INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.
Rubino, James Anthony

THE RELEVANCE OF ARTISTS' INTENTIONS TO THE DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF WORKS OF ART

The Ohio State University

Ph.D. 1983

University
Microfilms
International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106
THE RELEVANCE OF ARTISTS' INTENTIONS TO THE DESCRIPTION
AND INTERPRETATION OF WORKS OF ART

DISertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

James Anthony Rubino, B.F.A., B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1983

Reading Committee: Approved By
Lee B. Brown
Daniel M. Farrell
Richard T. Garner

Lee B. Brown
Adviser
Department of Philosophy
To Lee B. Brown and L. Neal Smith
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to those who helped me write this dissertation. The philosophical guidance of my reading committee, Lee B. Brown, Daniel M. Farrell, and Richard T. Garner, was instrumental to the clarification of the theses I here defend. Any errors or oversights are my own. I would also like to thank Mike Perkins for his insightful comments on early drafts of this essay.

I am grateful to all those who encouraged me to continue writing. I am indebted, in particular, to Mike and Linda Perkins for pretending to scold me when I needed it. Mary Lee Raines did a splendid job typing this dissertation, and I would like to thank her for thwarting my attempts to invent new words. I cannot fully express my appreciation to my wife, Carol Cruickshank, for her patience and encouragement over the past six years. Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their support, and for giving me a sense of humor.
VITA

November 27, 1951 . . . Born - Hackensack, New Jersey

1977 . . . . . . . . . . B.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1977 . . . . . . . . . . B.F.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1979 . . . . . . . . . . M.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1977-1983 . . . . . . Teaching Associate, Department of Philosophy, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Area of Specialization: Philosophy of Art

Areas of Competence: Moral Philosophy, Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ................................................. ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................ iii
VITA ....................................................... iv

CHAPTER

I. CRITICAL STATEMENTS .......................... 1
   The Range of Critical Statements .......... 5
   Distinguishing Critical Descriptions  . 19
   from Interpretations  . 38
   My Approach to the Internalist/ . 55
   Externalist Debate  .

II. INTERNALISM AND CRITICAL DESCRIPTIONS . . . . 60
   Clarification of the Internalist Position . 60
   Distinguishing Critical from  . 71
   Non-critical Descriptions  .
   The Influence of Belief on Perception . . 83
   Identifying the Work, Normal Conditions  . 104
   and Direct Inspection  .

III. INTERNALISM AND CRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS . . 108
   Some Preliminary Remarks ................. 110
   The Anti-Intentionalist Position ....... 120
   Some General Objections to Intentionalism 123
   A Defense of Intentionalism ............ 133
   Conclusion  . 168

IV. ART AND ARTISTS ............................. 169
   Artistic Responsibility ................. 170
   Description, Interpretation and  . 186
   the Artist's Responsibility  .
   Conclusion to this Dissertation ....... 200

NOTES ................................ 203
BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................. 221
I. CRITICAL STATEMENTS

Not all of us interested in the arts are able, unassisted, to understand fully or appreciate all works of art we encounter. It is the job of the art critic to help us do so. By describing in detail the features of a painting or the recurrent patterns in a piece of music, a critic might help one see or hear what one would not have otherwise seen or heard. A critic's interpretation of a poem can allow one to find in that poem a richness of meaning that perhaps, without such help, one would have missed. The critic is a guide.

It is possible, however, for a critic to lead one astray—not everything that every critic says about works of art is correct. Interpreting art is a different activity from the viewing of shapes in the clouds—the description and interpretation of art allows for the possibility of mistake. A critic can "read into" a painting or a poem what is not there. Certainly, for example, a 17th century poem cannot allude to a 20th century poem; a critic who claimed otherwise would be mistaken. Likewise, one might claim that a work is highly organized when it is not. Thus, when there is disagreement over what characteristics a work possesses (e.g., whether it is monumental,
mysterious, balanced, garish, trivial, etc.) or over the meaning of a work (e.g., whether it is about mankind's relation to God, or symbolizes the inequities of capitalism), these are genuine disputes. A literary critic's judgment is liable to error, and disputes that arise can be settled by appeal to evidence.

When critics disagree over how a work is best described or a literary text correctly interpreted, they appeal to evidence. One approach to a particular work of art can be shown superior to other approaches. It is not my purpose here, however, to settle any critical disputes. Rather, my subject is how such disputes are to be resolved. In particular, I examine the philosophical controversy over the type of evidence a critic can legitimately appeal to in the defense of a critical description or interpretation of a work of art.

In many cases the artist or author of a work will have something to say about how his paintings are to be seen or his poems interpreted. Often the remarks of an artist about what he thought he was doing, or wanted to accomplish, will conflict with what the critic says he finds in the work. Consider the following letter which appeared in a recent issue of Artforum:
To the Editor:

Stuart Morgan discusses our work at Documenta informatively and intelligently (Artforum, October, 1982) . . . . His concluding metaphor of Moses and the Promised Land, however, was mythopoetically close but inappropriate. Our work is intended to inaugurate no "form of art" but spiritual penitence.

--Art & Language
(Michael Baldwin, Charles Harrison, Mel Ramsden)

Can we, with good reason, take the intentions of these artists to have any bearing on the correctness of the interpretation offered by Stuart Morgan? Does the fact that these artists intended to convey something about "spiritual penitence" count as evidence that Stuart Morgan's interpretation is inadequate?

It is the position of some philosophers that critical claims can be defended only by appeal to the observable features of the work itself. To the questions I raised, their answer would be an emphatic 'No.' A work of art, it is claimed, is "self-sufficient." Our experience of a work of art "is a wholly autonomous one. It does not and cannot take account of any entity or fact which is not aesthetically perceivable in the work of art itself." Facts external to a work--the artist's purpose or plan or
expectations concerning his work, or the sociological events surrounding a work's creation—are claimed to have no role to play in the justification of critical remarks.

Franz Marc's *The Fate of Animals* (1913) is dynamic and full of movement. The fact that he intended it to be so (or even if he intended otherwise), seems to have no bearing on whether it actually is dynamic or full of movement. In the case of literary works or pictorial representation, it is claimed that what an author or painter intended to convey is irrelevant to determining what a work does convey. An author can fail to use language properly, and hence a work can mean what its author did not intend it to mean. The fact that an author intended his poem to mean such-and-such "cannot change the meaning (or meaninglessness) or the original words."\(^4\) The same is claimed to be true of pictorial representation: one's intending a scribble to represent the Empire State Building does not make it do so. Rather, "it is the properties of the design itself which determine what it represents."\(^5\)

This is a cursory statement of the view I shall call internalism. The cluster of views contrary to internalism—the position which takes the genesis of a work of art to be in some way relevant to the support of critical
statements—I shall call **externalism**. In this dissertation I will criticize the internalist position and defend a version of externalism. This first chapter is devoted to some preliminary remarks on the nature of art criticism. One's conception of criticism will, of course, have a bearing on the type of evidence proper to it.

In section 1, I address the question of the type of claims about art that are of concern in the internalist/externalist debate. I will call the claims at issue "critical statements." Of the claims made by art critics, some are descriptive, some interpretive and some evaluative. In section 2, I examine different approaches to distinguishing critical descriptions from critical interpretations. Some philosophers have claimed that critical interpretations of works of art cannot be either correct or incorrect. This issue will be briefly discussed in section 3. Finally, in section 4, I give an outline of what I hope to accomplish in the remainder of this dissertation.

1. **The Range of Critical Statements**

   If we were to take the internalist's position to pertain to any statement about a work of art, it would clearly be false. "**Guernica** is a painting that was painted by a Spaniard" is about that work, ascribes to it a
certain feature, yet verification of that claim would obviously involve more than a perceptual examination of Guernica. At issue between the internalist and externalist is a special subclass of statements about works of art. This subclass of statements I will call critical statements. The questions I wish to address first is how critical statements are to be distinguished from non-critical statements. After offering what I take to be a plausible way of making out this distinction, I will examine the distinction between description and interpretation of works of art.

Descriptions of a work which ascribe to it aesthetic features appear to be paradigmatic examples of critical statements. "de Kooning's Woman I is garish," "Webern's Five Pieces for String Quartet" is rarefied, and "Bernini's The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa is delicate," seem clear examples of critical remarks. I should note, however, that by 'critical' I do not mean merely evaluative. To describe a dance as graceful is to describe a feature of the dance which (in most cases) would tend to make it a good dance. But judging a dance to be graceful is logically distinct from judging it to be good. Gracefulness is a way of moving, and, as it turns out, is a good-making characteristic of most dances. But it need not be the case that a graceful movement within a dance is desirable--a jerky, robot-like motion might in some modern dance be preferable
to a flowing, graceful movement. Likewise, to call a painting garish is not necessarily to give it a negative assessment—the garishness of Emile Nolde's The Last Supper is central to its effect, whereas garishness in an impressionist work would most likely be detrimental to its worth.

Claims that ascribe to a work an aesthetic property of the sort noted are clear cases of critical descriptions. They do not, however, exhaust the class of critical statements. A critic will often describe a non-aesthetic property of a work, for example, that a painting has a streak of yellow in its upper half. One who notes what a sculpture symbolizes or who claims that a passage in a poem alludes to the first world war are also making critical remarks. What critical statements have in common, I shall argue, is that they refer to features of a work relevant to its worth as art, i.e., its aesthetic worth broadly construed.

Of course, many non-art items have aesthetic features, although much of the time these escape our notice. When we encounter a work of art in the appropriate setting, however, its aesthetic features will in the usual case be an object of our attention. We pay attention to some of a work's features, others we ignore. Questions about a painting's weight or the chemical composition of its
pigments rarely come to mind. It seems that our looking, in the case of painting and sculpture, and our listening, in the case of music, is in some way different from the way we look or listen in the ordinary situation. We approach a poem with a different frame of mind than we approach a philosophical essay. Perhaps what distinguishes critical from non-critical statements is that the former are the type of claims one is apt to make when one approaches a work with a certain frame of mind.

Some philosophers have characterized the particular way that we attend to art as the "aesthetic attitude" or the "aesthetic point of view." To attend to something with this attitude is, roughly, to perceive it without regard to one's well-being. Jerome Stolnitz, for example, defines the aesthetic attitude as the

\[ \text{disinterested (with no ulterior purpose) and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone.} \]

One can, for example, look at a car from the aesthetic point of view--noting its sleek lines and shiny surface qualities. Here, one observes the car in a way not essentially related to its utilitarian function (although, of course, its aerodynamic design may aid in its achieving its function more efficiently). A sailor in a lifeboat
can look at the surrounding fog as it affects his life and death situation. As such it is menacing. Yet that same sailor can ignore the fact that the fog poses a threat to his existence and see it as gracefully floating above the glistening water's surface. The claim made by Stolnitz is that the features of a work of art are the features one notes when one takes this attitude. Adopting this position for our purpose here, we might say that a critical statement is a claim which ascribes any such feature to a work of art.

George Dickie has argued that there is no such distinct mode of perception which characterizes our viewing of art. Consider the case of a person, A, who listens to a piece of music in order to write an analysis of it for an examination. A is not, according to Stolnitz' definition, attending to the music aesthetically--A has the ulterior purpose of passing his examination. Says Dickie,

He [A] would have motives for what he is doing which are different from those of someone listening to the music with no such ulterior motives, but would this mean that the two persons are attending in a different way? They could both enjoy or be bored by the music, no matter what their motives are.7

This case shows that Stolnitz' definition of the aesthetic attitude is unsuccessful--the fact that the one has
ulterior motives in looking at an object does not preclude one's looking at it from the aesthetic point of view. The critic writing a critical analysis of a work of art would be a clear case of one's attending to a work aesthetically, even though in the role of critic one has "ulterior" motives (i.e., making a living).

It is Dickie's point that there is only one kind of attention: either one is attending to X or one is not attending to X. A is attending to the music or not attending to it, regardless of his motive. In this sense, it is true that "A's attention to the music turned out to be just like that of any other listener." Yet suppose that B listens to the same recording as A. B, however, is the tuba player's uncle, and it is B's motive in listening to the music to hear his nephew play. We can, with Dickie, say that both are engaged in the same activity: both are listening to the music. It would be incorrect, however, to say without qualification that B's attention is "just like" A's. Both are attending to the same music, but what each hears is likely to be different, a difference that results from their respective motives. Their attention is the same only in the trivial sense that they are both listening to the music.
The truth in the notion of the aesthetic attitude is that when we contemplate works of art as art, we do tend to pick out features we do not usually pick out in ordinary perception. How the detective sees the photograph of a suspect is different from the way a juror of a photography competition would see that photograph. The way each sees that photograph, moreover, is reflected in the way each would describe it. The detective would note the suspect's distinctive facial features, and his approximate size and weight inferrable from the photograph. The juror, on the other hand, would more than likely describe the sitter's expression or the patterns of light and shade within the photograph.

The claim that this difference results from the juror's attention being "disinterested" is unhelpful. We can be interested in a work of art for many reasons. And given different motives, we focus on different features it might possess: its size, shape, or weight; its chemical composition; its aesthetic features. The features of a work of art one notices—and is therefore apt to offer in a description of it—depend, for one thing, on one's purposes for examining it. This point is nicely made by Paul Ziff:
If we were to go to a carpenter and ask him to build a crate for shipping the painting, [it] would be important in this case for the carpenter to realize that the painting we wish to ship is made of a flat strip of canvas mounted on wooden stretchers, for some paintings are executed on gesso panels, some on masonite, and some on plaster slabs, and so forth. . . . [That the] painting is a strip of linen canvas coated with pigments containing manganese oxides, iron hydroxides, and so forth . . . would be important and relevant to a chemist engaged in cleaning the painting. . . . Or we might say simply, the painting has great depth. This is the sort of description a person who criticizes, judges, evaluates, or simply appreciates, the painting would be primarily interested in.9

Our description of a painting to the carpenter/shipper will differ from our description to a restorer, and both of these will differ from the description we would give if our motive was to assess its worth as a work of art.

If the different types of claims made about works of art merely reflect different purposes in describing it, what counts as a critical statement is tied to the purpose of art criticism. Ziff's comment is to the point. A person's description of a work is likely to be a critical statement if his/her purpose is to criticize, judge, evaluate, or simply appreciate a work. When one describes a painting to a shipper not all the features one finds relevant to one's purpose, the painting's weight and monetary value, for example, are relevant to an artistic
appreciation or evaluation of the work in question. When, on the other hand, one describes (or simply tries to make sense of) something as art, one usually does so toward the end of understanding, evaluating or appreciating it, if not explicitly to criticize it, at least to find some redeemable features in it. Given this purpose, certain features of the work will be appropriate to include in one's description of it, viz., those relevant to its artistic or aesthetic worth (for example, its color), others will not (for example, its chemical composition).

When one describes a painting to a shipper, one does not simply look at the work and begin describing any feature one notices. What one notes is guided by one's purpose. There is this similar link between what features of an art work one notices when one describes (or sees) it as art. We do not simply describe a work and then, this being done, proceed to evaluate it. When we critically describe a work of art—or, more usually, just see it—we describe or see it in such a way that some learned set of normative standards becomes applicable. Compare, for example, the reactions of a "representationalist" and a "formalist" to a work of Picasso, say, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907). The former's evaluational standard for paintings might turn on representational fidelity, or, perhaps, on the
value of what is pictured—as one might prize a poster in virtue of the cuteness of the kittens it pictures. It is features relevant to such standards that the representationalist is prepared to seek out when confronted with a painting. The "formalist," like the representationalist, visually focuses on those aspects which constitute, for him, good-picture-making characteristics. In the "formalist's" criticism, formal characteristics are paramount because only formal characteristics are taken to be relevant to artistic worth.

It is not surprising that both the formalist and the representationalist ignore, in their description/perception of Les Demoiselles, the painting's weight, for this feature of that work is not relevant to its worth as art. The claim 'Les Demoiselles weighs 147 pounds' is not a critical claim because that painting's weight is irrelevant to our appreciating or evaluating it as art. On the other hand, noting the weight of a ceramic vase—that it is excessively heavy, for example—could very well be critically appropriate. That is because in judging ceramics weight is often taken to be pertinent to its worth as art.

