summative judgment is rarely needed. It is only when works in the canon are being challenged or non-canonical works being reassessed that explicit judgments seem pertinent. Sometimes, for example, global judgments are made about whole schools of writing, notably in a period of canon revision:

It is mainly due to him [T. S. Eliot] that no serious poet or critic today [i.e. 1932] can fail to realise that English poetry in the future must develop (if at all) along some other lines than that running from the Romantics through Tennyson, Swinburne, *A Shropshire Lad*, and Rupert Brooke. He has made a new start and established new bearings.¹

The efforts of critics, such as T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis in the 1920s and 1930s, to demote Romantic poetry in favor of modernist poetry of the kind written by Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, were based on judgments of the comparative merits of the two schools of poetry, backed up by observations about the new social environment: “urban conditions, a sophisticated civilization, rapid change, and the mingling of cultures have destroyed the old rhythms and habits.”²

Staying at a general level of value, some judgments refer to generic faults (or strengths) in works. Here is Virginia Woolf commenting on the novelist George Meredith identifying both a local flaw in his novels and a flaw in any novel:

[Meredith’s] teaching is too insistent. He cannot, even to hear the profoundest secret, suppress his own opinion. And there is nothing that characters in fiction resent more. If, they seem to argue, we have been called into existence merely to express Mr. Meredith’s views upon the universe, we would rather not exist at all. Thereupon they die; and a novel that is full of dead characters, even though it is also full of profound wisdom and exalted teaching, is not achieving its aim as a novel.³

If academic critics are primarily concerned with established works, or works that aspire to be so, journalistic critics focus on new works and are paid to offer their assessments. Readers go to such critics to seek guidance on their reading. Here judgments do tend to be explicit, although again the judgments are worthless without support:

Successful literary thrillers in the mould of Umberto Eco’s “Name of the Rose” are the stuff of publishers’ dreams, and in [Iain] Pears’s novel [*An Instance of the Fingerpost*] they may have found a near-perfect example of the genre. It is literary—if that means intelligent and well written—and for the reader who likes to be teased, who likes his plots as baroque and ingenious as possible, “An Instance of the Fingerpost” will not disappoint.⁴

In a couple of sentences, the critic has identified the genre of the novel, by comparing it to another highly acclaimed work, valued it within that genre, and offered reasons why readers might enjoy it.

Sometimes critics are unsure of the overall quality of a work and find good and bad elements in it:

[*Jane Eyre*] is a very remarkable book. We are painfully alive to the moral, religious, and literary deficiencies of the picture, and such passages of beauty and power as we have quoted cannot redeem it, but it is impossible not to be spell-bound with the freedom of the touch. It would be mere hackneyed courtesy to call it 'fine writing'. It bears no impress of being written at all, but is poured out rather in the heat and hurry of an instinct ...⁵

A further kind of value judgment connects a summative assessment of a work with the success of localized detail in, or strategies of, the work:

one of the triumphs of the novel [*Bleak House*] is the delicacy with which Dickens handles the knowledge, suspicions, guesses, and mistakes of the various characters... Esther is never seen by the omniscient eye, nor does Tulkinghorn ever appear personally in Esther's narrative. This corresponds to their limited knowledge; Tulkinghorn, for all his plotting, never knows of Esther's relation to Lady Dedlock while there is no substantial evidence that Esther knows anything of her father until after her mother's death.

Granted this, the opportunities for dramatic irony are clearly enormous and it is to Dickens's credit as an artist that with great tact he refuses many of the chances for irony offered by the interlocking narratives. How close—all unknowing—is Esther to meeting her father during her first visit to Krook's? Yet we scarcely perceive this, even on a re-reading of the novel. A lesser artist would have wrung dry the irony of such an incident, but Dickens is sound in his refusal to do so. For the novel, as it stands, is so taut, so potentially explosive, that to expatiate on, or to underline, its implications would make it quite intolerable.⁶

These are just some of the kinds of values that readers find in literary works. They show how natural and familiar such judgments are in the practice of reading, against an often heard complaint that talk of value in the arts is extraneous, elitist, or merely personal. Nevertheless, the roots of these values need careful exploration.

