

SEMANTICS AND LITERARY STUDIES

The link between language studies and literary studies was established anciently. It is interesting that the Latin word *grammaticus*, which is sometimes rendered 'grammar,' is properly the title given to the 'teacher of literature and languages.' According to Quintilian (c.35-c.95 AD) in his *Institutio Oratoria*, the *grammaticus* must be a man of great and wide-ranging learning. For him, it is not sufficient to have read the poets,

every kind of writer must be carefully studied, not merely for the subject matter, but for the vocabulary; for words often acquire authority from their use by a particular author. Nor can such training be regarded as complete if it stop short of music, for the teacher of literature [*grammaticus*] has to speak of metre and rhythm; nor again if he be ignorant of astronomy, can he understand the poets; for they, to mention no further points, frequently give their indications of time by reference to the rising and setting of the stars. Ignorance of philosophy is an equal drawback, since there are numerous passages in almost every poem based on the most intricate questions of natural philosophy (Book I, Chap iv. par 4).

It has always been understood that the literary scholar should be well informed about the concerns of several other fields of learning; and several different reasons are given for this. For example, Aristotle explains the need for this knowledge on the ground that it provides 'the points to be considered in resolving problems of criticism' (*On the Art of Poetry*, Chapter 25); and the issues at stake may range from grammar (Chapters 20 to 22), to political theory, medicine, history, and logic (Chapter 25). More than twenty-one centuries after Aristotle, and seventeen after Quintilian, Shelley was to write as follows about poetry:

It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought (1962: ll.979-983).

If this is the case, the literary scholar has his work cut out for him. He has the entire field of knowledge before him. Apparently, the poem is the point of entry into the field of knowledge, as well as the destination where all intellectual quests are gathered up and come to rest.

Ironically, Shelley was making these claims precisely at the time that knowledge was breaking away from language and poetry. Knowledge (*scientia*: science in general) has since become highly sophisticated and specialised, with a highly formalised sign system, which tends to exclude all but the initiates. This may recall Saussure's dyadic sign theory being articulated after this relation had already dissolved – at any rate, after it had ceased to function in literature.

Nevertheless, there are important aspects of knowledge which the 'teacher of literature' cannot avoid. For instance, he will have to speak of metre and rhythm, when these issues arise. But what never ceases to arise is language, vocabulary, words. Quintilian, just like Aristotle before him, insists that the scholar must pay close attention to the individual word, to the one who utters it, to the specific context in which this is done, and the specific function it performs in that context; 'for words often acquire authority,' he says, by reason of these correlates. The expectation, therefore, is that the everyday meaning of a word is one thing, that in the poetic text quite another. It has become possible, of course, since Saussure's exposition of the sign to isolate 'a language whose peculiar mode of being is "literary"' (Foucault, 1970:300), which makes the task still more complex for the scholar. A key characteristic of this language is that it has density. By this property, the possibilities of meaning are infinite – something we may equally express as instability. This prescribes a new relation with the text, which is called close reading. No longer assimilating, the reader follows the words that make up the text with great attentiveness because reading has become an 'archaeology' (Foucault) or an interrogation (Derrida). The word has simply ceased being a medium: it is the object of reflection. Without this reflection interpretation and criticism can never have rigour.

Criticism and interpretation are of course the distinctive functions of the *grammaticus*, and have been understood as such since ancient times. We read in Quintilian, for instance, that 'the art of writing is combined with that of speaking, and correct reading precedes interpretation [*enarrationem*], while in each of these cases criticism [*iudicium*] has its work to perform' (Bk I, chapter iv, par 3).¹ The work he assigns to criticism is mainly the judgement as to which works are *literary* and belong to the corpus of a tradition. Competence to judge in this matter remains even today as the key cultural function of criticism. Not all the writings that appear like a poem or a play are in fact *literature*. The ordinary reader may take things at face value, but the critic must be able to tell the difference. It would appear then that the very first move in the training of the literary scholar is the characterising of certain objects, really 'words become objects' (Banfield, 1985). *Literature* is such a word/object, and learning how to characterise it is of the first order of importance and a key intellectual preoccupation of the critic, as it is by this means that the object of study may be set forth and classification and analysis may begin.