In this light, I will define a critical statement as any statement about a work of art relevant to evaluating
or appreciating it as a work of art. It is the job of the critic to point out those features of a work which will allow one to better appreciate it. Although a critic need not in every case evaluate a work or have as his aim to appreciate it, his descriptive or interpretive remarks are critical remarks insofar as they could justify an evaluation or aid in the appreciation of the work. "The painting has a dark blotch of blue in its lower left hand corner" is a critical statement insofar as it might justify the further description that the painting is unbalanced, which in turn might support a negative evaluation of that work. "The painting is 1 1/2 inches thick" is not, in the usual case, a critical statement since that fact about a painting has no bearing on its worth as art. As I have noted, descriptions of a work's aesthetic features are paradigmatic critical statements, and this fact is readily explained--the aesthetic features of a work are often paramount in assessing its worth as art.

I shall not here attempt to specify a class of features which always count toward any work's worth as art or others which can never do so. It is not even obvious, in light of some contemporary avant-garde works of art, that aesthetic features of a work are in every case pertinent to a work's value. On the other hand, claims about what a
work means would seem always to have a bearing on its assessment as art, and hence all such claims would be critical statements. (Yet even here, the sense of means would have to be clarified, for the claims, "This use of imagery means that the work's author was paranoid," or "The use of line in this painting means that the artist has given up his previous style," are not critical statements.)

Some further clarification on the notion of a work's "value as art" must be made, for it has a bearing on the internalist/externalist debate. In "The Artistic and the Aesthetic Value of Art," Tomas Kulka distinguishes two types of value a work of art is capable of possessing in its role as art. A work of art can have art-historical value in addition to (or, perhaps, in spite of its lack of) aesthetic value. Consider the following remarks concerning Picasso's Les Demoiselles:

The Young Ladies of Avignon, that great canvas which has been so frequently described and interpreted, is of prime importance in the sense of being the concrete outcome of an original vision.10

Yet the authors of the above continue:

In itself the work does not bear very close scrutiny, for the drawing is hasty and the colour unpleasant, while
the composition as a whole is confused and there is too much gesticulation in the figures. 11

Both of the above comments evaluate Picasso's painting, yet the first is positive, the second negative. But we need not consider these comments contradictory. The first is an assessment of Les Demoiselle's art-historical value—its importance within the flux of art history, its major influence on the art that was to follow. The second assessment, on the other hand, is of that work's aesthetic value—its value in virtue of the qualities of its pictorial design. A work of art's art-historical value may not be on a par with its aesthetic value. Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, for example, might be quite high in their art-historical value (insofar as they have exerted a major influence on contemporary art), yet have little, if any, aesthetic value. Conversely, a painting done today in, say, the style of Rembrandt might rank high in terms of its aesthetic value, yet be of no art-historical value whatsoever.

Kulka's distinction of the types of value a work of art can possess is important to our present task of defining critical statements because the type of value we take to define that class has a direct bearing on the truth of internalism. Suppose we were to include the notion of
art-historical value in that definition; that is, suppose we were to take a critical statement to be any statement about a work of art that is relevant to its art-historical or aesthetic value. With this the case, the claim, "Picasso's Les Demoiselles is the concrete outcome of an original vision," would be a critical statement. It is clear, moreover, that verification of that statement demands investigation beyond perceptual examination of Les Demoiselles—one must know the historical context of that work's creation to be able to confirm that it is an original, novel work. It would follow, therefore, that internalism is false.

Not to beg any issues at the start, then, let us not count claims relevant to a work's art-historical value—its role in the direction of the subsequent history of art—as critical statements. These are not the type of claims that the internalist has in mind when offering his position. Yet I do not want to limit critical statements to claims pertinent to a work's aesthetic value narrowly construed. Although I will argue in Chapter II that even if we so limit the range of critical statements, internalism is false, I will also argue that some features relevant to a work's worth as art are neither features pertaining to its role in art history nor aesthetic features.
When I use the term 'aesthetic' below, I use it in its broadest possible sense.

2. Distinguishing Critical Descriptions from Interpretations

From among the class of critical statements, three major types of claims are usually distinguished: critical descriptions, critical interpretations, and critical evaluations. Critical evaluations ascribe to a work a presence or absence of aesthetic worth. I have noted that critical descriptions are logically distinct from critical evaluations. In practice, however, it is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between one's describing a work and one's evaluating it. Usually, to point out that a dance is gracefully done is in effect to praise it. Beyond these few remarks, I will have little more to say about critical evaluations per se. My concern for now is distinguishing descriptions from interpretations of works of art.

Before one can properly appreciate or evaluate a work of art, one must 'make sense' of it. In the usual case, coming to understand a literary work requires interpreting it. Non-literary works can also be interpreted: one can interpret the significance of an extinguished candle in a 13th century mural, for example. Nor are all critical remarks about literary texts interpretive. One might
point out that a novel is rich in metaphor, or highly dis-organized.

Below I examine four approaches to distinguishing critical descriptions from interpretations. Each, I think, captures some aspect central to the distinction. Although my aim is mainly reportive, I shall suggest problems for an account when they appear obvious or important. The semantic/non-semantic distinction explicated in section 2.3 is the account I find most satisfactory, and it is the distinction I adopt in this dissertation.

Before we begin, it will be of use to cite two critical treatments of works of art to which I can later refer. The first is an excerpt from an article on Manet's *Olympia* by Eunice Lipton:

She is not voluptuous in a traditional sense nor is she served up to the viewer. Quite the contrary. She is aloof, self-contained and almost disdainful; she dares her visitor and stares him down. One bracelleted hand plays with a luxuriant shawl while the other assertively rests on her thigh. A red hothouse orchid in her hair and a black velvet ribbon around her throat flaunt, rather than offer, her nakedness. *Olympia* is a contemporary, nonidealized woman posing as Venus. . . . [She] arrogantly confronts and gives the lie to every Venus, odalisque and courtesan figure ever painted. She undermines tradition and stares out at history as the self-contained model Victorine Meurent posing as a classic nude.13
The second is an excerpt from an interpretation of Blake's 'London' from his Songs of Experience. Here is Blake's poem:

I wander through each chartered street
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear—

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appalls,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls;

But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

David Gillham has offered an interpretation which focuses on the occurrence of 'mind-forged manacles' in the poem's second stanza:

Man has built himself an amazingly elaborate prison by the use of his mind. Too faithless or too clever to rely on the impulse of the moment, he has evolved a system of controls that manage every part of life. But these controls are the mind. The wanderer refers directly to no spontaneous impulse that might be an alternative to restraint. He regards the manacles as inescapable, an iron law of our condition. They are 'mind-forg'd', the result of intelligence and industry and not of stupidity and laziness.
2.1 Interpreting as "Bringing Something" to a Work

There is a type of interpretation in the arts that is not critical interpretation. A musician can interpret a musical score: a score may be performed in different ways. A director of a play can interpret the original script and an actor can interpret a role. Scripts and scores do not determine one unique performance; the director or performer must fill in gaps. Interpretation of this type allows for the creative play of the interpreter.

Joseph Margolis suggests that the interpretation of art by the performing artist and that of the critic is more similar than one might initially suppose. Describing a work of art

suggests a stable, public, relatively well-defined object available for inspection; the effort of the describer calls for no special notice.15

Interpreting of a work, on the other hand,

suggests a touch of virtuosity, an element of performance, a shift from a stable object whose properties, however complex, are simply enumerable to an object whose properties pose something of a puzzle or a challenge—with emphasis on the solution of the puzzle, or on some inventive use of the materials present, on the added contribution of the interpreter.16
In interpretation, the emphasis is upon performance, on what is added beyond the mere materials provided. 

When one describes a work of art, one points out those features which are open to public inspection. If disagreement arises, we need only return to the work and examine the features it openly displays to all. When one interprets, however, one is creative; one imposes on the work a perspective or frame of mind and in so doing goes beyond a work's describable features.

Consider Margolis' approach in regard to Lipton's remarks on the nude in Manet's Olympia. Some of Lipton's claims are clearly just descriptions of that painting. Olympia is not voluptuous. Her hand rests on her thigh. She has a red orchid in her hair, and a black ribbon around her throat. Other of Lipton's claims lie on the borderline of description and interpretation. Is Lipton "adding" to the picture when she notes that Olympia "dares her visitor and stares him down," that she "plays" with her shawl or that her other hand "assertively" rests on her thigh? In these cases, Lipton is more clearly bringing a perspective to the picture. She reads the picture in a certain way. Finally, Lipton's claim (if I interpret her correctly) that Olympia pictures an
individual posing as a classic nude is, I think, most clearly an interpretive claim.

The speaker in Blake's poem wanders through the streets of London. He notices in the people he passes signs of weakness and woe. The word 'mark' in the third line of the first stanza means 'notice', while in the following line its meaning is different. Similarly, the word 'cry' differs in its meanings in the first and second lines of the second stanza. In making these simple observations about Blake's poem, I am noting only the literal sense of its words.

My observations, of course, are just a beginning toward an understanding of these stanzas. Understanding the poem requires going beyond the literal sense of the words presented, and some words in the poem have no clear literal sense (e.g., 'chartered streets,' and 'mind-forged manacles'). Gillham's interpretation of Blake's poem gives us a start. He interprets 'mind-forged manacles' as referring to the self-imposed rules and conventions which guide our everyday affairs. His reading sheds light on the significance of the various activities the wanderer reports.

According to Margolis, the central difference between describing and interpreting a work of art is the
difference between what can be "found" or discovered within a work and what is invented or created. While it is true that an interpreter goes beyond a work's describable features, Margolis suggests that the only features a work possesses are its describable features. "We do, as a matter of practice," he says, "attribute to a literary work much that might otherwise pass as interpretive." In interpreting Blake's poem Gillham had to go beyond that work's literal sense. This is not to say, however, that his reading is not to be found in Blake's poem.

My objection to Margolis' treatment of interpretation is one of emphasis. We must go beyond a work's describable features when we interpret. I am not willing to admit, however, that every reading of a poem is reading into a poem. On the other hand, perhaps the disagreement between Margolis and myself lies in what he is willing to accept as an interpretation. (See section 3.3, this chapter.)

2.2 The Epistemic Distinction

William Kennick has suggested that the distinction between interpretation and description of works of art can be made out in terms of what features of a work are obvious and which are not.
To say that Manet's Olympia contains a nude woman is to describe that picture, in part, but not to interpret it. So also for saying that the atmosphere of a Dutch interior, for example, in a typical Pieter de Hooch, is quiet and peaceful. Anyone can see this at a glance, which suggests that statements about the obvious in a work of art, for example, is that the first phrase of Herrick's "Corinna's Going A Maying" is "Get up," are to be classified as descriptions and not as interpretations.\(^{19}\)

The distinction between the obvious and the non-obvious is epistemic. One can come to know at a glance that the atmosphere of a typical Pieter de Hooch interior is quiet and peaceful. Some features of Manet's Olympia that Lipton points out are readily apparent to all: that the nude in that picture rests her hand on her thigh. This, again, is clearly a descriptive claim. That her hand rests "assertively" on her thigh is not so obvious. Lipton's claim that Olympia pictures an individual posing as a classic nude is clearly not obvious. It is most clearly an interpretation of that picture.

As regards interpretation of literary works, consider again Gillham's interpretation of Blake's "London." Compare the nature of the claim that the wanderer in that poem notices the activity of the people around him with the claim that the wanderer regards man's "system of controls . . . as inescapable, an iron law of our condition."
We can be sure that the first is true. The second has a more tenuous epistemic standing; it is clearly an interpretive claim.

What is obvious to one person (e.g., the literary critic) might not be obvious to another. One could make the distinction between description and interpretation relative to a group or to the individual. Annette Barnes, in an elaboration on Kennick's remarks, suggests that if the first option is taken,

> what knowledge or skills are required in a particular case for judgments of obviousness depends in part upon the art, and the kind of work within the art that one is dealing with. It also depends upon the state of the art, its criticism, and the general intellectual climate.20

In the case of Blake's poem, for example, we might count as descriptions claims about it whose truth is readily apparent to the sensitive reader of English. Given the general knowledge common to critics of paintings, the claim that the woman in Manet's *Olympia* strikes a classic pose would count as descriptive.

Let me sketch one problem with this approach. First, Barnes correctly notes that what is obvious is distinct from what seems obvious. If it is obvious that p, it follows that p is true. The problem that follows from
this is that if all critical descriptions are obvious, then all critical descriptions are true. But it is clear that not all descriptions of works of art offered by critics are true. Perhaps what must be said is critical descriptions of a work are claims about a work that seem obvious. (I should note, moreover, that if the distinction is weakened in this way, it allows the possibility that external evidence could have a bearing on the truth or falsity of critical descriptions.)

The second option I mentioned is relativizing the distinction to the epistemic position of the individual offering the critical statement. This option is taken by Robert J. Matthews. Describing and interpreting are things an individual can do with words. They are, according to Matthews, speech acts.

The basic intuition behind the notion of a speech act is that we use words to do different things. We can use words to command, to promise, to request, to congratulate, etc. The performance of any speech act requires that certain conditions be met. I cannot, for example, christen a ship merely by smashing a bottle of champagne on its bow while uttering "I hereby christen thee the SS Rubino," for the institutionally ordained conventions for the act of christening a ship would not in that situation be met.
Similarly, one cannot command another to perform some action unless one takes it to be understood that one is in some position of authority over another.

In the same way, certain conditions must be met in order for one to be describing an object. In order to be able to describe an object, Matthews argues, one "must be in a position to know whether the statements constituting the description are true." Consider the case in which one is presented with a wrapped package and is asked to describe its contents. One cannot do so. In this situation, one can only guess or conjecture about the contents of the box. One might even guess correctly, but the truth of one's guess does not make what one says a description. The difference between a guess and a description is a difference in the strength of the speaker's epistemic position.

In interpretation, the strength of one's epistemic position falls between conjecture and description. To interpret an object one must be in a weaker epistemic position in relation to an object than describing it requires. According to Matthews, the interpreter must not be in a position to know what he says of an object is true. Yet, one's interpreting requires a stronger epistemic position than guessing or conjecturing. To interpret, one
must know (and hence be in a position to know) that the statements constituting his interpretation are plausible, reasonable, or at least defensible on evidence provided by the interpretandum.24

Most of us would be in a position to know that Manet's Olympia pictures a nude. In noting this feature of the painting most of us would be describing that painting. Finally, Matthews would claim that Gillham is interpreting Blake's 'London' only if Gillham is in a position to know that what he says is plausible or reasonable. On the other hand, in order to Gillham to be interpreting that poem, he must not be in a position to know that what he says is true.

Matthews claims that his remarks on the distinction between interpretation and description are not limited to cases of art criticism.25 There appear to be cases, however, where his account of interpretation fails. Michael Hancher offers the following as such a case.

If I am having trouble understanding a passage in my calculus textbook, I may go to you and ask, "Would you interpret this for me?" meaning pretty much the same as "Would you describe what's going on here for me?" Certainly I would not put such a request only if I believed that you were not in a position to know whether the statements constituting [your] "interpretation" of the passage were true. Much the same is true of foreign-language interpretation in general.26
It would be quite natural, furthermore, to speak of a physicist interpreting a line in a cloud chamber to be the path of an electron. Yet to admit this is not to deny that the physicist is in a position to know that the line is an electron's path. Cannot my psychoanalyst know that the sword in my dream is a phallic symbol? This might be its obvious interpretation, given its context within my dream.