The Literary Institution and Appreciation

Institutional accounts of literature provide a useful framework for exploring the fundamental bases for valuing literature as art. The claim of one such institutional account is that the very being and nature of literary works depend on an "institution" in a manner analogous to that in which the being and nature of a chess piece or an item of currency depend on, and are grounded in, a corresponding game or practice.⁷ Certain consequences follow immediately. One is that there would be no literary works without the institution; literary works are not "natural kinds," just finely wrought stretches of language independent of specific purposes and actions. They are "institutional objects," a concept that we shall return to later. Second, the existence of literary works depends on a set of conventions

concerning how they are created, appreciated, and evaluated; in other words, on attitudes, expectations, and responses found in authors and readers. A third point directly arises from the chess/currency analogies. It is a feature of chess and currencies that there are multiple ways of instantiating the formal roles of the pieces in each case. The king in chess can not only be made of wood or plastic, be two inches or two feet high, take all kinds of stylized forms, but in fact it need have no physical manifestation at all. Chess can be played without a board by simply specifying moves. Likewise, there are any number of forms in which a dollar or fifty pence can be manifested. The institutional account of literature places no restrictions on the forms that literary works can take. Finally, there is nothing in the institutional account that implies restrictions on participants in the practice, their social class, age, gender, or ethnicity. To participate it is enough to know and conform to the conventions and to have had some initiation (“literary education”) into the rules of the practice.

The institutional account also points to a contextualist ontology for literary works, as texts that are doubly embedded, both *historically* as a product of an act of creation at a time, by a person, in a literary-cultural context, and *institutionally*, being of a kind that invites and rewards a certain mode of response as determined by a rule-governed practice, guided by broadly conventional aims and expectations.⁸

These expectations concern matters such as: salience assigned to the design, form, and structure of a verbal artifact; the presentation of a subject with a reasonable degree of coherence and connectedness; and the development of a thematic interest that allows for deeper, more far-reaching reflection on, and beyond, the particularities of the subject. To attend to a work with these expectations and to have them rewarded afford a species of pleasure—aesthetic pleasure—that inclines readers to spend time exploring what the work can offer. Value resides in the quality of the experience a work yields, focused on two broad dimensions: imaginativeness or creativity evident in the design of the work and the richness of its content at both subject and thematic levels.

It is a striking but obvious fact that those works that reward appreciation to the highest degree will be those that readers are inclined to return to and explore in depth. Valuable works of art are those that sustain this kind of interest. Consider an example, Gerard Manley Hopkins’s sonnet “The Windhover,” which exhibits exceptional power and felicity in its language, in a way that seems to epitomize the poetic, indeed the aesthetic:

I caught this morning morning’s minion, king-
 dom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
 In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
 As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
 Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
 Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.⁹

It is more than just its rippling mellifluous melodies that have struck readers. There is a remarkably large body of secondary critical writing about this single poem. Why should that be? Why should some poems such as this, and not others, draw so much attention? The answer is that readers derive pleasure from reflecting on the poem; different readers notice different aspects of it and further reasons for returning to it. Here is a not untypical example:

The triumph of this poem is precisely that perception of the likeness in the unlikeness, and of the poet's own achievement—the association of bird, self, and Christ. The “buckling” in line 10, then is a sort of gravitational centre, in the poem, where the conflation of figural levels “here,” in the poem itself, takes place as analogy is lifted to the level of allegory and interpretation. The octave of “The Windhover” is to a large degree about perception, but the sestet, a formal revision of the octave, is about re-vision—seeing again. Mere perception has become a different kind of vision, and brings the poet access to what we call the visionary.¹⁰

As is conventional, this critic notices factors about the poem's form, its immediate subject, and the wider context of what it is “about,” interrelating all three. The poem elicits quite different interests from other readers:

“The Windhover” most famously images Christ in highly equestrian terms, as an endearing “chevalier” (11). Yet, even there, amidst the aristocratic emblem of falconry, the kestrel is a symbol of “mastery” (8), iconizing “Brute beauty” (9), and the poem closes by falling heavily with the weight of the ploughman's “sheer plod” (12). Any reader of Hopkins's work, then, encounters a definitely masculine poetics.¹¹

This reader pursues the partly biographical, partly literary critical theme in Hopkins of the “unswerving attention to the embodiment of divine power in differing types of working men,” in light of the idea that “the male body, especially the working-class male body, has such potency, vitality, and, it has to be said, no uncertain danger in Hopkins's aesthetics.”¹²

It is a mark of the great works of literature that a tradition of “readings” builds up around them, representing the fascination that readers have with the works and their desire to explore them further. Of course, it is not just the quantity of readings that indicates literary value but the nature of what these readings reveal. Works that reward continued interest will be those that are amenable to different perspectives, that have the capacity to surprise, and that open up new imaginative possibilities. Lesser works will simply not reward renewed attention.