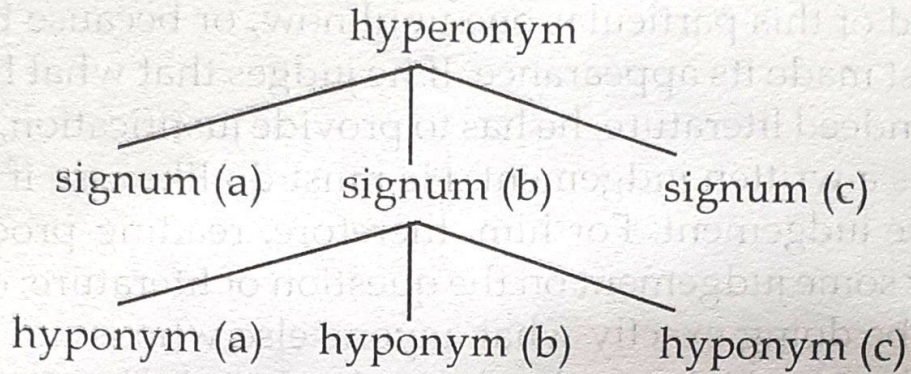
The characterising of words-become-objects is not the same thing at all as a 'definition.' The 'definition of terms' works very well within the structural binary of a *representing element* and a *represented content*. In this format the principle is that there is for every term a specified content which belongs to it and determines its value in the given system. In the present study, by contrast, it is helpful to presuppose that the reflection on words, particularly the key words, is worthwhile precisely because they are manifold in signification. We presuppose further that no aspect of this wealth of meaning may be put out of play or reduced to a secondary status, not even when one pattern of signification seems to contradict another.

The question of the semantics of literature can be stated in terms of its distinctive properties. Identifying each and every element that comes within its ambient would be one way to provide this specification. Another would be to place it correctly on its own node in the tree representation of all the elements that make up the

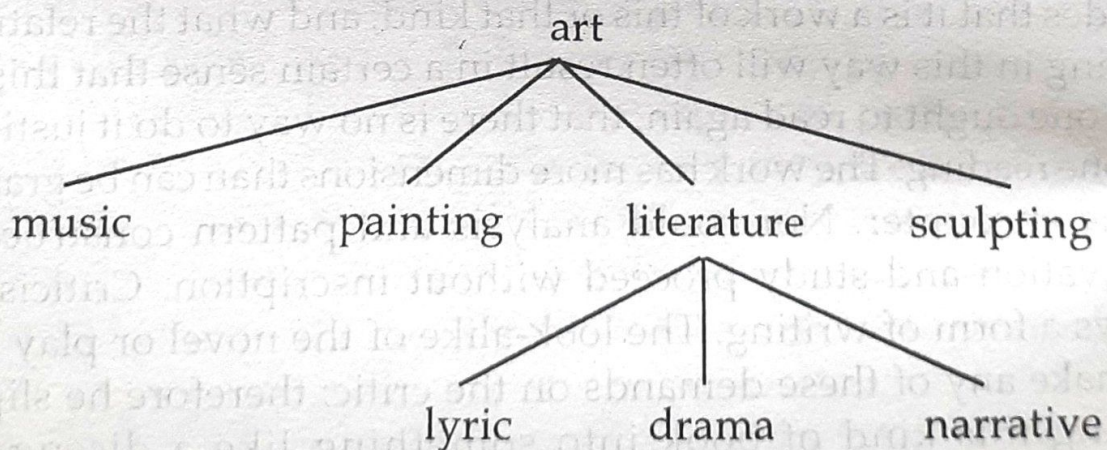
genus. In this way the question boils down to explaining how to know this word-object in contradistinction to other things, some of which may even look like it. This question crops up for the critic faced with a new literary work – new either because he hadn't read or heard of this particular one until now, or because the work has only just made its appearance. If he judges that what he has before him is indeed literature, he has to provide justification, especially if he gives a written judgement. He must do likewise if he returns a negative judgement. For him, therefore, reading proceeds on the basis of some judgement on the question of literature; otherwise he would be doing exactly what anyone else who is not a critic does when they read a book; that is, go through the book, whether as a diversion or for its entertainment value, and add it in the list of what they have read. For this reason, it matters a great deal how the critic understands literature, and that is the issue we are focusing on in this paper. Without a clear idea of this concept, a critic may still be able to bring out an *appreciation* of what he has read. But this is something that newspaper columnists and review writers do all the time, without being critics. For the critic, to read is to observe and study each and every element and phase of the work, to follow its interconnections with all the other elements, to perceive the resultant patterns and configurations and the density the work develops thereby – therefore to perceive the textual process, which includes that it is a work of this or that kind, and what the relations. Reading in this way will often result in a certain sense that this is a book one ought to read again, that there is no way to do it justice in this one reading. The work has more dimensions than can be grasped in one encounter. Nor could analysis and pattern construction, observation and study proceed without inscription. Criticism is always a form of writing. The look-alike of the novel or play does not make any of these demands on the critic; therefore he slips in reading this kind of book into something like a disengaged consciousness, if there is such a thing.