In the case of art criticism, it is certainly not clear that one can never know that an interpretive claim is correct. Again, I will use Handler's example:

When the editors of The Norton Anthology of English Literature gloss "Lycida," line 109, "The pilot of the Galilean lake," as reference to St. Peter, they are interpreting the line for the reader (it would be odd to say that they are "describing" the line, or even the meaning of the line). . . . In this case, at least, they know (and a fortiori, are "in a position to know") whereof they speak. 27

Note, first, that it would be odd to call any ascription of meaning a description. This lends support to the view I discuss in the next section, viz., that interpretations are semantic in character. Second, although Matthews' distinction here fails, his claim that one cannot know that an interpretation is correct must be reckoned with. I discuss this claim in section 3.3, below.
2.3 The Semantic/Non-Semantic Distinction

Monroe Beardsley makes the distinction between interpretation and description on the basis of the propositional content of critical statements. "To interpret," he says, "is verbally to unfold or disclose meaning (either sense or reference)."\(^2^8\) In his *Aesthetics*, he says

A critical interpretation, for the purposes of this book, is a statement that purports to declare the "meaning" of a work of art—this is not to be confused with the quite different sense in which, for example, a pianist is said to "interpret" a sonata in playing it a certain way. I use the term "meaning" for a semantical relation between the work itself and something outside the work.\(^2^9\)

The claim that a painting represents a cow, that a work symbolizes the indifference of nature or denotes the folly of greed, each specify a semantic feature of a work. Each is, on Beardsley's view, an interpretation. Arthur Danto appears to hold a similar view, although his point is not to distinguish interpretation from description per se: "To interpret a work is to offer a theory as to what the work is about, what its subject is."\(^3^0\) Mary Sirridge makes the distinction on the same grounds:

Critical interpretation . . . is fundamentally semantic in character. It connects recognized features of the work (including what is actually represented or said) to another domain, to objects and situations which are not literally presented in the work.\(^3^1\)
Critical descriptions, on the other hand, are those critical statements which ascribe to a work non-semantic features. Says Beardsley,

statements that inform us about the colors and shapes of a painting, or summarize the plot of a motion picture, or classify an operatic aria as being of the A B A form, are critical description.32

There are several ordinary uses of 'interpretation' which support this way of making the distinction. The central cases of interpretation are cases involving language. The foreign language interpreter tells us what passages in an unfamiliar language mean. To interpret the Bible or other religious text is to attempt to discern the meaning of its words or parables. When one interprets a dream, one attempts to say what particular images within the dream represent or symbolize. Finally, when we ask what a poem means, we are asking for an interpretation of it.33

I am satisfied with this way of making the distinction between critical descriptions and interpretations. Before turning to the question of whether critical interpretations are true or false, however, I consider one more view about interpretation. I do so in order to point out that when one describes a work, one is in a different, yet important, sense interpreting.
2.4 The "Ways of Seeing" Distinction

"For most of us," Isabel Hungerland notes, "different interpretations carry with them different ways of seeing the things in question." Suppose a child creates a clay figure and we are unable, at first glance, to make sense of it.

We are confronted with an art product and do not know, as we say, "how to look at it." It appears as a "jumble," no clear pattern emerges. Or, we are faced with alternative interpretations of a product, correlated for us with different ways of seeing it. Shall we look at this piece of child sculpture as a representation of a plate of donuts or as a precocious study, in the manner of Henry Moore, of the human form?

The nature of the child's work does not reveal itself to us. We are presented with options. Some connection can here be made with the other accounts of interpretation offered above.

One implication of X's being an interpretation of Y is that there are other possible interpretations of Y. This is clear in the case of ambiguous pictures. We can perceptually interpret the well-known duck/rabbit picture as picturing a duck or as picturing a rabbit. In the case
of Manet's *Olympia*, its picturing a nude seems obvious because no alternative way of seeing it is apparent. Unlike the duck/rabbit picture, we cannot switch from one interpretation to another. Finally, I should note that part of Beardsley's reason for calling claims of representational content interpretable is that "in the usual case [of pictorial representation] there is apparent ambiguity of depiction."^36^  

An interpretation of a literary work gives one a way of construing that work. Marcia Eaton notes four interpretations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that have actually been offered:  

(a) Hamlet is a man of action thwarted by circumstances.  
(b) Hamlet is a man whose vacillating nature prevents him from taking any positive action.  
(c) Hamlet is motivated to act, but cannot because he is too fat.  
(d) Hamlet's inaction is caused by his melancholic, indeed suicidal, state.^37^  

It is easy to see, I think, that the adoption of one of these interpretations will make a difference in how one reads that play. The same actions by Hamlet within the play will carry a different significance depending on the interpretation one brings to the work. In the case of Blake's poem, the claim that an individual within the
poem wanders through the street is not an interpretive claim. On the other hand, it seems possible that one could plausibly construe 'mind-forged manacles' to refer to something other than man's self-imposed conventions. This is perhaps why we classify that claim as interpretive.

Let me turn back to descriptions of the visual features of a work of art. Some philosophers, in light of recent studies in the psychology of perception, have suggested that all perception involves interpretation.

The world as we know it is perceived in terms of the concepts we employ. In our everyday perception, we do not see unrelated fragments of meaningless sensations, but recognizable objects jointed together in a comprehensible relation to one another. . . . Even if perception begins with unprocessed, raw sensations, we are not conscious of them until they have been categorized into concepts, such as "a cup," "a table," "trees," and systematically arranged into some meaningful order, "after-dinner coffee," "lunch in the park," and so on.

Observations are not "givens" or "data" but are always interpretations in the light of our background assumptions. The idea of unambiguous objects of perception is a myth. 39

Reception and interpretation are not separable operations; they are thoroughly interdependent. 40

If we follow this line and push the 'seeing as' conception of interpretation to its extreme, the distinction between
"mere" description and interpretation collapses. Seeing is always seeing-as; the background beliefs that we bring to a work are in every case a determinate of what we see in the work.

Such a view of scientific knowledge has been elaborated and defended. John M. Ellis comments on this development in the philosophy of science:

The process of knowledge is not, then, a linear progression that assembles facts, the interpretation of which follows from their piling up; it is a circular process of continual refinement, in which an interpretation is held up to scrutiny in light of observations, and observations are scrutinized in light of an interpretation.

There is no sphere in which the view of knowledge as a continual acquisition of unalterable building blocks is tenable. To say that facts suggest interpretations is just as true as saying that interpretations suggest facts.

Ellis argues in light of these considerations that "the notion of the gap between linguistic analysis and criticism is a serious mistake."

I do not want to deny that the distinction between critical description and interpretation can be made along reasonable lines. Rather, I bring up the above view of interpretation to emphasize that descriptions of works of art do not carry with them the epistemic certainty that
one might suppose. I wish to deny, that is, that in giving a critical description we "analyze what is given--what appears." There is an element of interpretation in description.

3. The Truth Status of Critical Interpretations

It is often the case that more than one interpretation of the same work will be offered by different critics. Consider the four interpretations of Shakespeare's Hamlet that I noted above. From among these four, must one be the correct interpretation of that play? (a) and (b), it seems, cannot both be true. It cannot be the case that Hamlet is a man of action and that he has a vacillating nature that prevents him from acting. (a) and (b) are incompatible interpretations of Hamlet. On the other hand, (a) and (c) are compatible. It can be the case that Hamlet is a man of action thwarted by circumstances and that he cannot act because he is too fat. His being fat could be construed as just one aspect of his circumstances that thwarts his action. The question I will consider here is whether in the case of incompatible interpretations, one must be true or correct, the other false or incorrect. It is the position of some philosophers that as a rule no interpretation is true or false, correct or incorrect.
3.1 Interpretations as Correct or Incorrect

In his introduction to *The Possibility of Criticism*, Beardsley remarks that

It seems to me that critics often make claims to knowledge—of what a poem is like, of what it means, of what it is worth. The problem is to assess these claims... It is the possibility of criticism as knowledge that I am inquiring into.47

The possibility of interpretive knowledge requires the possibility of interpretations being true.

There is consensus among the disputants in the internalism/externalism debate that some interpretations are correct, others incorrect. One can, moreover, know that an interpretation is true. "One who advances an interpretation," says Beardsley,

...tacitly claims correctness for it, and thus allows the logical possibility that it may be incorrect. He purports to be giving information about the work he is interpreting, and one who accepts a new interpretation typically feels that he thereby learns something... about the work which he did not know before.48

E. D. Hirsch, a prominent intentionalist, concurs. Literary texts have one and only one correct, or "valid" reading. To 'validate,' he says, "is to show that a conclusion is probably true on the basis of what is known,"
and "the goal of interpretation as a discipline must be the modest one of achieving validations so defined." Simi-
larly, the intentionalist P. D. Juhl claims that in defending an interpretation we claim implicitly that it is more likely to be correct than any of the alternative readings we have considered.

A text's having one correct reading, however, does not exclude its being ambiguous. Says Hirsch, Ambiguity, or for that matter, vagueness is not the same as indeterminateness [of a text's verbal meaning]. To say that verbal meaning is determinate is not to exclude complexities of meaning but only to insist that a text's meaning is what it is and not a hundred other things.

A text might have interpretations which, as far as one can tell, comply equally well with the evidence at hand. In such a case, either it is just that we do not know which interpretation is correct or that the text is simply ambiguous. What cannot be the case is that two incompatible interpretations of a text both be correct. Beardsley calls this "The Principle of the Intolerability of Incom-patibles," and says that "all of the literary interpretations that deserve the name obey this principle."

It is clear that some interpretations are mistaken. An interpretation which entailed that in Blake's "London"
"mind-forged" manacles" referred to epilepsy, would beyond any doubt be mistaken. It has been argued, however, that the possibility of interpretations being incorrect does not entail that some interpretations are correct. It is claimed that interpretations cannot be true or false, but can only be at most plausible or implausible. While it would be contradictory to claim that two inconsistent interpretations are both true, it is not contradictory to claim that both are reasonable or plausible.

As far as I can tell, Hirsch does not argue for the claim that a text has one valid reading (though he does suggest that "few would listen to a critic" who did not claim validity for his interpretation^). Beardsley, on the other hand, does offer argument.

I do not see how an interpretation could be reasonable unless reasons can be given to show its superiority to some alternatives; and I do not see how the reasons could count unless they are reasons for thinking it true.54

Plausibility is at least an appearance of truth based upon some relevant evidence, and any statement that is plausible must be in principle capable of being shown to be true or false.55

Beardsley's argument is that a necessary condition for being plausible, is the possibility of being true. It is
therefore contradictory to claim that an interpretation is both plausible but (in principle) neither true nor false.

I shall now consider other positions on the truth status of critical interpretations. I will, where I can, offer support to the Beardsley/Hirsch position that interpretations can be correct.56

3.2 The Emotivist Conception of Interpretation

C. L. Stevenson holds that interpretive claims are disguised normative claims.57 First, a poem will be understood differently by different groups of readers. It will, for example, be understood differently by the average person than by those with a prolonged interest in literature. One's claim that a poem means such-and-such must therefore be qualified by the group of readers one has in mind. In claiming that a poem means such-and-such, says Stevenson, one is implicitly "referring to the way it is understood, or would be understood, by a certain group of readers."58 More importantly, it is Stevenson's view that the group of readers to which an interpretive statement implicitly refers "cannot be made explicit by means of factual terms alone, but must be indicated, in part, by means of evaluative terms."59 The group of readers to which a critic implicitly refers will be the group which the critic takes to be the ideal or proper readers of the
poem. The proper readers of a poem are those who understand it as it ought to be understood. This normative conception of interpretation, he claims,

translates the question, "What does this passage in the poem mean?" into some such question as this: "How would the passage be understood by those who read it as they should—i.e., by those who bring to it a skill and sensibility that is neither too rich nor too poor, but is just right?"60

Interpretive claims are therefore prescriptive. It does not follow from this, however, that interpretive claims are neither true nor false. It might be true, for example, that a poem ought to be understood in the way its author understood it. Stevenson, however, holds an emotivist view of normative claims. Normative claims serve mainly (though not exclusively) to express the speaker's attitude of favor or disfavor, and do so in a way that invites, as it were, the hearer or hearers to share this attitude.61

Critical interpretations express the attitude of the interpreter and are an attempt to persuade the reader to share this attitude. As such, interpretations are neither true nor false.
Stevenson would claim that the intentionalist critic holds to the principle, roughly, that a poem is understood as it should be understood if and only if it is understood as its author understood it. The anti-intentionalist, on the other hand, holds that a poem is understood as it should be understood if and only if it is understood consistent with the conventions of language. Some philosophers have claimed that the disputants in the debate are in fact merely offering recommendations of this type. If there is no rational basis for deciding which of these two principles is the correct principle of literary interpretation, then the debate in question cannot be rationally resolved. I will address this challenge when I take up literary criticism in Chapter III (Section 1.1).

The major problem with Stevenson's view is, I think, that it fails to square with our ordinary conception of interpretation. Consider two of the interpretations of Hamlet that I have noted. One critic claims that Hamlet fails to act because he is suicidal. Another critic says that Hamlet's inaction is the result of his obesity. It is certainly odd to say that this interpretive disagreement is merely a clash of attitudes of the respective critics, i.e., that neither critic is in fact mistaken about the source of Hamlet's inaction. We would ordinarily say that one of these two critics is simply mistaken.
3.3 Interpretations as "Logically Weak"

In section 2.1 above I noted that Joseph Margolis compares critical interpretation to the interpretation of scores and scripts by the performing artist. He concludes, partly on the basis of that comparison,

that where his effort is interpretive, we cannot judge the critic's remarks to be simply true or false, accurate or inaccurate, but only that his interpretation, like the performing artist's, is "plausible," "reasonable," "admissible," "indefensible," "not impossible," and the like.62

Elsewhere,63 he draws the same conclusion from consideration of the different "perspectives" from which one can approach a work of art. The following are some of his examples.

One might interpret Hamlet in light of the way that the individuals of Shakespeare's time saw the world. On the other hand, Ernst Jones has given a Freudian interpretation of that same play. Jacques Maritain has approached the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud from the perspective of Catholicism and interpreted it accordingly. And we can imagine a critic taking the Marxist point of view in his interpretation of that same set of poetry.

Margolis calls these different frames of mind with which one can approach a work of art, 'myths' or 'schemas
of imagination.' A myth, as he uses the term, is a point of view "capable of effectively organizing our way of viewing portions of the external world in accord with its distinctions."⁶⁴ Such myths need not be factually true to serve as guides to construing works of art. We need not accept the Christian view of the world to accept and appreciate an interpretation of Dante's *Commedia* from the Catholic perspective. Nor must Freudian psychology be true to yield insights into Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. What matters is that a myth direct our perception of a work in a way that allows for a complex and coherent construal of its parts.

Margolis contends that the practice of critics shows widespread tolerance of alternative incompatible critical interpretations. We find critics questioning Freud's analysis of the works of Leonardo da Vinci from the Freudian point of view, but not questioning that approach to art per se. Given such tolerance of interpretation, Margolis concludes that critical interpretations cannot be said to be true or false, but merely plausible or implausible. In scientific speculation, there are cases where the technical inability to gain the necessary information allows only the judgment that a hypothesis is plausible or implausible. Yet "considerations of plausibility are more nearly central to aesthetic criticism." [Critical
interpretations] are, in principle, logically weak."

Incompatible interpretations do not necessarily preclude each other. All can be plausible, but none can be more than plausible, i.e., true or correct.

A major premise in Margolis' argument is that we find among practicing critics a tolerance of incompatible interpretations. He claims that critics in general do not hold that there is "some ideal object of criticism toward which all relevant experiences of a work converge." Beardsley takes issue here:

I find the critic Samuel Hynes, for example, contrasting the opinions of Clark Emergy and Hugh Denner on the Cantos and adding: "Obviously they cannot both be right; if the passage describes an earthly paradise, then it cannot be a perversion of nature." I find E. D. Hirsch remarking: "No doubt Coleridge understood Hamlet rather differently from Professor Kittredge. The fact is reflected in their disparate interpretations. . . . Both of them would have agreed that at least one of them must be wrong." Of course, Beardsley's examples do not conclusively show that there is not the tolerance that Margolis speaks of. Margolis could probably marshal some examples to the contrary.