The framework of the literary institution also raises a further context for reflecting on value, which concerns the value of the institution itself. The emphasis thus far has been on the value attributed to individual works, but there are values attached to participation in the practice. Perhaps only quite general comments are possible here, but there are clearly values associated with both the production of works and their appreciation. Artists derive,

if nothing else, at least some personal satisfaction and sense of fulfilment in producing works that give pleasure to those who appreciate them. In turn, appreciators can find intrinsic as well as instrumental value (ideas we shall return to) in the experience of literature. A literary education is an education in how to acquire worthwhile experiences of this kind, and it takes the form of initiation into some such practice.

It is possible to stand back even further and ask about the roots in human life and human society of an institution that reveres certain kinds of linguistic artifacts and that encourages the constitutive benefits to producers and appreciators alike. Perhaps an evolutionary explanation is at hand, identifying adaptive features of storytelling or poetry.¹³ However, given the essential features associated with literature—language, design, imagination, play, “imitation,” and broad themes of human interest—it is hardly surprising that the institution of literature is such a universal and inter-cultural phenomenon. The imaginative realization in narrative (storytelling) of fundamental human concerns, about life and death, love, and despair, seems to manifest itself in all cultures, and the roots of poetry are found in song, ritual, and oral traditions. It is difficult to conceive of a society that could find no need for such activities. Whatever detailed explanation is forthcoming for the origins and durability of this phenomenon, its value within human life is there for all to see.

The philosopher of literature, though, needs to provide a more down-to-earth account of the nature of values in the literary sphere. There are many misconceptions to overcome.

Key Distinctions about Value

Valuing as x, as y

The value we are exploring is *literary* value or the value a work has *as literature* or *as art*. The innocent seeming “as” is important because when we ask if something is good or valuable we usually need to know what kind of goodness or value is at stake. A paperweight might be good as a decorative object, poor as a paperweight, valuable as a family memento, valueless in financial terms, good for propping a door open, and bad for packing in a suitcase. When asked if it is valuable, it is reasonable to ask “valuable as what?” Note that to relativize values in this way is not to imply that values are relative in the sense that they are merely subjective or dependent on personal preference. Yes, values are relative to interests, but once the interests have been identified, there need be no further relativization. To judge something as a paperweight is to invoke clear, if basic, criteria: the object must be heavy enough to keep papers from blowing away, must be a manageable size (fit easily on a desk, for example), must not be so heavy that it takes two people to lift it, had better not be completely round as it would likely roll off, and so forth. Such criteria affect the design of a paperweight and help determine good or bad examples.

Similarly, in asking what value a work has *as literature* or *as art* is to relativize value to particular interests. The interests in question relate to relevant conceptions of literature. If the generic conception of literature as *belles lettres* is at issue, then the question “Is it good as literature?” simply means “Is it fine writing?” Under a thicker conception of literature

as art, more than just fine writing is looked for. The question now concerns how well the work rewards a certain kind of attention (“appreciation”), how receptive it is to literary critical modes of reading, and, in general, how well it conforms to the norms of the “institution.” Exactly what that entails is a primary topic for the philosophy of literature.

Even works that are acknowledged to be literature (under the thicker conception) might reward attention other than a strictly literary one. Different interests can be involved. Social historians might have a legitimate interest in nineteenth-century novels and judge some more highly than others for the purpose of shedding light on contemporary attitudes and conditions. Their judgments, arguably, are not literary judgments. Similarly, philologists might rank novels and novelists according to the contributions they make to linguistic innovation. Freudian psychoanalysts admire certain works for “anticipating” Freud’s theories of the unconscious; Freud himself singled out the relatively obscure novel *Gradiva* by Wilhelm Jensen and Schiller’s play *Wallenstein* for just this reason. Again his interests, and thus his judgments, were not, and did not purport to be, strictly literary critical ones. The works were valued for illuminating his theories. Just as reading is directed, so too is evaluating.