Our semantics of *literature* can be given a formal determination by calling into play a number of postulates of axiomatic functionalism, to begin with, *signum*, *direct hyperonym*, and *direct*

hyponym. A *hyperonym* is of course a *signum*, just like a *hyponym*; but whereas a *signum* is an entity, each of the others is a position in relation to the particular *signum*. What holds them all together is a relationship of inclusiveness. Hence:



The *hyperonym* is a *signum* that includes in its meaning another *signum*, and all the *signa* included in the meaning of the particular *signum* are its *hyponyms*. The relationship we are describing is the one that links the top item in the hierarchy in a vertical line through *signum (b)* to *hyponym (b)*. *Art, literature, and drama* are related in that way. The three are all *signa*—entities in the language; but the series, *art, literature, drama* reflects the relationship of inclusiveness. *Literature* is a *hyponym* of *art* in so far as it is a species of art; and it is the *hyperonym* of *drama*, in so far as *drama* is one of the subtypes of *literature*. A diagrammatic representation of the relationship is as follows:



Between *art* and *literature*, no other *signum* intervenes; that means that *art* is the *direct hyperonym* of *literature*. For the same reason, *drama* is a *direct hyponym* of *literature*. In this way we can work out

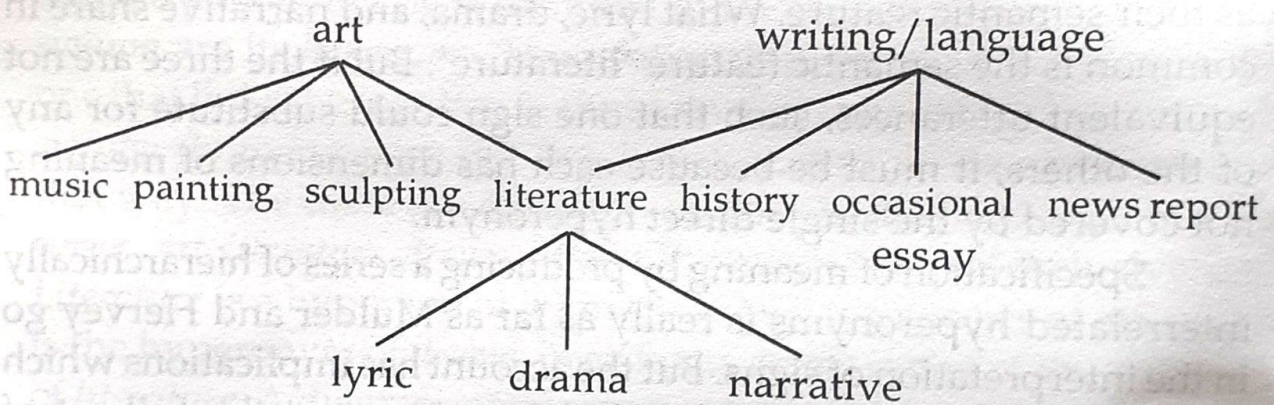
the semantic feature of a given *signum*. It is simply the possession of a direct hyperonym in question (Mulder and Hervey, 1980:208). To say that *art* is the direct hyperonym of *literature* is as much as saying that the most important thing about *literature* is that it is *art*; equally the most important thing about *drama* is that it is *literature*. It means further that the signification of *drama* remains closed to us until the significations of *literature* and *art* are attained.