More importantly, Beardsley denies that he and Margolis are speaking of the same thing. Concerning
Freudian, Marxist or Christian "interpretation," Beardsley says

it is true that "readings" such as these need not exclude each other. But the reason is surely that they do not bring out of the work something that lies momentarily hidden in it; they are rather ways of using the work to illustrate a pre-existent system of thought. Though they are sometimes called "interpretations" (since this word is extremely obliging), they merit a distinct label, like superimpositions.68

The disagreement arises from a difference of subject matter. The difference, I think, between an interpretation as Beardsley wishes to use that term and a "superimposition," is the difference between understanding a work and having an understanding of a work. Margolis remarks that

we should expect someone educated in a Buddhist society to construe the design of Western works of art, wherever promising, in terms of the "myths" that guide his own imagination.69

The Buddhist who saw Western art only through the eyes of Eastern "schemas of imagination," might have an understanding of Western art, but this is not to understand it. Having a "way of seeing" a work does not suffice for understanding a work. "The atomic theory of matter," says Margolis, ". . . could provide a 'myth' for criticism."70
One might approach Manet's *Olympia* from the standpoint of the atomic theory of matter (and possibly even appreciate it through the categories of that perspective), but one would not thereby understand Manet's painting.

We can still consider Margolis' claim that interpretations are merely plausible as it applies to interpretations of the type Beardsley has in mind. Again, Beardsley argues that it is contradictory to claim that a statement is plausible, yet neither true nor false. Robert Matthews has responded to Beardsley's argument. He gives the following case as a purported counterexample to the claim that if a statement $p$ is plausible, then $p$ is either true or false.

Jones is a middle-aged male, born to parents the male members of whose families all became bald at an early age. Knowing what we do of his parents' families (and of heredity), we can be reasonably confident that Jones himself is bald, even though we have no knowledge of this fact. . . . Now suppose that we meet Jones and find that he is not bald, neither is he hirsute. In other words, it is not the case either that Jones is bald or that he is not bald (i.e., hirsute). He is, as we say, partly bald. Thus, we have an example of a plausible statement--viz., "Jones is bald"--that turns out to be neither true nor false.71

It appears to me, however, that Matthews' case fails for the simple reason that Jones is not bald, he is partially
bald. That is, the claim 'Jones is bald' is false. Let me give a parallel case. Suppose I write a statement on a sheet of paper and (not showing you what I have written) tell you that what I have written is true. Since you know that I am not prone to lying, let us suppose you have good reason to believe that what I said, and hence that what I wrote, is true. Here, given what you know, it is plausible that the written statement is true. Now suppose that what I wrote on the sheet of paper was the imperative, "Close the door." Given your evidence, it was plausible that the statement I wrote on the sheet of paper was true, yet it is clearly a statement that can be neither true nor false.

Whether or not a statement is plausible is relative to some set of evidence. Given the evidence now at hand, it is not plausible that there is life on Mars. Additional evidence could, however, make it plausible that there is life on Mars. The salient feature of Matthews' case (and my parallel case) is that the judgment of plausibility is made in ignorance of the truth status of the claim judged plausible. Given one's ignorance that the statement I wrote was an imperative (and hence neither true nor false), one can have good reason to believe it is true. Once one knows that a statement is neither true nor false, however, it cannot be judged plausible. If one knows a statement
is an imperative, no mass of evidence together with this knowledge can make that statement plausible. What Matthews' case shows, then, is that if one is unaware that a statement is neither true nor false, then one can have good reason to believe it is true.

Matthews goes on to argue that "interpretations in art criticism will as a general rule be neither true nor false." The only interpretations that are correct or incorrect are those given by a critic who is unaware of all the relevant (internal) evidence.

When a critic succeeds in providing a correct interpretation, his achievement is a minor one, made possible by his failure to apprise himself fully about the interpreted work.

Now, a critic can be sure that he has at his disposal all the relevant (internal) interpretive evidence. He can know that his interpretation is neither true nor false. But if he knows the interpretation he offers is neither true nor false, then he can no longer claim plausibility for it. A truthvalueless statement can be plausible only to one unaware of its lack of a truth value. As "Imperative claims cannot be plausible," is tautologous, so too--given our (supposed) knowledge of the truthvalueness of interpretation--would "Interpretations cannot be plausible."
Matthews attempted refutation of Beardsley's argument fails.

3.4 The Hermeneutic Circle

I here briefly consider a related problem. It has been suggested that there is in principle no objective means of deciding between competing interpretations of literary works. In order to know the meaning of a literary work as a whole one must, of course, know the meanings of its individual words and word segments. On the other hand, in order to understand the meaning of the words and sentences in a literary work, one must know the broader meaning of the entire text. The meanings we attribute to the individual segments of a text support our interpretation, yet we invoke our interpretation as evidence that we have interpreted the work's smaller segments correctly. Interpretive reasoning, it is claimed, is thus inherently circular. Hence, interpretations are "self-confirming," and there is no objective method of deciding between competing interpretations.

Consider, for the purpose of analogy, the statement

(1) That cat is cool.

One might interpret (1) to state that some particular furry mammal is cold. Support of this reading involves assigning particular meanings to the word 'cat' and the
word 'cool,' as noted. On the other hand, one might interpret (1) as slang. That is, one might interpret it as stating that a certain person behaves in a certain way. Here, one's reading (1) as slang supports the meanings one assigns to its individual words. We cannot here appeal to the meaning of the words in (1) to decide between these divergent interpretations, for each interpretation (that it is slang or non-slang) determines which possible meanings are reasonable to assign to those words.

One way to maintain that there can be an objective method for deciding between divergent interpretations is to maintain that there is an objective foothold which eliminates the supposed hermeneutic circle. That is, one might deny that interpretive reasoning is in the end completely circular. Beardsley holds, for example, that

there are some features of the poem's meaning that are antecedent to, and independent of, the entertaining of an interpretive hypothesis: and this makes it possible to check such hypotheses against reality, instead of letting them become self-confirming through circular reasoning.74

The meanings of words are not so ambiguous to allow the flexibility of interpretations which the doctrine of the hermeneutic circle suggests. Hirsch makes a similar point:
It is true that an idea of the whole controls, connects and unifies our understanding of parts. It is also true that the idea of the whole must arise from an encounter with parts. But this encounter could not occur if the parts did not have an autonomy capable of suggesting a certain kind of whole in the first place. A part—a word, a title, a syntactical pattern—is frequently autonomous in the sense that some aspect of it is the same no matter what whole it belongs to.75

Elsewhere, however, Hirsch argues that the only way to escape circular reasoning is by appeal to external evidence. Appeal to the

author's typical outlook, the typical associations and expectations which form in part the context of his utterance ... is not only the one way we can test the relative coherence of a reading, but it is also the only way to avoid pure circularity in making sense of the text.76

Psychological facts about the author in relation to a text can thus, on Hirsch's view, supply a firm objective ground outside the hermeneutic circle.

I should note that some have argued that appeal to authorial intent does not avoid the circle, but simply enlarges it. One's chief evidence of authorial intent is the meaning of the text and ancillary documents. The basis for assigning a particular meaning to a text might,
in part, be authorial intent, but the basis for positing a particular intent will lie in the meaning one assigns to that text and ancillary documents. Thus one's reasoning remains circular. I am inclined to think, however, that if there is circular reasoning in such cases it is not a vicious circularity. Perhaps in conversation with my friends I hypothesize as to what they are saying on the basis of what I think their beliefs and attitudes are. But I know what their beliefs and attitudes are on the basis of what they say. It is clear nonetheless that I understand our conversations.

4. My Approach to the Internalist/Externalist Debate

In this chapter, I have tried to mark out the type of claims about art central to the internalist/externalist debate, i.e., critical statements. The issue, as I take it, is what type of evidence can be appealed to in verifying statements about a work of art that are relevant to our appreciating or evaluating it. I have noted several means that have been suggested for distinguishing critical descriptions from critical interpretations. In the remainder of this dissertation I make the distinction on the basis of the propositional content of a critical statement. A critical description I will take to be any critical statement which ascribes to a work some
non-semantic feature. A critical interpretation I will take to be any critical statement about what a work of art means, represents, refers to, denotes, is about, etc.

I adopt this distinction, in part, because I believe it to best capture our intuitive distinction between critical description and interpretation. In addition, I adopt it because of the apparent difference in the type of evidence relevant to the justification of descriptions and interpretations when the distinction is made in this way. It seems clear that the sociological background of a work or the intent of its creator can have little varying on whether that work is dynamic, garish, balanced, and the like. There is no apparent reason why one must know something about Rembrandt to recognize his Return of the Prodigal Son as somber (or non-somber). Such features, it seems, are there for inspection to discover.

There is, on the other hand, an apparent evidential tie between the meaning of a claim and the intent of its speaker. In ordinary conversation we appeal to a speaker's intent to settle misunderstanding. We do not, however, appeal to the cook's intent to decide if the cake before us is chocolate. We simply look at it or taste it. It is in part because of this intuitive difference, I think, that internalism with regard to critical descriptions has been relatively neglected by philosophers. My
general aim in this dissertation is to offer a defense of externalism which is applicable to both critical descriptions and critical interpretations.

In Chapter II, I consider Monroe Beardsley's defense of internalism with regard to critical descriptions. It is Beardsley's position that all critical descriptions ascribe to a work some perceptual feature. Since perceptual features of a work can be determined by direct inspection, he concludes that all critical descriptions are verifiable by direct inspection alone. I argue, first, that some critical descriptions ascribe to a work non-perceptual features, and these are not verifiable by direct inspection. Second, I draw upon the arguments of Kendall Walton to show that even ascriptions of perceptual features to a work of art require presuppositions about its origin. The aesthetic features one sees upon inspection of a work will depend upon one's perceptual habits. For this reason, the aesthetic features of a work must be relativized to habits of seeing. In this sense, the descriptive features of a work are radically ambiguous. If we are not to embrace critical relativism, then appeal to external evidence must be invoked to settle what features can truly be ascribed to a work.
In Chapter III, I turn to the intentionalism/anti-intentionalism debate concerning literary interpretation. It has been claimed that the debate itself reduces to a simple clash of attitudes that cannot be resolved. I first argue that this is not the case. I then examine and reject several arguments often given against intentionalism. I explain and (with qualification) defend the view of the intentionalist E. D. Hirsch. His argument, roughly, is that literary texts are radically ambiguous unless authorial intentions are taken into account. I appeal to the arguments of P. D. Juhl in defense of the claim that in at least some cases literary texts are utterances of their authors, and appeal to the author to disambiguate a text is therefore reasonable.

The major arguments for externalism in Chapters II and III are essentially similar. Works of art in general can be seen or interpreted in many ways consistent with their internal properties. Our options, then, are either to accept some form of critical relativism or to appeal to facts outside a work to settle critical disputes. I reject the first option on the grounds that it is clear that one can be mistaken about the features a work of art possesses. On taking the second option, however, it must be shown that facts about a work's artist are reasonable to appeal to in settling critical disputes.
As Juhl has remarked, we could just set up a panel of critics whose decision would be final in settling such disputes. In Chapter IV, I argue that appeal to facts about an artist to "disambiguate" works can be grounded on our concept of what a work of art is. A necessary condition for something's being art is that it have an artist, someone responsible for the features it possesses. Some descriptions or interpretations of a work of art consistent with its internal features will not be compatible with this fact. Only those descriptions or interpretations of a work which are consistent with an artist's being responsible for that work are acceptable.
II. INTERNALISM AND CRITICAL DESCRIPTIONS

In this chapter, I consider the view of internalism with regard to critical descriptions of works of art. Monroe Beardsley is the most prominent contemporary advocate of this position, and much of this chapter is devoted to explicating and criticizing his views. Though I concentrate my attention on Beardsley, it is not my aim merely to explicate his view in particular. Rather, I hope to focus on the aspects of his position which I take to be central to internalism in general. I here argue that the view of internalism with regard to critical descriptions is false.

1. Clarification of the Internalist Position

Beardsley introduces a distinction crucial to a discussion of internalism. Internal evidence he defines as evidence gained "from direct inspection of a work."¹ For the time being, we can take direct inspection of a work of art to consist in perceiving the work under normal viewing conditions by an individual with adequate perceptual sensibilities. External evidence, on the other hand, is evidence not gained by perceptual examination of the work.
itself, but by investigation into the sociological back­
ground of the work or the psychology of its creator. I take
Beardsley's internalist position to consist of two related
theses concerning the relevance of these two types of evi­
dence to the verification of critical descriptions of
works of art.

Consider the following description of the paintings of
Milton Avery by art critic James R. Mellow:

[Avery's] later paintings become assem­
blages of erratic and unfamiliar forms
that slowly resolve into some recogniz­
able bit of scenery. In Sunset (1952),
for instance, the odd-shaped form,
painted an orangy beige, which looks
like nothing so much as a spread-eagled
man's shirt, turns out to be a frothy
wave. . . . In Sand Dunes and Yellow Sky
(1959), the wedge of black is a glimpse
of distant sea in the midst of rolling
dunes. A late painting by Avery typic­
ally becomes a sequence of practiced
deceptions.²

Here, Mellow points out a significant feature of Avery's
later paintings, that they exhibit a visual interplay of
form and representational content. How is one to confirm
that Mellow's description of Avery's work is true?

The most obvious way to verify Mellow's claim is to
look at Avery's late work to see if, as Mellow claims, its
representational content is not immediately apparent.
Perceptual examination of the paintings in question would
seem to yield evidence enough to establish that Mellow's claim is or is not true. Knowledge of the time and place that Avery painted these works or knowledge of his psychological attitude toward them do not seem a prerequisite to seeing the feature Mellow points out. It is Beardsley's position that it is true of all works of art that such knowledge of its origins is unnecessary to verify critical descriptions. Critical descriptions, that is, can be confirmed by internal evidence alone:

\[(I_1)\] Direct inspection of a work of art (by an individual with the requisite perceptual sensibilities, in normal lighting, etc.) is sufficient for confirming or disconfirming any critical description of that work.

\[(I_1)\] does not entail, however, that only internal evidence can serve to verify a critical description. \[(I_1)\] could be true and yet external facts play some evidential role in art criticism. Consider these further remarks of Mellow:

In Avery's late paintings, we are not meant to read the subject straightaway, but forced to scout the territory before confirming the fact--this is a meadow, a road, a stream, a strip of ocean above the beach. . . . Avery clearly intends that we should savor the strangeness first and then enjoy the moment of recognition. It is part of his elusiveness as a painter.
Mellow here shifts from speaking of features of Avery's work to features of Avery's psychology. We are not meant to read the subjects of Avery's paintings immediately; Avery intends us to enjoy the shift from perception of form to recognition of representational content.

Mellow also mentions in his review of Avery's work a few details of Avery's personality and life:

Avery was as elusive—not to say evasive—as a man as he was as an artist. Throughout his career, Avery misrepresented his age by nine or ten years. Ostensibly, he hedged in the beginning because he was in love with a much younger woman—Sally Michel, an artist whom he had met during a summer of painting in Gloucester, Massachusetts—and he wanted to avoid both her disapproval and that of her parents.4

This mix of comments about an artist's work, his psychology, and his life is common in art criticism, and it is central to the internalist position that in art criticism the latter two types of claims are in some way misplaced. The internalist might argue for the exclusion of external facts from art criticism on several grounds. I shall consider three lines of argument an internalist might offer.

First, the internalist might argue that a critic who invokes external, psychological evidence confuses the work of art with the artist's intention concerning that work.
Some aestheticians, Croce for example, have held that the work of art is to be identified with a psychological state of the artist. If this identification were correct, then claims about an artist's psychology would certainly be germane to art criticism. I will not consider arguments against this view, but it is clear the internalist must deny this mentalistic approach to art.