More controversially, when readers choose novels for taking to the beach or going on holiday, they are not characteristically concerned with literary merit. They want “light entertainment,” “easy reading,” and something to help them relax and take their minds off work. Much genre fiction can be rated highly as fantasy or pure entertainment without having any literary aspiration. The distinction, though, is controversial because it is sometimes deemed to rest on elitism or snobbery rather than anything more intrinsic to the works. However, the charge is unfair, at least partially, because the values concerned are incommensurate. It is not that there is a single scale of value on which “literary” works rate highly and genre fiction rates lowly; rather, there are different scales. Judged as fantasy, the Harry Potter novels rank high, and *Middlemarch* ranks low. As tragedies, *Hamlet* is good, and *What Ho, Jeeves* is a non-starter. Of course, some genre fiction also aspires to literary status, and on that scale can perform well—Harry Potter might be an example or the spy novels of John Le Carré. But the fact that many genre novels neither invite nor reward systematic literary analysis should not be taken as a negative feature of them. Their merits lie elsewhere. The cheery but trite rhyming couplets in a birthday card might suit the purpose (of the card) very well but entirely lack literary interest.

Part of the reason why comparisons continue to be made between literary and genre fiction, often to the detriment of the latter, is that the generic conception of belles lettres is being assumed. Genre fiction, so the thought goes, is just not as well written. But then that judgment is subject to the charge of snobbery. Why should works that are sometimes difficult to read (e.g., Henry James’s later novels) be more highly valued than straightforward storytelling? Only snobbery, it is said, could be the explanation. A number of confusions underlie this familiar spat. The first is that there is more to literary value, in the substantial sense of “literature,” than fine writing. James’s novels might fulfil the relevant criteria—beyond belles lettres—better than a standard murder mystery. The second is that the idea of fine writing is itself a relative value as noted earlier; it is a matter of means and ends. The convoluted prose of James’s novels is only admired, if at all, because it serves, among other things, the literary purpose of exhibiting complexities, ambivalence, and fragility in human relations. If it were reproduced in a letter of condolence or a memo around the

office or a popular whodunit, the writing would not be praised but thought pretentiously inappropriate. In a genre novel where suspense, action, or fantasy is paramount, the writing needs to conform to those ends.

Another overriding problem is that in principle any work can be read *as if* it were literature in the substantial sense. It is always possible to undertake a critical analysis of any work, looking for unifying themes, character development, formal complexity, internal connectedness, moral seriousness, etc., but most genre fiction does not reward such attention, and the enquiry is seen as pointless and irrelevant. However, it should not be concluded that these works are of no value, only that their primary interest is not *as literature*.

The debate cannot quite be left there, although the points about incommensurable values are important. Even ardent fans of murder mysteries, or other genres, are likely to concede that there is a broader framework in which comparative value judgments across works can be made. Within this framework, literary works of art—those, as we have seen, that reward continued re-readings—seem to provide more lasting satisfaction, the chance for deeper and more reflective contemplation, than the self-confessedly ephemeral productions suitable for beach or birthday card. If there is a scale of lasting or rewarding pleasures, then literary works are likely to score higher. The thought is familiar from John Stuart Mill's admittedly not uncontroversial discussion of "higher pleasures." As Mill puts it, "there is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation."¹⁴ In the literary context, it is important to draw the right inference from this: not that there is no value in the works of non-literary genre fiction or that they are intrinsically inferior or that canonical works of literature should always be promoted over these productions, only that the gains in quality of experience, lasting pleasure, and stimulation of the imagination are likely to be more rewarding from the former over the latter. There is still no reason to run the categories together and to suppose that genre fiction is trying and failing to do something that literary fiction does better.

Intrinsic and Instrumental Values

A distinction related to that between reading *as literature* and reading *as something else* is the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values. It is common to speak of works of art as valued *for their own sake* rather than for some extrinsic end.¹⁵ Clearly, to value a work of art as something other than art is not to value it for its intrinsic merit. Instrumental values of literature are associated with values attached to the effects of reading where these effects seem remote from artistically relevant qualities: they might include reminding me of my childhood, giving me the ability to pass an exam, or providing examples of psycho-analytic theory. Reading the works is instrumental in bringing about these desired effects, but the effects do not indicate intrinsic values.