We note also from the diagram that a certain relationship holds between *music*, *painting*, *literature*, and *sculpting*, and between *lyric*, *drama*, and *narrative*. That relationship is called *paronymy*, and entails that the *signa* in the set share one or more semantic features. Every element established as a semantic feature is shared, or interconnects a minimum of two paronyms. But when there are more than two, all the paronyms necessarily share the common direct hyperonym as their semantic feature. What *lyric*, *drama*, and *narrative* share in common is the semantic feature **literature**. But if the three are not equivalent utterances, such that one sign could substitute for any of the others, it must be because each has dimensions of meaning not covered by the single direct hyperonym.

Specification of meaning by producing a series of hierarchically interrelated hyperonyms is really as far as Mulder and Hervey go in the interpretation of signs. But the account has implications which can and ought to be brought out in working out the full set of potential interpretations pertaining to a sign. The properties that differentiate the paronyms among themselves are surely part of their characterising features. For instance, the difference between the art of painting and the art of literature is that the one is an organisation of colours, the other of language. This determination goes back to Aristotle at least, and as far as I know, has not been seriously challenged – although, like much else in literary theory, the phrasing of ‘organisation of colours or language’ is open to a split interpretation. Some emphasise the verbal matrix of *organisation*, and conclude that *organising* is the distinctive function of the artist, and that this is what characterises and gives value to his production. There is a basis for this in Aristotle’s *On the Art of Poetry*, where he writes that ‘the ordered arrangement of incidents is what I mean by

plot [*muthos*]² (Chapter 6), and in Chapter 9, that it is obvious from what he has been saying 'that the poet must be a maker of plots [*muthoi*] rather than of verses.' But he not only places the author, the efficient cause of the poem, a long way behind the final cause, the material cause, and the formal cause in the *Physics*, he explains in *On the Art of Poetry* that 'the end,' what the poem exists for, 'is everything' (Chapter 6). Accordingly, other scholars in the field emphasise the organic form of the entity, its state of being, rather than the making of it. The implications of these conflicting ways of seeing and interpreting are part of the general intent of this paper to try and unravel.

The diagram below shows that the two constitutive elements of meaning analysis we have proposed may easily be built into the model:



The convergence on *literature* of lines radiating from *art* and *writing/language*³ indicates that both are hyperonyms of *literature*, and that there are at least two elements comprising the semantic structure of the literary, namely *language* and *art*. We may also deduce that though historical documentation is usually a linguistic construction, it is not an art form, as it does not share the hyperonym *art*. The role of language in history is to document something that is not named in our model (we could modify the model to do so). On the other hand, the function of writing/language in literature is to enable art to appear; similarly, the role of art in literature is to enable language to take place. The language called forth in this way by what Aristotle calls 'the requirements of the art' (*On the Art of Poetry*, Chapter 25), which is how art here and now takes place, is what Foucault means

by the language whose 'peculiar mode of being is "literary."' As far as the work is concerned, the two factors of art and language are simultaneous, an interaction that corresponds to what is called *representation* – the creation of a work of art. As Paul Ricoeur has shown, '*mimesis* does not mean the duplication of reality; *mimesis* is not a copy: *mimesis* is *poiesis*, that is, construction, creation' (1981:180). Even here the two different ways of seeing that mark the opposite paths in literary criticism may be distinguished. In the one case, art is visualised as if an entity in the 'world of forms;' and the literary work would be the outcome of this entity articulating itself upon language, just as the unnamed quality would do in the production of a historical document, in the other, there is no secondary process. The scene of writing is the place and moment of emergence of a wholly new entity, the concrete work of literary art.