Second, many times an apparent reference to an artist's intent is in fact an implicit reference to a feature of the work itself. A critic might claim, for example, that a play is "unintentionally funny." This apparent reference to the playwright's intention could, Beardsley argues, be avoided. "Perhaps," he notes, "[it means that the play] is funny in some respects, but not in others, or perhaps the humor is of a peculiar and irritating kind." In many such cases, the critic is simply confused as to the subject of his claims. The ambiguity of reference of such intention-alistic remarks, moreover, makes verification of them more difficult. Says Beardsley,

if we do not know whether a critic is talking about the work or about the artist, how can we know whether what he is saying is true, for how can we know what sort of evidence is required to confirm it?
I think it is clear, however, that Mellow does not make this second mistake—his claim that Avery did not intend the subject matter of his work to be immediately apparent is not an implicit characterization of Avery's work. It is clear from the comments on Avery's life that Mellow is speaking of the man, not his work. Perhaps his remarks about Avery's life are Mellow's attempt to give some evidence for his claim about Avery's intent.

It need not be the case, furthermore, that Mellow is making the first-mentioned confusion. Perhaps Mellow notes Avery's intent as additional evidence that his critical description of that work is true. If the internalist is to make his case that references to an artist's psychology or the sociological facts surrounding a work are misplaced in art criticism, it must be shown that this use of external facts is also misguided.

The internalist would clearly be mistaken to claim that external evidence cannot justify, give one a good reason to believe, a critical description of a work of art. We certainly can have a good reason not to see a particular motion picture—the fact, for example, that all movie critics claim a movie to be extremely dull gives one a good reason to believe that it is dull. Here, one invokes external evidence to justify one's belief that a critical
description of the movie is true. In many cases knowledge of the sociological background of a work or the psychology of its creator do make it reasonably likely that it possesses certain aesthetic features. The fact that a painting was created in 1600 in Rome, for example, surely gives one some reason (though of course not conclusive reason) to suppose that it has classical balance. That Paul Klee intended a particular watercolor to be whimsical gives one fairly good evidence that it (even sight-unseen) is whimsical. Likewise, Mellow's claim that Avery intended an interplay of form and content in his work is some evidence that it occurs in his work. The evidential support in these cases depends on inductive generalization: Most paintings done within a particular social milieu will share certain aesthetic features, and it is in general likely that a work intended to have a particular aesthetic feature will in fact have that feature.

Beardsley admits this. An artist's statement of intent, he notes, gives one "indirect evidence of what the work became." In many cases the critical descriptions supported by the direct evidence of perceptual inspection will coincide with those supported by the indirect evidence external facts supply. This is the case with Avery's work--he intended the representational content of his work
to be elusive, and on viewing his work one can see that it is so. In other cases, however, the descriptions justified by an artist's statement of intent will conflict with those supported by observation of the work. A painter might write in an exhibition catalog, for example, that he intended his work to be delicately balanced, yet on viewing his work we find it to be grossly unbalanced. In such a case the indirect evidence that the artist's statement of intent provided would be overridden by internal evidence. If not non-inferential, the perceptual evidence that a work is balanced involves inferences much less susceptible to error than those provided by external evidence of either psychological or sociological facts concerning the work's origin.

An analogy may here be helpful. A colorblind individual might by practice be able to identify certain things as being red (apples, blood, etc.). A relevant difference between a normal-sighted individual's determining it to be red is the strength of support one's evidence gives to one's judgment that the object is red. The judgment of the colorblind individual might in bizarre circumstances give one a reason to doubt one's color judgment—for example, if the former presented good evidence that there was hallucinogenic drugs in one's just-finished drink—yet in the normal situation the judgment
of the normal-sighted individual that an object is red would override the judgment of an individual unable to see colors directly.

\((I_1)\) entails that all critically relevant features of a work of art are discernible by perceptual examination alone. If one can just see that a work has certain aesthetic features, a judgment based on the visual examination of a work of art (by an individual with the requisite perceptual sensibilities, in normal lighting, etc.) would always bear more evidential weight than a contrary judgment based on inductive generalization invoking external facts. In addition to \((I_1)\), Beardsley wishes to defend the following thesis:

\((I_2)\) The justification of a critical description by internal evidence (as perceived by an individual with the requisite perceptual sensibilities, in normal lighting, etc.) cannot be overridden by contrary external evidence.

Not only is internal evidence sufficient to establish the truth of a critical description, it is also the final court of appeal.

I take \((I_1)\) and \((I_2)\) to be the central theme of internalism with regard to critical descriptions. Together they suggest that external evidence can play no crucial role in art criticism. If external evidence
coincides with internal evidence, the former is unneeded. If it conflicts with internal evidence, it is overridden. As will be seen, moreover, Beradsley also suggests that external evidence can have a negative effect on the verification of critical descriptions. What one sees in a work of art can be influenced by one's beliefs and expectations. It is possible, therefore, for one to misperceive a work due to one's knowledge of external facts. A sculptor's statement of intent, for example, "may be able to get us to see grace where we would otherwise not see it, or a greater airiness than we would otherwise see." Although an artist's statement of intent or the sociological background of a work might suggest a way of seeing a work, what is there to be found in the work is what could be seen by one who has no knowledge of such external matters.

In conclusion, the internalist would make the following comments concerning Mellow's remarks. First, whether or not there is a visual interplay of form and content in Avery's late work can be verified by observing that work. Thus Mellow's claim that Avery intended it to be so is unnecessary for confirming that claim. Furthermore, even if Avery had intended otherwise, had intended the representational content of his work to be immediately
recognizable, this indirect evidence cannot undermine the stronger, direct evidence of perception. Finally, Beardsley would add that the knowledge of Avery's intent can interfere with one's seeing within Avery's work what is really to be found there.

In my discussion below, (I₁) will be my chief point of focus. My criticism of that thesis, however, will entail that (I₂) is likewise false. I take Beardsley's defense of (I₁) to consist of two parts. First, in section 2.1, I consider how Beardsley distinguishes critical from non-critical descriptions of a work of art. He claims that critical descriptions ascribe to a work of art perceptual features only. I examine this thesis in section 2.2., and argue that some critically relevant features of some works of art are non-perceptual. Since the presence or absence of such features in a work is not discernible by perceptual examination, (I₁) is therefore false.

In section 3, I turn to the perceptible features of works of art. First, I argue (contra Beardsley) that the perceptual features of a work are not necessarily those features one perceives without one's perception being influenced by external matters. Second, I argue that (I₁) and (I₂) are false even with regard to aesthetic features of works of art. Finally, in section 4, I consider those
critical mistakes that result from misidentification of the work of art or its viewing conditions. In such disputes, I argue, appeal to inspection of the work is beside the point. Appeal to the artist's intent is demanded in such cases.

2. Distinguishing Critical from Non-Critical Descriptions

I here examine Beardsley's view as to how critical descriptions are to be distinguished from non-critical descriptions. In section 2.1 I explicate his view, and in section 2.2, I criticize it.

2.1 The Aesthetic Object

The truth of (I₁) and (I₂) depend on what counts as a critical description. "A 'critical statement'," Beardsley claims, "is any statement about a work of art." But consider the following statements about Renoir's *Three Bathers*:

1. It is an oil painting.
2. It contains some lovely flesh tones.
3. It was painted in 1892.
4. It is full of flowing movement.
5. It is painted on canvas.
6. It is on a wall in the Cleveland Museum of Art.
7. It is worth a great deal of money.
8. It was painted by a brilliant man.
If (3), (5), (6), (7) and (8) are critical statements, (I₁) is false, for confirming the truth of these demands that one engage in sociological or psychological research. External evidence is crucial to the verification of these claims, and any conflicting evidence that is yielded by just looking at that work would not in every case override such external evidence. An 1892 dating of the Three Bathers in a Renoir letter would be stronger evidence as to its date of completion than the fact, for example, that it looked to be of a later period in his artistic career. Thus, if (3) is a critical claim, (I₂) is also false.

It is necessary, therefore, for the internalist either to deny that (3), (5) and (6)-(8) are critical statements or to in some way specify the sub-class of critical statements to which (I₁ and (I₂) apply.

Toward this end, Beardsley argues that the statements in question are not critical statements because they are not about the work of art which is Renoir's Three Bathers. The referent of the pronoun 'it' is not the same throughout (1)-(8). In (1), (3), and (5)-(8), Beardsley claims, the pronoun refers to the physical conglomeration of paint and canvas, while in (2) and (4) it refers to an object of a different ontological status: the aesthetic object. Works of art, according to Beardsley, are not physical objects
but aesthetic objects, and critical statements are about the latter. Since (1), (3), and (5)-(8) are about Renoir's painting _qua_ physical object, they are not about the work of art, and hence not critical statements.

A few remarks on Beardsley's notion of the aesthetic object are in order. One of the roles the aesthetic object plays in Beardsley's critical theory is clear. He holds that some critical statements are mistaken. Making a mistake about the properties had by an ordinary physical object—for example, judging that a plastic ashtray is made of glass—requires that the object have some property independent of one's judgment. The ashtray is plastic even if one judges otherwise. Now, Beardsley holds that critical statements are not about physical objects (judging a painting to be balanced is not to judge how that mix of wood, paint and canvas will hang from a central point), and thus, if mistakes are to be possible, there must be some entity whose qualities are in some sense "stable," that is, whose qualities are independent of one's judgment of their presence or absence. The aesthetic object is an _object_ in at least this role: it serves to fix the qualities properly ascribable to a work of art, hence making judgments about those qualities objectively true or false.
The aesthetic object is an object of a special ontological status. It is neither a physical object for a mental phenomenon. Some may find its existence dubious. Its use, moreover, makes Beardsley's arguments less clear. I believe, however, that the general direction of his arguments can be understood without reference to it. After considering his claims about the aesthetic object relevant to distinguishing critical from non-critical statements, I will present an approach which, although comparable concerning the range of critical descriptions, does not require reference to the aesthetic object.

First, Beardsley makes the general distinction between what he calls the perceptual object and its physical basis. A perceptual object, he notes, "is an object some of whose qualities, at least, are open to direct sensory awareness." The ashtray before me, for instance, has certain qualities qua a perceptual object: its color, shape and texture, for example. As a perceptual object my ashtray is green, square, and smooth, for these are the qualities of the ashtray that are perceivable. Besides the perceptual ashtray, Beardsley argues, there is the physical ashtray "whose properties are discoverable not by direct sensation but by weighing, measuring, cutting, burning, etc." The physical ashtray before me weighs one-half pound, is 4 inches square and 1 inch deep, is flame-resistant, etc.
Beardsley's reasons for positing a perceptual object can best be seen by considering his arguments for positing the aesthetic object, a type of perceptual object. We often, of course, speak of an art work's physical characteristics--its being of a certain size and shape, being made of marble, paint, or clay, etc. Sometimes, however, other claims we make about a work of art contradict such descriptions. We might reasonably say of a painting (though perhaps not in the same breath) both that it is flat and that it has great depth. Likewise, while it is true that the soundwaves of a piece of music increase in amplitude, it is not true that the music increases in amplitude. Given that a painting is actually flat or that the sound waves which make up a piece of music can increase in amplitude, it cannot be the case that the music is identical to its soundwaves, nor the painting--which has great depth--be identical to a flat piece of canvas. The painting qua perceptual object has great depth, its physical basis does not. Soundwaves are the physical basis of a perceptual object, the music we hear.

Critical descriptions, for Beardsley, describe a work of art as an aesthetic object, which is to describe it as a perceptual object. "To speak of [a] sculpture as an aesthetic object would be to speak of it in respect to its perceptual qualities." One can, however, speak of how a
particular sculpture came to have the perceptual qualities it does have. Consider the claim

(9) The warm glow of Michaelangelo's Pieta results from its marble being polished.

(9) is about the Pieta's warm glow, a perceptual quality of that statue. It is thus about the Pieta as aesthetic object. Yet if (9) is a critical description of the Pieta, (I) is false in that external evidence is necessary for the verification of (9). Beardsley thus distinguishes external statements about the aesthetic object ("statements about the causes and effects of an aesthetic object") from internal statements (statements "about the aesthetic object as such: its blueness, its 'meaning,' its beauty."). A critical statement, finally, he defines as "an internal statement about the aesthetic object." (9) is an external statement about the aesthetic object which is the Pieta. It is therefore not a critical statement and the problem suggested is avoided.

Note that Beardsley's definition of 'critical statement' is meant to cover critical descriptions (e.g., that a work is blue), critical interpretations (e.g., that a work 'means' such-and-such), and critical evaluations (e.g., that a work is beautiful). My focus in this chapter is, of course, the first type of critical statement. As I noted in Chapter I, Beardsley distinguishes between
description and interpretation in terms of their propositional content. A critical description differs from a critical interpretation in that the latter ascribes to a work some semantic relation. A critical description is thus an internal statement about an aesthetic object which ascribes to it some non-semantic feature.

2.2 Objections to Beardsley's Distinction

In this section, I will attempt, first, to clarify Beardsley's definition of critical description and to show its reference to the aesthetic object is unnecessary. Secondly, I will argue that his definition is too narrow, that some clear cases of critical descriptions do not meet his definition. The cases of critical description I offer, moreover, are statements which require external evidence for their verification, and thereby show that \( I_1 \) is false.

Beardsley's definition of critical descriptions does not by itself give one sufficient means to determine whether, for example, "Renoir's Three Bathers is an oil painting" is a critical description of that work. First, one must determine if that statement is an "internal" or "external" statement. In order to determine this, one must first know whether 'being an oil painting' is a quality properly ascribable to an aesthetic object as such. Knowing this, finally, requires that one know the type of
qualities the aesthetic object as such is capable of having. Well, an aesthetic object is a perceptual object; its only qualities are perceptual qualities. Critical descriptions, then, are those and only those statements which ascribe a perceptual feature to a work of art. We can thus take the notion of the aesthetic object to play merely an intermediary role in distinguishing critical from non-critical descriptions. "Renoir's Three Bathers is an oil painting" is not a critical description of that work because being an oil painting is not (at least by Beardsley's lights) a perceptual feature. On the other hand, "Renoir's Three Bathers is full of flowing movement" is a critical description in that the characteristic here ascribed to the Three Bathers is a perceptual characteristic of that work.

There are difficulties here. Noting a perceptual feature of a work is not sufficient for making a critical remark. The claim "Renoir's Three Bathers feels flat" ascribes to that painting a perceptual feature, but it is not a critical description. That Michaelangelo's Pieta looks like it weighs over a ton is one of its perceptual features, but clearly that characteristic is critically irrelevant. It will, however, suit my purpose
here if we consider only what Beardsley would take to be a necessary condition for a statement's being a critical description:

(CD) All critical descriptions are statements which ascribe a perceptual feature to a work of art.

In Chapter I, I argued that critical descriptions are best construed as statements which specify (non-semantic) features of a work that are relevant to our understanding or evaluating it as art. One of Beardsley's remarks suggests that he is willing to accept this claim. If the critic

plans to interpret or evaluate the work then he must be prepared to give at least a partial description of it--to point out clearly those characteristics upon which its interpretable significance or its aesthetic worth depends. 16

Beardsley's mistake, as I see it, is his assumption that only a work's perceptual features are relevant to our understanding of it or its worth as art. That he makes the normative assumption is clear:

In our description of the aesthetic object we are interested in the perceivable properties. (Italics are mine.)
To describe the perceptual painting as such is to say nothing about how its physical basis was produced—whether the colors were painted on, dripped on, splashed on, blown on, thrown on, photographed, engraved, drawn, or merely spilled. What matters is the visible result.18

(Italics are mine.)

I shall now argue that not all critical descriptions ascribe perceptual features to a work of art. Knowledge of some features of some works of art crucial to our understanding and evaluating them are not perceptual features.