However, it cannot be quite right to draw the intrinsic/instrumental distinction exclusively in terms of the relevance or otherwise of effects. The intrinsic value of a work cannot be independent of all effects because works of art only have value for human beings.

The very existence of works of art is dependent on the responses of humans to art. Artistic values and thus literary values are, in that sense, *response-dependent* values. Therefore, now the question is: which effects—or which responses—are directly related to a work's intrinsic value, and which are merely “contingent” or instrumental effects? The question points to a complexity in the idea of intrinsic value. Philosophers can mean different things by this.

One idea is that a work's intrinsic value connects only to the properties of the work that are intrinsic to it, those properties that give it its unique character: these are primarily formal properties such as structure or composition, but by extension these properties incorporate vocabulary, subject, and theme. Another idea locates intrinsic value with the value of an experience intimately bound up with the work: this is usually connected to the pleasure that the work gives. In fact, the two ideas are related because the unique experience that a work yields is necessarily linked to the intrinsic properties of the work.

However, once it is admitted that some effects of a work—such as pleasurable experience—are linked to intrinsic value, where can the line be drawn between intrinsic and instrumental? Crucially, what becomes of properties such as learning, moral knowledge, heightened awareness, increased sensitivity to human affairs, and indeed any of the properties that might be considered under the heading of “cognitive”? Are these part of the intrinsic value of a work or are they instrumental values, i.e., merely beneficial consequences of reading? We seem to be pulled in two directions. Either we say that certain extrinsic-looking properties, such as moral knowledge, are in fact intrinsic to a work and part of its intrinsic value, its value as a work of literature, or we say that certain genuinely extrinsic properties are a part of literary value, so literary value is not confined to intrinsic value. In both cases, though, we are caught with the problem of where to draw the line. After all, if we include all extrinsic properties—such as helping to win prizes, make money, and impress friends—as part of the value of reading literature, then we are in danger of losing the notion of a genuinely literary value. But if we include some but not all effects of reading among intrinsic values, why should just those effects—associated with pleasurable experience—be counted?

One route out of the dilemma is not entirely satisfactory in the case of literature, namely, to appeal to a narrowly defined kind of aesthetic pleasure or aesthetic experience, which is closely tied to the intrinsic, formal properties of a work. This idea is often linked to notions such as “disinterested attention” or attention cut off from practical, utilitarian, political, or moral concern, involving contemplation of an object for its own sake. This might get around the problem of how pleasure could be both an effect wrought by a work and in some way intrinsic to it; it does not do justice, however, to a genuine literary response that goes far beyond the disinterested contemplation of a work's formal properties.¹⁶

A more subtle account keeps the notion of experience, even aesthetic experience, as integral to artistic value but broadens this experience to include more than bare formalism. Malcolm Budd has defended a view of the value of art in terms of the experience a work offers:

The value of a work of art as a work of art is intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers It should be remembered that the experience a work of art offers is an experience *of the work itself*, and the

valuable qualities of a work are qualities *of the work*, not of the experience it offers. It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in undergoing the experience the work offers; and the work's artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience. So a work of art is valuable as art if it is such that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable.¹⁷

Budd is at pains to keep the connection, surely rightly, between what the work is like in itself and the valuable experiences it affords. But he rejects formalism and allows that the relevant experience might possess intrinsically, not merely as consequences, all of the following: "the invigoration of one's consciousness, or a refined awareness of human psychology or political or social structures, or moral insight, or an imaginative identification with a sympathetic form of life or point of view that is not one's own."¹⁸

Therefore, here cognitive—and other—values are reinstated among the intrinsic values of a work. While this might seem a desirable outcome, it does put pressure both on the idea of "experience" and the intrinsic/instrumental distinction.

Budd builds a lot into the term "experience," requiring that an appropriate experience of a work be "imbued with an awareness of ... the aesthetically relevant properties of the work" and be "an experience of interacting with it in whatever way it demands if it is to be understood." The crucial point is that the experience on which the value of a work is based is not just *any* response that the work might elicit in individual readers but is subject to norms of appropriateness. If a reader misunderstands a work or is unaware of its important aesthetic properties, then any value judgment of that reader will be compromised.