It must be admitted that this account of semantic structure of the literary is somewhat in contradiction to a postulate of axiomatic theory in which *semantic feature* is explained in terms of arranging the direct hyperonyms in a series, such that the set is unique to the *signum*. What is envisaged in our analysis is a number of hyperonyms of equal rank in relation to the *signum*. But then the proposal ought to be studied and tested further, and if found to be consistent with the interpretive practices of the linguistic community, the postulates are modified accordingly. This modification is a requirement of axiomatic functionalism itself of which the *raison d'être* – the functionalists prefer to say – the ontology, is that the postulates '*describe* the appropriate conventions [and] depend themselves on the conventions, and not *vice versa*. If the conventions alter, the dictionary needs to be revised – if the dictionary departs from the conventions prevalent in the speech-community, it, and not the speech-community, holds the wrong 'key' to correct interpretations of the signs in question' (Hervey, 1979:xxii). This is axiomatic functionalism's inbuilt mechanism for revision and updating.

By way of connecting our earlier reflection on reading matter to the present one on the semantics of *literature*, we can say, provisionally, that the work which requires consciousness to be in

full wakefulness and alertness is the one that bears the markings of art – of literary art, if the work in question is a form of writing. That is why the question of art always arises when we discuss literature, and it is a decisive question for literary studies. Art, literature, and the associated concepts are issues going deep into the cultural memory of the linguistic community. In some cases, their histories go beyond the history of the given linguistic community. We have already seen something of this when we were considering the cultural figure of the literary scholar in the work of Quintilian. Because of this depth and divagation in the history of the concepts, semantic-etymological and semantic-hermeneutical explorations are undertaken. By these two paths, the reflection upon tradition may be pursued beyond the tradition itself, to its very places of coming forth. The semantic-hermeneutical pathway – we may simply call it the hermeneutical approach – is where the cultural, emotional, psychological, in short, the human significance of terms like *art* and *literature* is worked out.

In principle the same mode of analysis we have used for literature and drama may apply to language and art. But as always, we are conscious of the different systems of thought reflecting the different philosophical foundations from which arises literary theory. Under the logic of traditional metaphysics, it is possible to think of art as a certain essence, which may then appear in one form or another, whether painting, music, or some other form. Under the phenomenological, art is experienced always already as a specific object, and one can hardly think of the art of the poem apart from the poem itself. Similarly, language is characteristic of human beings by reason of its bond with thought. In the opposite practice, art needs a material medium, and language is not so much characteristic of human beings so much as a handy tool. All this means that we can't even agree on the hyperonyms of language and art, so that analysis on that format can help but little. Hence we are going straight to the history and traditions of the linguistic community to try and ascertain the governing conventions.

To start with the semantic-etymological level, which we may now simply call the semantic level: this is where the full set of

potential interpretations of the sign is set forth. We find first of all that art (Latin, *ars*), translates two Greek words, *téchnē* and *parergon*. *Téchnē* means 'a handicraft, a trade, a craft.' This is the word that bears the burden of Plato's account of 'poetry' in the *Republic*. Strictly, Plato is concerned with the 'craftsman' (*technites*). This is of course the word we are familiar with in such modern terms as *technique*, *technical*, *technology*, and *technocrat*. The word, together with its many derivatives in the modern languages covers a vast range of activities and processes related to culture and civilization very few of which have a direct bearing on the kinds of things commonly understood as *art*. Rather the range of activities by reason of which it was apprehended in Latin as *art* are designated by other names, such as *skill*, *design*, *pattern*, and so on. The American New Critics were to recall this old Greek word to criticism in the 1940s and 1950s. A famous example is in Mark Schorer's 'Technique as Discovery.' Here, however, Schorer writes about novelistic techniques, not in terms of skill, or design, but in tones that often implicate what is usually called *form*:

Under the 'immense artistic preoccupations' of James and Conrad and Joyce, the form of the novel changed, and with the technical change, analogous changes took place in substance, in point of view, in the whole conception of fiction. And the final lesson of the modern novel is that technique is not the secondary thing that it seemed to [H.G.] Wells, some external machination, a mechanical affair, but a deep and primary operation; not only that technique *contains* intellectual and moral implications, but that it *discovers* them. For a writer like Wells, who wished to give us the intellectual and the moral history of our times, the lesson is a hard one; it tells us that the order of the intellect and the order of morality do not exist at all, in art, except as they are organized in the order of art (1972:391).