Consider, for example, Marcel Duchamp's Fountain. Were one to interpret or evaluate that work solely in terms of its perceptual features—its smooth and shiny surface qualities—one would surely not have succeeded in understanding it, nor would one be in a position to properly evaluate it. Similarly, Jean Arp's Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance cannot be fully understood or properly evaluated via critical description which focused on its visual appearance to the neglect of the origin of that appearance. And if one rejects (or for that matter, praises) the music of John Cage without knowledge of the role of chance in its composition, this would be a mistake; it would show, that is, a lack of understanding of Cage's work.
In an article on chance art, Beardsley says in relation to Cage's music,

I suppose one could produce a pudding by mixing arbitrarily chosen ingredients according to a table of random numbers or the Chinese dice. But I can't imagine many people being persuaded that they ought to eat the results simply on account of the method of cooking, whatever its relation to Planck's constant or Dr. Suzuki's Koans. Why should we have lower standards when it comes to music?

Beardsley approaches Cage's music looking for "melody, harmony, rhythm, and larger structural relationships," and, of course, he does not find them. He is, we would say, looking for the wrong thing, and as a result he fails both to understand or appreciate Cage's work. That the music is produced by chance methods is a central feature of that work, and any adequate critical account of Cage's work must therefore include description of this aspect of it.

Many such examples, where a description of the process of creation is a prerequisite for a complete account of a work, could be drawn from contemporary "process art," a genre whose very label suggests that one focus on the origin of an artifact rather than on the perceptual features of the artifact itself. Harold Rosenberg remarks that "the function of art in our time is not to please
the senses, but to provide a fundamental investigation of art and reality"—what he calls "de-aestheticized" art. "The principle common to all cases of de-aestheticized art," he notes, "is that the finished product, if any, is of less significance than the procedures that brought the work into being, of which it is the trace." If one accepts such works as art—and to deny them this status would be to reject many notable works of the past twenty years—one must reject (CD).

A few, less avant garde, cases are also worth noting. Were one to take recent Photo-Realist paintings for actual photographs rather than paintings, one would not be in a position to fully understand or evaluate these works. Were it discovered that some of these works now taken to be paintings were in fact photographs, much of the criticism previously written about them would be unacceptable. That these works are paint on canvas rather than photographs—even if the two were perceptually indiscernible—makes a difference in our understanding of them. Jackson Pollock's Number One and a perceptual counterpart meticulously rendered in trompe l'oeil fashion demand different critical treatments. The fact that in the former the paint is "dripped on, splashed on, [and] thrown on" does matter even though the visible result is the same for both paintings.
It follows from these considerations, then, that some claims relevant to the understanding, evaluation, or appreciation of a work ascribe to the work a characteristic which is not a perceptual feature. "Arp's Collage was produced in part by chance processes," is a critical description of this type. That description of Arp's work, moreover, cannot be verified by perceptual examination of Arp's Collage. Thus, the internalist thesis, \( I_1 \), is false—some critical descriptions require external evidence for their verification.

I now turn my attention to the internalist thesis with regard to those critical descriptions which do ascribe to a work some perceptual feature.

3. The Influence of Beliefs on Perception

In the preceding section, we saw that Beardsley holds critical descriptions to describe the aesthetic object as such, that the features of a work of art qua aesthetic object are its perceptual features, and hence that

\[
(CD) \text{All critical descriptions are statements which ascribe a perceptual feature to a work of art.}
\]

If \( CD \) were true, the truth of internalism with respect to critical descriptions would depend on whether external evidence is ever required to determine the truth of an
ascription of a perceptual feature. (CD) together with the assumption that all perceptual features of a work of art can be verified without recourse to external evidence entail Beardsley's internalist thesis:

\[ (I_1) \text{ Direct inspection of a work of art (by an individual with the requisite perceptual sensibilities, in normal lighting, etc.) is sufficient for confirming or disconfirming any critical description of that work.} \]

Can we decide without knowledge of external facts about a work of art whether or not it is, for example, dynamic? The answer to this question might at first seem obvious—it surely seems that one can look at a work of art, not knowing who made it, how or where it was made, and see that it is or is not dynamic. This quick answer, however, ignores the fact that what one sees in a work of art—or in any case—depends to some extent on what one otherwise (consciously or unconsciously) believes about it. This is a psychological thesis to which Beardsley admits. He argues, however, that although background knowledge influences perception, if one's seeing a feature in a work is the result of background beliefs concerning its physical make-up or genesis, that feature cannot be truly ascribed to a work.
In section 3.1 below, I elaborate on Beardsley's defense of this claim, and argue that in some cases one's beliefs about a work's physical basis or process of creation can legitimately influence one's perception of a work. Such influences, that is, do not in every case lead to incorrect descriptions of a work's perceptual features. In section 3.2, I argue that \((I_1)\) is false, that external evidence is required in at least some cases to determine what aesthetic predicates are properly ascribable to a work of art. My discussion there also suffices to show that the second internalist thesis, \((I_2)\), is also false.

3.1 The Perceptual Features of a Work of Art

Beardsley refers to the perceptual features of a work of art as being "given," as being "what appears," as being "open to direct sensory awareness." This suggests that he has in mind features the perception of which is non-inferential or, perhaps, involves inference of little complexity. One difference in seeing a shape in a painting to be blue, seeing the painting to be balanced, and seeing it to be Cubist, is the difference in the range and complexity of the background beliefs one brings to bear in perceiving each. When Clive Bell remarks that

to appreciate a work of art we need bring nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with
he appears to suggest that to fully appreciate a work of art one need only point one's eyes in the appropriate direction and be aesthetically affected.

To claim that all the significant features of a work of art are features "open to direct sensory awareness" would be to join Bell in his mistake, namely, to under-emphasize the fact that what one sees is in every case (consciously or unconsciously) influenced by one's anticipations and memories. Perceiving is an active process in which a multitude of preconceptions are brought to bear. Nelson Goodman makes this point quite eloquently:

The eye comes always ancient to its work, obsessed by its own past. . . . Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice. It selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyzes, constructs. It does not so much mirror as take and make; and what it takes and makes it sees not bare, as items without attributes, but as things, as food, as people, as enemies, as stars, as weapons. Nothing is seen nakedly or naked.

I will not argue for this thesis of perceptual psychology. Yet it is clear that to deny the influence of one's background beliefs on one's perception of a work of art
would be, at the very least, to sterilize our experience of it. Beardsley is aware of this fact. "We do not come to the object cold," he notes, and

our capacity to respond richly and fully to aesthetic objects depends upon a large appreceptive mass. This may include some previous acquaintance with the general style of the work, or of other works to which it alludes, or of works with which it sharply contrasts. All this may be relevant information for the perceiver [who hopes to correctly perceive a work of art].

It is thus somewhat misleading when Beardsley elsewhere characterizes the features of the aesthetic object as being open to direct sensory awareness. Background information plays an important role in what one sees when one views a work of art. It is Beardsley's position, however, that not all such information should influence our perception of art, for some such influences lead to mistake.

Now, one can make a mistake about the perceptual features of a work of art for different reasons. Bad lighting, physiological abnormalities, or a lack of discriminatory capacity can lead one to describe a work incorrectly. Disregarding mistakes that result from these factors, another source of error is possible. Sometimes one's knowledge of a work's genesis can adversely influence one's perception of a work. An individual can be so
impressed by an artist's pronouncements about his/her work, or perhaps so romanticizes an artist's life, that he/she sees things in a work that are not there. Knowing the turmoil of Van Gogh's life and his struggle with insanity might predispose one to see his *Wheatfield with Crows* as more tumultuous than it really is. The true features of that work, Beardsley claims, are those seen without such a bias. It is his contention that the actual perceptual features of a work of art are those and only those features that one can perceive in the work given that seeing the features does not require background knowledge concerning the work's physical make-up or origins:

What is not relevant [to the perception of art] is specifically information about the physical basis, the physical process of creation, and the biographical background.24

An example Beardsley offers will help illustrate what he has in mind here. Consider an individual, call him B, who makes an aesthetic judgment concerning a piece of architecture. Suppose that B knows that the structural strength of the building results not from its outwardly visible stonework, but from a hidden steel understructure. B sees the building in question as cheap, vulgar, insincere and dishonest. Although B sees these features in the building, they are not properly ascribable to the building
qua aesthetic object. Although "knowledge of the physical conditions of an aesthetic object may in fact affect the way it appears to us," says Beardsley, features the awareness of which "depend upon knowledge of their causal conditions, whether physical or psychological" are not features of a work of art qua aesthetic object. B's seeing the building as dishonest as a result of his knowledge of some physical characteristic of the building (that it had a steel understructure), and hence "dishonesty" is not a feature of the building qua aesthetic object.

I will agree with Beardsley that knowledge of external facts can sometimes distort one's perception of a work of art. This does not, however, give us reason to regard the influence of this knowledge as always misleading. Further argument is needed. In defense of his proposal, Beardsley argues that

Anyone who attributes to aesthetic objects all the phenomenal characteristics induced by the knowledge of the personalities of artists and their techniques is faced with an uncomfortable dilemma. He may say that the characteristics of the object change as historical knowledge changes; which is an odd way of speaking. Or he may say that the "true" object is the one that contains all the phenomenal characteristics that would be seen in its presentations by anyone who knew all the facts about its causal conditions. This would seem to imply that we can actually know little of
the "true" nature of all ancient and medieval, and most modern, works of fine art, even works that we can study for years in a good state of preservation.26

First note that this dilemma is a dilemma only for those who would hold that the true features of a work of art are those that would be seen by one who knows all external facts about a work. Against that position the dilemma does indeed seem successful. One who accepts the view in question must either give up the stability of art works over time, or hold that the features of works of art remain constant, yet that complete understanding of most works is beyond our grasp. I agree with Beardsley that either consequence is untenable.

As an argument for Beardsley's position, however, the dilemma he offers is unsuccessful. Its success presupposes another dilemma, namely, that either one accept Beardsley's position—that no external facts are relevant to the perception of art—or that all external facts are significant. But this latter dilemma is a false dilemma. It ignores the possibility that our conscious or unconscious awareness of some external facts are crucial to our perceiving a work of art correctly.

A statue made of cheese might look very different to one who knows it to be made of cheese than to one who
believes it to be cast in bronze. Concerning this, Beardsley claims that

if a perfect imitation of a bronze statue be carved from cheese, so that to sight and touch no difference could appear—let us ignore the smell—then as an aesthetic object the imitation is exactly similar to the original, and the characteristics in which they may appear otherwise to people who know of their actual physical basis are not their characteristics at all. 27

Suppose, however, that a bronze statue of Ronald Reagan was commissioned to honor his service as president. An imitation of that statue made of government surplus cheese might be perceptually indistinguishable to those who had no knowledge of its physical understructure. The two statues, however, would certainly not have identical artistically relevant features. The fact that the original is made of bronze might be of little relevance to its assessment. But note how our approach to the second, cheese, statue would be different. First—and this is a matter of interpretation, not description—the fact that the imitation of the bronze statue is made of government surplus cheese makes it best construed as a political statement (about, say Reaganomics). The fact that the statue is made of cheese certainly has interpretable significance, and to fail to
take note that it is made of cheese would be to miss its point.

In this case, moreover, knowledge of the statue's physical basis would, more than likely, influence how one sees that work. It is Beardsley's point that our knowledge of the statue's physical basis would affect our perception of it, but his insistence in this case that that influence leads us to see the statue incorrectly is, I think, mistaken. Here, perhaps, I exaggerate that influence, but if Reagan looked pensive in the bronze, but uneasy in cheese, one would not be mistaken in describing each statue accordingly. Beardsley's demand is that in perceiving the cheese statue we "either forget . . . or abstract from" our knowledge it is made of cheese. But this, in turn, is to require that when we perceive the statue that we "forget" our interpretation of it.

Now, Beardsley might object that if we allow such influence in this case, why not in the case where the comparable (perceptually indiscernible) statues are made of bronze and gold? If the physical basis of a work is only sometimes relevant, how are we to distinguish the cases in which it is from those to which it is not? Let me suggest an answer. In the case at hand the fact that the statue is made of cheese has a bearing on our overall understanding of it. As I noted, the fact that the statue is made of cheese has interpretable significance, and this,
it seems to me, is the reason why that knowledge can legiti-
mately affect our perception of it. Would our under-
standing of a similar statue in gold require our noting
that it was made of gold? If so, that fact might legiti-
mately influence the way we see it.

Consider Robert Rauschenberg's work *Erased de Kooning
Drawing*. The work is what its title suggests: Rauschenberg
obtained a pencil drawing of Willem de Kooning and erased
it. Here, again, external matters would influence our
perception. Supposing one could not tell by inspection
alone that this work was an erased drawing, what one saw in
looking at this work would depend on whether one knew its
process of creation. The process of creation here has
interpretable significance, and I see no reason to suppose
that if one saw it in light of one's knowledge of this
process, one would be liable to mistake concerning its
perceptual features.

This and many of the cases I have discussed thus far
in my opposition to Beardsley—cases, that is, where the
medium or process of creation has major significance in a
work—are typical of much contemporary art, but atypical
of art in general. I now turn to a discussion of the
ascriptions of aesthetic predicates, and argue that
background assumptions concerning a work's origin play a crucial role in our determining what aesthetic features are properly attributed to a work of art.

3.2 Aesthetic Judgments and External Evidence

In *The Story of Modern Art*, Norbert Lynton remarks that Piet Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* "seems to echo the scale of the country as well as the vividness of New York and the pulse of its music." I would not think that this remark is atypical of critical remarks in general—a comparison is made between the work and something with which the reader is assumed familiar. Strictly speaking, of course, one might have to take a trip to New York or listen to some music before one could assess Lynton's description. To avoid this complexity, however, let us consider instead the more simple claim that Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* is dynamic. Can one without knowledge of its origins determine that *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* is dynamic?

Again, what one sees by direct inspection will depend on one's background information; in particular, whether one sees *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* as dynamic will depend on the works with which one, perhaps unconsciously, contrasts it. Ernst Gombrich makes this point in *Art and Illusion*:
In most of us the name of Mondrian conjures up the expectation of severity, of an art of straight lines and a few primary colors in carefully balanced rectangles. Seen against this background, the boogie-woogie picture gives indeed the impression of gay abandon. It is so much less severe than the alternative we have in mind that we have no hesitation in matching it in our mind with this style of popular music. But this impression is in fact grounded on our knowledge of the restricted choice open to the artist within his self-imposed discipline. Let us imagine for a moment that we were told the painting is by Severini, who is known for his futuristic paintings that try to capture the rhythm of dance music in works of brilliant chaos. Would we then still feel the Mondrian belongs in the pigeon-hole with boogiewoogie?29

What we see in the Mondrian depends, as Gombrich would put it, on the "mental set" with which we approach it.

What does (I^) tell us about an imagined dispute between one who describes Broadway Boogie-Woogie as dynamic, and another, familiar only with the works of Severini, who describes that painting as static or severe? Given the different psychological set of each, appeal to perceptual inspection of the work would apparently be of no help—the individual familiar with the works of Mondrian would see it as dynamic, the individual familiar only with the work of Severini would see it as severe. The aesthetic features one sees within any work of art depend to a large extent upon other works of art with which one is familiar.
In "Categories of Art," Kendall Walton offers a fairly detailed account of how our knowledge of other art—specifically, the way we are accustomed to categorizing works of art—affects our perception of the aesthetic qualities of a work. A 'category of art,' as he uses the phrase, is a class of art works membership in which can be determined solely by features that can be perceived within a work (when viewed under normal conditions). The categories of painting, sculpture, impressionist paintings, cubist paintings, Gothic architecture, classical sonatas, and music in the style of late Beethoven are among the examples Walton offers.

For all categories of art, there will be some features that a work must have in order to be a member of that category. Such features Walton calls standard features. "A feature of a work of art is standard with respect to a (perceptually distinguishable) category just in case it is among those in virtue of which works in that category belong to that category." The property of being flat, for example, would be a standard feature of the category of painting since being non-flat would tend to disqualify a work from that category. A feature is a variable feature with respect to a category if and only if it is irrelevant to a work's belonging to that category.
brown, for example, is a variable feature of the category of painting—having that feature neither qualifies nor tends to disqualify a work from that category. Finally, some features of works of art are contra-standard with respect to a given category. Contra-standard features are those features which tend to disqualify a work from a given category. Having moving parts, for instance, is contra-standard with respect to the category of painting.