It is a moot point whether Budd's conception of experience leaves room for a non-arbitrary distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values. It might, for example, be argued that acquiring a "refined awareness" or "moral insight" (two items on his list) must extend beyond an experience itself as both are dispositional properties, realizable in subsequent action long after any particular artistic experience has passed.¹⁹ This would suggest that they are distinct from experience and are consequences of experience; therefore, they are not intrinsic values of the experience. On the other hand, employing a notion such as that of "vision" might bring awareness and insight closer toward intrinsic experiential qualities.

A further example might help. It seems to be a clearly instrumental property of a work that it cheered me up when I read it—this is a beneficial effect but an effect nonetheless. In contrast, being *cheerful* might be an intrinsic property of the work. Recognizing its cheerfulness might be integral to a proper appreciation of the work. It is a different move altogether, though, to say that feeling cheerful or being cheered up is an experience demanded by the work when properly understood. The work property and the experience property never quite come together as intimately as that. Being cheered up, we might say, is not an aesthetic experience.

However the issue of intrinsic/instrumental is resolved, it does seem that in seeking literary value we should seek it, as far as possible, in intrinsic rather than instrumental values, as that distinction is normally understood, although a good case can be made that intrinsic values include values associated with a fairly broadly conceived experience a work can offer. When focusing on literature, however, not merely art in general, a sharper conception of the relevant experiences is needed. That can be provided only by returning to core ideas of what literature is.

Text/Work

If we seek the intrinsic value of a literary work, the value it has as a work of literature, where do we look? It might seem a hopelessly indeterminate matter trying to discern the value of a stretch of writing even if the value is limited to intrinsic value. Why should we expect any single kind of experience to be shared by all readers? This is indeed a problem if the focus is on *texts*. Let us define a text, in this context, as simply a string of sentences (or words) in a language endowed with the meanings assigned to the words by the language. It is hard to see how a *text* in itself, so defined, can have any value. A text only acquires value when it fulfils a purpose: it is valuable only to the extent that it fulfils the purpose well. A sentence used in a conversation has value if it conveys information intended by a speaker and grasped by a hearer. A work of literature—a poem, a novel, a drama—is not just a text in this sense but, as suggested earlier, an “institutional object,” a text located in a network of conventions and actions, i.e., a “work.” If we are to identify literary value, we must do so, as always, within the context of a relevant conception of the literary work. On the institutional conception, a work is defined through the conventions of a practice of reading and appreciation.

A brief look at other institutional objects, as illustrated above, shows parallel cases of the locus of value. A chess piece, a playing card, or a banknote acquire their distinctive value only in the context of an “institution,” in this case a game or a banking system. Taken as a physical object, a chess piece has only the value, such as it is, of the object itself. If the piece is made of gold, then it is indeed valuable, but that is not a “chess value.” How do we account for its value *as a chess piece*? An explanation can only be given within the terms of the game. Within chess, a queen has more value than a pawn. Why? Because a queen has greater maneuverability than a pawn. Maneuverability is a criterion of value in chess. Of course, that is not to deny that in a particular game at a particular time, a pawn might be more powerful than the queen: the queen might be trapped and rendered momentarily useless, while the pawn is threatening checkmate. However, such circumstances do not undermine the general claim about the relative values of the pieces. Nor is there any inclination to think of these values as “merely subjective.” Someone might have an eccentric personal preference for pawns over queens; if so, that is indeed “subjective.” But it does nothing to impugn the objective fact that overall the queen has higher value than a pawn in the game of chess although, in some particular games, *this* pawn at *this* moment is more valuable than the queen in *this* position.

Similar points can be made about the values of a playing card and a banknote. A card’s “face” value is its value determined by constitutive rules of card games: a 10 is higher than a 6, a King higher than a Jack, etc. Undoubtedly, local rules in particular games might vary these values. Banknotes too have “face” values, invariably more than the intrinsic value of the paper on which they are printed. Their monetary value, such as the value of a playing card, is not an arbitrary or subjective matter; rather, it follows agreed conventions. These simple examples show how uncontroversial it is in some cases to speak of an object’s possessing value relative to a practice or system of rules.

The analogy between these cases and literature is only loose. The rules governing chess, for example, are stricter and more clearly defined than the conventions of literary practice. However, the fact that there are conventions governing responses to works “from a literary