In opposing technique to 'machination' and other such metaphors, Schorer clearly understands *technique* in terms of *how something is made*, that is, all the material and intellectual facilities put to work, all the processes and moves made by the gifted craftsman in producing the object. In other words, the 'artist' works as if he had the perfect image of the object before him, and performs all and only those actions needed to materialise it. Thus does technique

discover the object. All this is very close to what Aristotle calls 'the requirements of the art'. An inventory of the major conclusions and findings of the New Critics reflected in this passage may be as follows: the idea that 'machination,' manipulation of any sort, whether of language or of characters or whatnot, has no place in art, the idea that form ('technique,' according to Schorer) guides, shapes, and accounts for the work's coming into being, the idea that art is abused if it is *used* to try and do something else, even as a way of giving the 'temper' of an age, and the intellectual and moral history of a period, and the idea 'that the order of the intellect and the order of morality do not exist at all, in art.' All this was to be surpassed in the 1950s by still newer and more radical modes of analysis, as phenomenology was being assimilated into the intellectual tradition. In the face of this, the voices coming out of England and the older centres of the northern United States were as if the things being said were going too far; hence the scholars of The Great Tradition swung into action with the idea of bringing back to its pristine position in literary studies what up to now had gone without saying, namely that literature is a way of communicating and persuading, and that art is a secondary process, a matter of skill, craftsmanship, embellishment, in short, machination.

As it has turned out, *téchne* made it into English and the modern languages without passing through the intermediary of Latin, and it is used in these languages in the general sense of 'know-how.' The Latin *ars* equally made it into English, but almost as an all-purpose word. Hence accounting for its content is a slightly different sort of activity than accounting for a term like *nature* which is usually presented in philosophy as its opposite. The only problem here is to establish the exact boundary where nature ends and art begins. For the scholar concerned with the cultural phenomenon called art, the question is without a final answer, in part because of the inscriptions and memories it has brought from contact with the Greek tradition into the new language, and in part because consciousness is evolving, endlessly reviewing its achievements, rethinking established positions which, if reaffirmed, become new

points of departure for the endless movements of thought. This is the key reason why the individual art objects continue to present new dimensions and depths. Paul Ricoeur brings out this pattern in analysing meaning and intention in the work of art:

the text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say, and every exegesis unfolds its procedures within the circumference of a meaning that has broken its moorings to the psychology of its author (1981:201).

That is to say, far from the old idea that meaning is a deposit, perhaps a fixed deposit, as far as the literary work is concerned, the law of meaning is motility, or instability. And so the reflection on the always-unfolding new dimensions and depths is part of how scholarship makes progress in the field of literary and art criticism.

The Latin word is necessarily equivocal because it translates an equivocal word, *téchnē*. The word is encountered in Aristotle's phrase, 'the requirements of the art,' where it has to do with form itself, and it is encountered as objective knowledge and in the word *skill* in the following lines of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*:

I taught them to determine when stars rise or set—
A difficult art. Number, the primary science, I
Invented for them, and how to set down words in writing—
The all-remembering skill, mother of many arts
(lines 456-8).

It equally translates the knowledge of how a thing is made. This usage is found, for instance, in Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics*, where we read:

Take architecture. It is an art, that is a rational faculty exercised in making something. In fact there is no art which cannot be described, nor is there any faculty of the kind that is not an art.... The business of every art is to bring something into existence, and the practice of an art involves the study of how to bring into existence something which is capable of having such an existence and has its efficient cause in the maker not in itself (Book VI, Chapter 4).

Although this account of art as a making, not a doing, applies to poetry, Aristotle is unsure whether this art can be taught, in terms

of 'the study of how to bring [a poem] into existence.' For he writes in *On the Art of Poetry* that 'poetry is the product either of a man of great natural ability or of one not wholly sane; the one is highly responsive, the other possessed' (Chapter 17).