Now, Walton offers the following psychological thesis:

What aesthetic properties a work seems to have, what aesthetic effect it has on us, how it strikes us aesthetically often depends (in part) on which of its features are standard, which variable, and which contra-standard.³¹

In support of this thesis he offers several examples. Consider, for instance, our reaction to the bust of a Roman emperor—we take it to resemble a man with such-and-such facial features. We do not take it to resemble a completely motionless man, severed at the waist. The reason we do not is that with respect to the category of busts, motionlessness and ending at the chest are standard features with respect to busts. It is our seeing it as a bust which makes such features irrelevant to what the bust resembles and hence represents.
Consider also a photograph of a dancer. Again, we do not take this to represent a motionless person—stillness is standard to the category of still photographs. Yet were the perceptually indistinguishable image to occur within a motion picture (if, for example, the dancer in a film were moving very slowly almost to the point of stopping), our reaction to it would be quite different than our reaction to the still photograph. The latter dancer would not appear frozen as motionlessness is standard to photographs. On the other hand, motionlessness is a variable feature relative to motion pictures. For this reason, Walton claims, we would find the film of a dancer moving very slowly studied, calm, deliberate and laborious, while we find the photograph of the dancer dynamic, energetic, flowing, or frenzied.\(^{32}\)

It is a standard feature of the tones of a piano that they are of small duration—after a key is struck, the tone quickly becomes inaudible. This fact about the nature of the instrument has a bearing on the aesthetic features we hear in the music.

If a singer or violinist should produce sounds even approaching a piano’s in suddenness of demise, they would be nerve-wrackingly sharp and percussive—anything but cantabile or lyrical! Yet piano music can be cantabile, legato, or lyrical nevertheless.\(^{33}\)
Were we to take a piece of piano music as violin music (to hear it as being in the category of violin music), the fact that quick diminution of tones is standard to the music of the former instrument would alter the aesthetic effect it has on us. "The character of [a musical passage] is determined not merely by the 'absolute' nature of the sounds, but by that in relation to the standard property of what piano tones can be like." Such is the case also when we compare how we hear violin music as contrasted with computer generated music. The vivacity of a piece of music will depend not on the absolute speed of the music, but upon the limits the particular medium places on its speed. While the actual tempo of a passage on a violin might be considerably slower than a passage electronically produced, the fact that the speed of electronically generated music is virtually unlimited will tend to make us hear it as less energetic than the violin passage of a comparable absolute tempo.

There is one example that Walton offers that I find most congenial to my discussion here. He asks us to imagine

a society which does not have an established medium of painting, but does produce a kind of work called guernicas. Guernicas are like versions of Picasso's "Guernica," but the surfaces are molded
to protrude from the wall like relief maps of different kinds of terrain. Some guernicas have rolling surfaces, others are sharp and jagged, still others contain several relatively flat planes of various angles to each other, and so forth. Picasso's "Guernica" would be counted as a guernica in this society—a perfectly flat one—rather than as a painting.  

Note, firstly, that the standard, variable, and contra-standard features of Picasso's "Guernica" with respect to the category of painting would differ from those with respect to the category of guernicas. Its flatness would be variable relative to the category of guernicas, yet standard with respect to the category of paintings. Its colors and shapes would be standard relative to the category of guernicas, yet variable relative to the category of paintings. Since one's aesthetic reaction differs depending on the category in which one sees a work, the aesthetic features one would be inclined to attribute to Picasso's "Guernica" would depend on in which category one took that work to be.

It seems violent, dynamic, vital, disturbing to us. But I imagine it would strike them as cold, stark, lifeless, or serene and restful, or perhaps bland, dull, boring—but in any case not violent, dynamic, and vital. We do not pay attention to or take note of "Guernica"'s flatness;
this is a feature we take for granted in paintings, as it were. But for the other society this is "Guernica"'s most striking and noteworthy characteristic—what is expressive about it. Conversely, "Guernica"'s color patches, which we find noteworthy and expressive, are insignificant to them.36

The question that remains, then, is which set of features truly describes Picasso's "Guernica"—is it violent, dynamic and vital or cold, stark and lifeless? One option is to adopt a relativism of aesthetic features. That is, we cannot say simply that "Guernica" is violent, but rather, it is violent as a painting and lifeless as a guernica. Walton rejects this line because it does not allow aesthetic judgments to be mistaken often enough. It would certainly be natural to consider a person who calls "Guernica" stark, cold, or dull, because he sees it as a guernica, to be mistaken: he misunderstands the work because he is looking at it in the wrong way.37

There are correct and incorrect categories in which to perceive a work, and to perceive Picasso's "Guernica" as a guernica is to perceive it within the incorrect category. For this reason, the aesthetic judgments of one who perceives Picasso's "Guernica" as a guernica are mistaken.

More generally, for any work of art there will be some category relative to which that work's aesthetic
features would appear to be different from those we would normally ascribe to it. The cases here considered thus present a dilemma for Beardsley's position. To use the example of Picasso's "Guernica," either the aesthetic properties of that work are relative--vary from culture to culture or age to age--or facts about its origin are crucial to determining the aesthetic features it possesses. Beardsley must therefore either give up his objectivist stance or he must give up internalism with respect to aesthetic properties. If the ascription of aesthetic features of a work are subject to mistake (at least with the frequency we suppose in normal practice), then direct inspection of the work is not sufficient to determine what those features are.

It is not the case, therefore, that a critic's ascription of an aesthetic predicate to a work is justified if he/she can get one to see that work as having that aesthetic feature by referring to its internal features. There can be more than one way to see a work, each of which might make a different aesthetic description seem applicable. The critic must, strictly speaking, further justify his description of a work by citing external evidence that the way he sees the work is the appropriate way to see it. Thus, internal evidence is not sufficient for determining
the truth of all critical descriptions; \( I_1 \), that is, is false. With this the case, moreover, external evidence can override the justification of a critical description by direct inspection. If in making a descriptive judgment one sees a work from the perspective of a category inappropriate to it, external evidence (which determines the backdrop against which a work is properly seen) can undermine the aesthetic judgment which depends on such a misperception. Thus, \( I_2 \) is also false.

In conclusion to this section, I would like to suggest a brief explanation of the piece of criticism with which this chapter began. How is Avery's intent ("we are not meant to read the subject [in his paintings] straightaway") relevant to confirming Mellow's claim that in Avery's work there is a visual interplay of form and content? First of all, it is clear that most of us who are familiar with modern abstract art will see this interplay within Avery's paintings. Some, however, are not so accustomed to viewing less than realistic art. To use Walton's terminology, some would see all paintings in the category of "realistic representation." Within this category, one's not seeing a painting's subject matter straightaway is a defect, a sign of an inferior work. As I see it, Mellow's noting Avery's intent is an attempt to undercut this
misunderstanding of Avery's work (and the improper evaluation that would follow). That Avery did not intend his paintings to be realistic renderings eliminates that way of seeing Avery's work as a legitimate way of seeing them. I shall have more to say about why an artist's intent is in this way relevant in Chapter IV.

4. Identifying the Work, Normal Conditions, and Direct Inspection

Another important point concerning \((I_1)\) can be made. Suppose \((I_1)\) were true, that direct inspection of a work would suffice for one's determining whether a critical description of it were true. Even so, critical disputes could still arise: disputes over what constitutes the work or over what are its appropriate viewing conditions. In settling disputes such as these, direct inspection is important, for the work and its appropriate viewing conditions must be ascertained before inspection of it can take place. Matters of genesis must be brought into play in such circumstances.

Arthur Danto relays a personal anecdote which illustrates this point.

Two works of the gifted artist Eva Hesse were shown in the same show as Corner-Piece. The two were in a single alcove. One consisted in a set of irregular
cylinders made of fiberglass, which were set in a kind of congregation on the floor of the alcove. The other was a sort of curved wire that went from floor to wall in a striking curve; there were pieces of some unidentifiable stuff attached to the curve at what appeared to be random intervals. When I spied the alcove, I saw what I thought was a single work with two main components, rather than two distinct works shown together by curatorial decision. Were it a single work, there would be a bright contrast between the soaring curve and the squat herd of dopy cylin- droids. It could almost be a political allegory.38

It might be determinable by direct inspection whether or not "the work" as viewed by Danto contained a bright contrast. Yet Danto had nonetheless made an interpretive mistake. Deciding the truth of "Corner-piece contains a bright contrast," demands that one first pinpoint the work itself, and doing so requires external evidence. In this case, the word of Eva Hesse—or some other evidence relevant to her intent—would appear to be the final court of appeal.

In most cases, of course, we can identify with little trouble—without sociological investigation—the "borders" of a work, but we do so only in light of our knowledge of other works of art. Suppose it was the case that traditionally whenever an artist created a painting, he/she either wrote or chose a musical composition to accompany
the viewing of the painting. A work of this genre would have two interrelated parts, its visual and auditory components. Under such conditions, were one to find a painting in one's attic one would most likely take it to be incomplete, incapable of being fully understood or properly evaluated in lieu of its missing part.

The difficulties with relying on direct inspection do not end, moreover, once the boundaries of a work have been identified. The conditions under which a work of art is viewed can, of course, alter the aesthetic predicates one could reasonably apply to it. \( I_1 \) presupposes our knowing the conditions appropriate to the viewing of a work, yet this knowledge requires external evidence. An artist works with a particular viewing condition in mind, and the features of his/her work will vary accordingly. A statue which is to be placed in an elevated position within a church, for example, will have to be shaped quite differently than one to be viewed at ground level. Were such a statue displayed at eye level within a museum setting, it might most appropriately be described as grotesque. But this would be to misdescribe it. Reasonable grounds for rejecting this description, moreover, would be that it was not intended to be viewed from ground level.
To give an extraordinary, yet actual case, consider the paintings of Georg Baselitz, whose imagery is always upside down. His *Drinker with Bottle* (1981), for example, appears to be an inverted painting of a man next to a bottle on a table. Suppose one were to find this painting in one's attic. Most would, on deciding to hang it, hang it "upside down," that is, with the bottle and face in the picture's upper half. Most would, therefore, fail to understand Baselitz's painting, fail to see its "joining of style and stupidity." Furthermore, this misunderstanding would be discoverable only by going outside the work, by ascertaining how Baselitz intended *Drinker with Bottle* to be viewed.
III. INTERNALISM AND CRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS

When we wish to gain a fuller understanding of a poem or other literary work, we believe that what literary critics have to say about that work will be of help. A cursory reading of most poems will suggest several interpretations that might apply. If a literary critic is a good critic, he or she will be able to discern which reading or readings of a poem are more nearly correct. We do not, moreover, expect the critic merely to tell us the reading of a text that he or she enjoys most. The critic's activity is a rational activity. We expect an interpretation to be justified.

For an activity to be a rational activity, it must be guided by norms. If adjudication among different interpretations is a rational activity, then the practice of criticism must be guided by principles. The possibility of criticism, says Beardsley, depends

\[\text{on the availability of a kind of method or principled procedure by which proposed interpretations can be tested and can be shown to succeed or fail as attempts to make textual meanings explicit.}\]

The subject of this chapter is the type of norms that the practice of literary criticism presupposes. I shall not,
however, offer a detailed account of correct critical procedure. Rather, I will focus on the question of whether an author's beliefs and attitudes can be used as evidence in deciding which interpretation of a literary work is its correct interpretation.

Some philosophers of criticism have argued that psychological facts about an author have no legitimate bearing on how his work is to be interpreted. The only evidence that can justify a literary interpretation is evidence "internal" to the text. An author's intentions are claimed to be irrelevant in this respect. This view I shall refer to as internalism or anti-intentionalism. Though other authors who hold this view will be mentioned, the view of Monroe Beardsley will be my primary concern. It was his and William K. Wimsatt's article, "The Intentional Fallacy," which originated the philosophical debate that is the subject of this chapter. Beardsley has since defended the anti-intentionalist position in numerous books and articles.

The contrary view—that facts about an author's life or psychology are pertinent to settling interpretive disputes—I call externalism or intentionalism. The major proponent of this view that I consider below is E. D. Hirsch. It is his view, with some modification, that I
here defend. I will draw upon the remarks of the intentionalist P. D. Juhl in my defense.

1. Some Preliminary Remarks

Before entering into a discussion of the intentionalist/anti-intentionalist debate, some preliminary matters require attention. First, some have suggested that the issue is at bottom merely a conflict of attitudes, and as such cannot be rationally resolved. This challenge must be addressed. Secondly, as the debate turns on the notion of authorial intention, I will spend a few paragraphs in the attempt to clarify that notion.

1.1 Can the Dispute be Resolved?

In Chapter I, I offered a sketch of the view of C. L. Stevenson that an interpretive claim is a normative claim. Again, it is Stevenson's view that the statement 'This passage in a poem means such-and-such' "translates into" 'This passage in the poem ought to be understood as saying such-and-such.' Thus when a critic offers an interpretation, he/she is taking a normative stance on how a poem or literary text ought to be read. If an interpretation is grounded on principles, it must in the end be grounded on a principle of the type, for example, 'Any poem ought to be understood as its author understood it.'
One could, in this light, treat the debate between the intentionalist and anti-intentionalist as a normative debate, i.e., as a debate over how literary texts ought to be read. Yet for the most part the debate has centered on the question, "What is the meaning of a literary text?" The apparent normative aspect has thus been left implicit, and for this reason the debate itself has come under attack. Says A. J. Ellis of the disputants in the debate:

> What in fact they are doing is offering recommendations how we ought to read poetry; each is recommending his own approach, but offering it disguised as a conceptual claim.³

There are different purposes with which one might approach a text—or construe what the text is. And in this light, suggests Jack W. Meiland,

> We now should no longer ask the old question, 'Which meaning is the meaning of the text?' but instead we should ask 'Which type of meaning is it important and valuable to pursue?' and 'Which type of text should we attempt to interpret?'⁴

It might be that if we take the intentionalist/anti-intentionalist debate to be at bottom this type of normative controversy, then there is no solution to the controversy because there is no one way that we ought to approach a literary text. Perhaps, as Stuart Hampshire suggests
(though in regard to principles of appreciation), there are no principles of criticism because, unlike our moral encounters, our encounters with art are "gratuitous." On the other hand, however, one might offer moral reasons for our construing texts one way rather than another. It might be argued, for example, that if we approach a text with the sole purpose of reaffirming our own perspective on the world, to the neglect of the author's, we wrongfully deny ourselves the knowledge a text might otherwise provide. In this same vein, Stevenson offers moral grounds for rejecting approaches to critical interpretation: an incorrect approach to criticism is one which is "indicative of habits of mind that no one ought to have."

I will here argue that there is a rational basis for settling the intentionalist/anti-intentionalist debate. I will criticize Ellis's arguments to the contrary.

I take the intentionalist/anti-intentionalist debate to concern the scope of the evidence relevant to the support of literary interpretations. Wimsatt and Beardsley label the intentional fallacy a fallacy in part to point what they take to be an unsound argument form. Concluding that a poem means such-and-such on the basis of
the fact that its author intended it to mean such-and-such is, they claim, an unwarranted inference in literary interpretation. The question, then, is whether there is rational grounds for deciding if such inferences are or are not warranted.

Now, Ellis's discussion of the dispute makes several references to the way knowledge of an author's intent inclines us to feel. When we learn that a poet's intent is incongruous with the way we had been reading a poem, we "feel unhappy," or perhaps we feel a "jolt." "This feeling of unhappiness," he says

may seem to indicate that we do in fact regard facts about the intentions of the author as relevant to our interpretation of his work. It is no good, I think, to reply here that if indeed we do feel like this, then the feeling is irrational and we ought to feel differently . . . . Someone who said that would seem to be thinking that there is some identifiable phenomenon, poetry, whose nature determines what should be the proper attitude to it. Isn't it that the complex of our attitudes defines for us what poetry is?8

First, what do our feelings have to do with whether or not an author's intent is evidence of what a poem means?