The equivocity of *art*, as has been said, is owed in part also to the strange word *parergon*. This word analyses into *para* ('beside'), and *ergon* ('work'). Hence it is sometimes taken literally in terms of extraneous things bordering on the individual work, 'an addition external to the representation' (Derrida, 1987:98), its surround, frame, or even background. But as Derrida goes on to show, in so far as *parergon* is related to a work, that is representation, it belongs by necessity to the work, it is proper to art. The work cannot appear, that is, let itself be seen, without it. The wider sense of the word, namely a 'subsidiary activity,' or 'something undertaken outside one's regular employment;' in any event, something not essential, not particularly important, something undertaken in the manner of play or diversion, and so on, is no less proper to art. Some of the attributes that Derrida associates with art, for example, excessiveness, exorbitancy, and supplementarity, as in *Of Grammatology* (1976:157-64), and surplus (1987:59) may be regarded as so many translations of *parergon*. There is something about art by which it exceeds all limits, the limits, particularly, of good sense. Isn't this precisely why so much scholarly effort goes into trying to make sense of it, why so much of scholarly effort in respect of art is in fact apologetics? Let it be admitted that art is difficult, that this difficulty is not accidental, but arises from the opposition in which it is constituted.

There is no way to elaborate a semantic theory that would accommodate the apparent contradiction of the *parergon*; still this contradiction must be thought in respect of the work of art: the art work has a frame or border which is not a part of it, and yet it could not be without the frame. As a subsidiary activity, the work of art has but a remote bearing on social practice, history, experience – and yet it is the very heart of culture and civilization. Martin Heidegger would go as far as saying, 'Poetry is the foundation which supports history, and therefore it is not a mere appearance of culture;

and absolutely not the mere "expression" of a "culture-soul" (1949:283). To those who would say the exact opposite to this key statement from Heidegger, that opposite statement would be perfectly straightforward and reasonable—even natural. In this opposite view the idea that poetry—art in general—is the foundation which supports history' would be hard to make sense of, except by a hermeneutic act in which the poem becomes the speech act of divinity or even of all mankind (Jung, 1933/72).

On the other hand, some aspects of the information-value we have unfolded in the history of the word *art* seem not to apply to *literary art*. *Making* is a case in point. It is this element that connects poetry (*poiesis*, 'a making') to Aristotle's account of art in *The Nicomachean Ethics*. But an understanding of art in contemporary culture must assign the least possible role to the aspect of making because of the new factor of mechanical production. Cart making is as much an art in Aristotle's world as flute playing. By contrast, the modern assembly line renders the phrase 'car making' something as remote from art as it is possible to be. In his famous article, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production,' Walter Benjamin offers explanations for this phenomenon, among them the following contrasting painting and photography:

The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art (1973:235-6).

The picture produced by the painter is a total one, and therefore no two paintings of the same landscape have ever corresponded exactly. If reality is not variable, then the paintings must fail in some way to capture that constancy, that aspect of reality that one is entitled to ask—and to ask in vain—from the work of art. But this is what a

series of photographs of the same reality from the same angle will never fail to capture.

There is a tradition in criticism in which little or no role is assigned to consciousness in the coming into being of the work of art. This position is implicated in Aristotle's remark concerning the kind of person a poet must be. The one who is not wholly sane, that is, possessed, can only bring out a poem by inadvertence, not by a conscious act. All notions of *inspiration* in poetry have this same presupposition that, to put it in Northrop Frye's terms, 'a poem is born, not made' (1970:98). Elsewhere, Frye does recognise a class of poetic works as 'conceptual' (1982:31), which would place the *efficient cause* in the position of the originator. Under inspiration, he is merely a name, not really a person. Paul Ricoeur offers a middle course as follows, between those who declare simply that the author is dead and those who claim that his poem is what proves that he lives on, and what is more ceaselessly speaks:

With written discourse, the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide. This dissociation of the verbal meaning of the text and the mental intention is what is really at stake in the inscription of discourse. Not that we can conceive of a text without an author; the tie between the speaker and the discourse is not abolished, but distended and complicated (1981:200-1).

From this point onwards, every function which enters into the understanding of art by reason of its efficient cause is rendered problematic: they include *skill, workmanship, craftsmanship, style, know-how*. What then, remains from our etymological explorations? Certainly *téchne*, in terms of 'the requirements of the art,' form. In writing, the artist is guided by the requirements of the art. Hence, according to Paul Ricoeur, *form* and *genre* are not terms of classification, but categories of production (p. 136). In literature, as in each of the other arts, we have a production that is formally determined, a work the law and goal of whose emergence is entirely to be an object of the particular kind. In its totality, it maintains itself in a frame (*parergon*), and thus maintains a natural distance from everything else. Keeping on the fringes (*parergon*), it is unable to grasp reality, the very thing that one is entitled to ask from the

work of art (Benjamin). This 'parergonality' (Derrida, 1987:73) – elsewhere I have called it 'otherness' (Akwanya, 1998), is the chief reason for the work's enigma, and at the same time, its 'enticement' (Derrida, 1978:11).

To conclude, the hermeneutic of *art* as we have produced it in the foregoing may serve as a model for a hermeneutic of its hyponyms, music, painting, sculpting, and literature. Of all these, only *sculpting* seems to be able to bring into whatever context it occurs the idea of art in the determination we have given the word here. To some extent, music also has this facility as long as it is an organisation of sounds, except that some forms of music seem to be entirely a performance, and lacking the quality of representation decisive in art. Music critics at least know the difference. However, whereas *sculptor* is likely to be understood in the same way in many cultures, that is not the case with *musician* or *painter*. A musician is often thought of as one who plays some musical instrument, or performs music professionally. But the counterpart to the poet in the European tradition is the composer. In English, *painter* is ambiguous between one who spreads colouring matter and the artist who produces representations as an organisation of colours and shades. In French *peintre* applies exclusively to the maker of representations, the artist, while in German, there are two unrelated words which translate the English verb *paint*; namely *malen* (to represent by means of colours) and *austreichen* (to spread colour). In many cultures, the *writer* is understood as one who writes as an occupation like journalists and writers of popular fiction. When the word is used of a literary artist, it is often with the narrative mode in view, not drama or lyric. *Literature* itself is similarly ambiguous. Quite apart from the generalised meaning of 'published materials' in phrases like 'the literature' and 'literature review,' it is also loosely applied to imaginative works generally. In the narrow and strict sense, it applies to the writing which takes place purely as representation, and has autonomous existence as such – only those works in fact which are designated as *writing* – a loan translation from the French, *écriture*. An equivalent utterance in French encountered as a direct loan into English is *belles-lettres*, rendered

by one dictionary as 'literature that is an end in itself.' *Composer, painter, poet, literature*, and so on are all technical words in art criticism, and they have got to be used technically in the discourse of the critic.

In the regions of Europe where the influence of Latin has been greatest, the subtle and significant shifts in tone and stress in the naming of cultural phenomena is very helpful in preserving all the richness of denotations of the terms that play key roles in fields of scholarships such as ours. In a language like English where some of the specific critical applications of technical terms may be tacit knowledge among scholars in the field, the pressure is mostly towards levelling down to the conventions associated with everyday usage. But the nearness and the ceaseless cultural interchange with the other European language communities where more of the distinctive forms are directly named help to neutralise this pressure. English studies have other remedies in addition, for example, the formal study of the history of the language and the historical study of literature and criticism in the original linguistic forms. For us at the moment, the second language situation is almost like a distant and isolated outpost. This psychological and geographical distance can lead to a cleavage, such that we may be using the same words without at all saying the same things. The teaching of semantics, the history of English, and other historical courses can be of help, as long as we are not presenting these as courses to pass in order to move on to the next stage, but as the handing on of tools for use in processing information, in analysis and description, and for relating to language and to the world.

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NOTES

- 1 These two Latin words did make it into English as *enmaration* ('detailed exposition or description'), now regarded as an archaism, and *judicium* (judgement'), which is rare, but part of the repertoire, and more commonly encountered in such words as *judex* (arbitrator), *judicial*, *judicious*, *adjudication*, and so on.
- 2 Frye draws attention to the fact that plot is not necessarily an adequate translation of *muthos*, as it equally translates 'narrative, or in general the sequential ordering of words' (1982:31).
- 3 Writing/language is an abbreviation of two stages in the hierarchical structure, in which language would be the direct hyperonym of *speech* and *writing*. On that basis it is not possible to think of literature except as *writing*. *Literature* may therefore be substituted by *writing* as an equivalent utterance, and both are shorthand for *literary art*.