Let me offer an analogy. Consider— in analogy to the intentional fallacy—what is usually called the gambler's fallacy. Suppose one is betting on the flip of a fair coin. On finding out that the coin in use has
just been flipped one hundred times and every time come up tails, one might feel a psychological pull to bet heads. It is clear, however, that the preceding flips of the coin have no bearing on the probability of tails turning up on the following flip. To say that the feeling to alter one's betting strategy in light of the coin's preceding flips is irrational is elliptical for saying that one logically ought not to let the psychological pull mentioned affect how one bets.

Ellis is probably right when he notes that "most anti-intentionalists know what it is like to feel the force of that influence [of knowledge of an author's intention]." But what the anti-intentionalists take themselves to be pointing out is that, though the psychological pull of intent is present, its pull is contrary to the (logically) proper support of literary interpretations. For several reasons, what an author meant to say cannot be taken as evidence for what a literary text means.

The disanalogy here that Ellis might point out is that in the case of the gambler's fallacy, the inference in question concerns the probability of the coin's turning up heads or tails. This is a question of fact--at least there is, apart from the psychological pull, agreement on the actual probabilities. We decide that inference is fallacious on the basis of what we independently agree
beforehand are the actual probabilities in the case at hand. What the analogy misses is that in the case of interpretation, our attitudes toward poetry predetermine what is to count as a correct interpretation. To put it another way, my analogy presupposes that "there is some identifiable phenomenon, poetry, whose nature determines" what is to count as 'the meaning' of a poem. We can separate the probabilities of a coin's turning up heads from our psychological feeling as to what those probabilities are, but we cannot separate what counts as 'the meaning' of a poem from our attitudes about poetry.

In response, however, it is our attitudes toward poetry that have shaped the practice of criticism. And it is this practice to which we can turn to judge whether or not one's conception of 'the meaning' of a text is adequate. "Imagine," says Ellis

that I have always read Blake's Jerusalem in a way which is consistent, plausible and gives a worthwhile poem but which is quite at variance with the way that Blake himself understood it. Why should I not continue to read it as before? After all, it's my book. Why shouldn't I do with it as I please? Why should I give up something worthwhile for something that is no better and may indeed be less worthwhile.

Ignoring some complexities here, I am inclined to agree with Ellis—he may read Blake's poem however he wishes.
If one's chief purpose is enjoyment, one may read a poem any way one wishes—certainly in so doing one is not doing something wrong. One would not, for example, be doing something (morally?) wrong in taking Blake's *Jerusalem* to allude to the pitfalls of the capitalist system, if this allowed one to enjoy the poem even more. But this is not what Blake's poem is about. All participants in the dispute would agree to this. The practice of criticism has to a great extent formed our attitudes toward poetry. There are interpretations which can readily be recognized as incorrect. And on the basis of obviously correct or incorrect readings of texts, we can discern the principles our attitudes presuppose.

In order for Ellis to claim that his reading of *Jerusalem* is plausible, he must have some reasons in virtue of which he takes it to be plausible. Given that there is general agreement about what is and what is not an adequate reading of a poem, we can ask if the principles to which Ellis would appeal are in general applicable to all interpretation. That is, will the general principles he invokes to support his claim that his reading is plausible allow us to determine "the meaning" of other poems? When Ellis remarks that the critic
he suggests that there are just two options. We can take as our criterion for what a poem means to be either (a) what its author intended, or (b) the reading which yields the greatest aesthetic worth for the poem.

This is, however, to over-simplify the issue. If one claims that in every case a poem means what its author intended it to mean, one will in some cases be mistaken. There are clear cases in which we would normally say that that is not what a poem means. Likewise, there will be readings of poems which give them greater aesthetic worth, that are clearly unacceptable readings from the view of critical practice. We can judge suggested critical principles against the yardstick of what we would ordinarily count as correct or incorrect literary interpretations. There are of course borderline cases--interpretations which are not clearly correct or incorrect. But success of interpretive principles in clear cases warrants their use in the more controversial case.
1.2 The Nature of Authorial Intention

Throughout this chapter I make repeated reference to authorial intention. I will here try to clarify my use of that notion.

An author can have a wide variety of intentions when setting about to write a literary work. He might intend to write the best play ever written, to make enough money to move to Bermuda, to offer homage to God, to allude to some other literary work, to have the occurrence of the word 'blue' in his poem suggest sadness. "Intention," as Beardsley and Wimsatt used the term in "The Intentional Fallacy,

corresponds to what he intended in a formula which more or less explicitly has had wide acceptance. "In order to judge the poet's performance, we must know what he intended." Intention is the design or plan in the author's mind. Intention has obvious affinities for the author's attitude toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write.13

There are several different construals of intention presented here, and the question of the relevance to interpretation of each type might demand a different answer. If what is at issue is whether an author's initial "design or plan" has any bearing on interpretation, there are problems for the intentionalist at the start. Some writers more
than likely have no plan or design when they sit down to write, and of those that do, that plan is very likely to change while he writes. On the other hand, an author's attitude toward his work could be that he dreaded the mental strain that writing it involved; he may have felt bored or ecstatic. Finally, what makes an author write can be any number of things—an overbearing father or a desire to impress a first love. Facts about an author such as these, at least at first glance, do not have any direct bearing on what passages in his text mean.

The type of intention that does seem central to the question of the meaning of a literary work is what we might call an author's linguistic intentions. An author's linguistic intentions are what an author intended to say, or meant by the words used in his text. A simple example will illustrate what is meant here. Suppose I say, referring to a person in our presence, "I saw her duck." My statement, taken in isolation, is ambiguous. It might mean that I saw her pet fowl, or that I saw her lower her head. You might, in light of the ambiguity of my remark, ask what I meant, that is, what I intended to inform you of by my remark. Usually, of course, what a person means to say will coincide with what they succeed in saying. The individual who says "It's going to rain tonight,"
for example, usually intends to convey that it is going to rain tonight.

This is the type of intention I will have in mind when I refer to authorial intention below. I should note also that the various types of intention to which I earlier referred could be invoked as evidence of what an author's linguistic intentions were in writing a text.

2. The Anti-Intentionalist Position

The thesis of anti-intentionalism is most often stated negatively: what an author intended to convey within a literary work is irrelevant to the justification of a literary interpretation of that work. The positive thesis is more difficult to state succinctly. Beardsley offers what he calls The Principle of Autonomy: "Literary works are self-sufficient entities, whose properties are decisive in checking interpretations and judgments."15 A text is self-sufficient in the sense that its meaning is discernible by appeal to the rules or conventions of the language in which the text is written. "What a sentence means," says Beardsley, "depends not on the whim of the individual, and his mental vagaries, but upon public conventions of usage that are tied up with habit patterns in the whole speaking community."16 An acceptable interpretation must conform with the public norms of language.
What sort of evidence can be appealed to in testing an interpretation? I have tried to answer this question, to show that public semantic facts, the connotations and the suggestions in poems, are the stubborn data with which the interpreter must come to terms, even in his most elaborate, imaginative, and daring proposals. 17

In addition to conforming to the public norms of language, an interpretation must also be measured against what Beardsley calls the Principles of Congruence and of Plenitude. Where the rules of language appear to sanction divergent interpretations, the interpretation which (a) is the more coherent, and (b) which gives to the poem the greatest complexity, is the correct interpretation.

A proposed explication may be regarded as a hypothesis that is tested by its capacity to account for the greatest quantity of data in the words of the poem—including their potential connotations—and in most poems for which alternative hypotheses can be offered it will turn out in the end that one is superior to the other. 17

It is Beardsley's contention that the proposed method of literary interpretation will, for the most part, be decisive in determining a correct interpretation. In cases where the above criteria do not indicate one interpretation as clearly superior to its contenders, the text has no single correct interpretation, but several equally correct interpretations. 18
A point of clarification concerning the claim that the meaning of a text is determined by the public norms of language should here be noted. Some knowledge prerequisite to the understanding of a text does not clearly fall under that notion. If all the relevant "internal" evidence is supplied by knowledge of the language in which a text is written, then clearly such internal evidence is not sufficient for correctly interpreting all literary texts. Understanding much of what goes on in a novel or poem requires that we not only consult a dictionary, but also an encyclopedia. Gene Blocker points this out:

The poet's comparison of old men to spaniels who mumble the game,

So well-bred spaniels did civilly delight
In mumbling of the game they dare not bite,

will mean little to one who doesn't already know, outside the poem, that spaniels are game dogs noted for the care they take in retrieving birds without mangling the flesh. Similarly, assuming the lines 'Many times he died, / Many times rose again', have some implied reference to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, this will mean little to the ordinary Burmese Buddhist. And one totally unfamiliar with snow or English violets will scarcely understand much of the poems of Frost or Wordsworth.20

Though perhaps no clear cut distinction can be drawn between knowledge of the meaning of a term and knowledge of related empirical facts, it is certainly clear that the type of
knowledge Blocker notes is not subsumable under the notion of "public semantic facts." This is not, of course, a damning criticism. Though misleading, one might include such encyclopedic knowledge as "internal" evidence.

3. Some General Objections to Intentionalism

I will begin my discussion of the issue by addressing some objections to intentionalism that are commonplace in the criticism of that position. Four objections will be considered. The first two can be dismissed. The third argument, that an author is not always aware of the meaning in his text, carries more weight. Finally, the fourth argument is successful, yet the view it shows to be false is not a position held by any intentionalist of which I am aware.

3.1 The Non-Availability of an Author's Intentions

In "The Intentionalist Fallacy," Wimsatt and Beardsley claim that

the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art.21

Here, the point made concerns the evaluation of literary texts, but the same claim is often made concerning the interpretation of literary texts. Appeal to an author's
intention in the support of an interpretation is not desir­able because an author's intent is not available to appeal to. The point seems to be a pragmatic one.

One concern, perhaps, is that intentions, at least on the Cartesian model of the mind, are essentially private phenomena. The position of intentionalism, however, need not presuppose this Cartesian position. On the other hand, even if the intentionalist were to adopt that view, it would not preclude the possibility of knowing an author's intent. The Cartesian model of the mind seems to preclude only conclusive knowledge of another's intent.

Elsewhere, Beardsley presents another argument.

There is a special and important sense in which the authors of many literary works are not available: they cannot be appealed to independently of the text in order to settle disputes about interpretation.22

Even if this were the case, however, it does not support the conclusion Beardsley draws:

That is one reason I conclude that the general and essential task of the literary interpreter cannot be the discovery of authorial meaning.23

First, a general lack of external evidence for authorial intent entails only that in general the support of literary
interpretations will have to depend on the evidence of the text itself. What does not follow is that evidence of authorial intent, when available, cannot be invoked to settle interpretive disputes. It might be the case in fact that there exists no fossil evidence which would establish an evolutionary tie between, say, baboons and humans. Yet it obviously does not follow from this that the anthropologist should ignore fossil evidence when it is available.

Second, in those cases where authorial intent is not available from external sources, one can still reasonably take the text itself as evidence of authorial intent. One might, that is, take authorial meaning as the proper object of interpretation in every case, regardless of whether or not external evidence of an author's intent is available. Beardsley agrees that for this reason his argument is inconclusive.

3.2 The Distraction Argument

It is sometimes claimed that the intentionalist critic is more interested in personalities than in art. "The critic who deviates from the work to the artist's conscious or unconscious intention," says Robert Kuhns, "ignores the artistic fact for what he assumes to be a more meaningful psychological fact." What is of central importance in
art, and what it is the interpreter's task to reveal, is the aesthetic value within a work. The priorities of the intentionalist critic are more akin to the priorities of the historian than the appreciator of art. Insofar as the former is given priority in interpretation, the focus of our attention becomes, not the work, but its author's personality.

Along these lines, Beardsley notes that

the goodness in which we take an interest (when our interest is aesthetic) is something that arises out of the ingredients of the poem itself. . . . It is in its language that the poem happens. That is why the language is the object of our attention and of our study when its meaning is difficult to understand. 

From which he concludes:

It is not the interpreter's proper task, then (I argue), to draw our attention off to the psychological states of the author—as would be suitable if we were approaching the work from a historical point of view. His task is to keep our eye on the textual meaning.

This argument is a non-sequitur. Suppose a critic is interpreting an 18th century poem, and cites sources from the OED concerning what a particular word in the poem means. Are we to conclude that in citing the OED he is drawing our attention away from the poem itself, that what
he is doing is lexicography, not interpretation proper?
The similar point could be made with regard to the encyclopedic knowledge which the interpretation of a poem might require. The explication of a poem might involve noting the role of spaniels in a particular culture at a particular time. If this is historical scholarship rather than literary interpretation, then the non-intentionalist critic must also fail to do interpretation proper.

The aesthetic value of a poem is not present to the naked eye—its value, of course, is in large measure due to the meanings of its words. The intentionalist critic might reasonably reply to Beardsley's argument by noting that to discern a poem's meaning (and hence to be able to assess its value), one must investigate its author's intent. We might let Beardsley help, by analogy, refute the distraction argument:

The so-called "New Critics" of literature . . . are said to be over-intellectual, over-ingenious, and given to missing the woods for the trees. As far as [this] objection is concerned, the reply is simple. To analyze is not to enjoy; you can't always do both at the same time. But to analyze at one time does not preclude enjoyment at another time; how could it?27

One might, at least for the moment, have to detract from a poem's aesthetic features in order afterward to arrive at a
full understanding and appreciation of it. It can be the critic's task "to keep our eye on the textual meaning," but doing this, the intentionalist will argue, requires investigation of authorial intention.

3.3 Meanings of Which an Author is Unaware

Some literary texts contain suggestions, connotations, and perhaps allusions of which their authors were not aware. The meaning of some poems is so very rich and complex that it would be implausible to suggest that their authors were consciously aware of all that such poems contain. It is clear, moreover, that (barring anachronism) attributing such meanings to a text is common, uncontroversial critical practice. Given the additional premise that an author cannot intend a meaning of which he is not consciously aware, it follows that a literary text can mean what its author did not intend it to mean. An author's intending his text to mean such-and-such is thus not a necessary condition for its meaning such-and-such. The relevance of this conclusion to the intentionalist position is this: Evidence that an author did not intend a particular interpretation of his text would not be evidence that that interpretation is incorrect.

In response to this argument, Hirsch admits that "there are usually components of an author's intended
meaning that he is not conscious of."\(^{28}\) What Hirsch denies is the premise that one cannot intend a meaning of which one is unaware: "That a man may not be conscious of all that he means is no more remarkable than that he may not be conscious of all that he does."\(^{29}\) Juhl offers further examples to this effect:

In order to walk, for example, I need to move my legs and raise my feet in certain ways. We rarely think of this when we walk; nor do we plan to do it, when we decide to go somewhere on foot. Yet we do not on that account say that these actions are unintentional; we fully intend to do them when we walk. The same is true of any number of other actions: shifting gears while driving, raising one's arm in signaling, chewing one's food while eating, and so on.\(^{30}\)

The examples do show that in at least some cases one can intend to do something without \(\text{consciously}\) intending to do it. It is thus not implausible that an author can unconsciously intend meanings in his text of which he is unaware.

The intuition behind the suggestion of Hirsch and Juhl is, I believe, sound. This line of defense, however, is not without its problems. First, there will be cases where an author explicitly denies that a clearly superior interpretation of his work is the interpretation he intended. The appeal to unconscious intent is in such
cases dubious. When Frank Cioffi suggests, for example, that Yeats may have been mistaken about his intention in writing *Among School Children*, Ellis responds:

Isn't the trouble with this that it is just so hard to believe? It is not as though Yeats's own reading is a stupid one, or one that he couldn't possibly have held; in fact it fits in with all that we know about his thinking.31

The problem here is the implausibility that in every case of conflict between an author's statement of intent and a plausible interpretation of it, that the author is just mistaken about his intent. To maintain that line would be comparable to the Freudian who claimed that it was simply impossible for one to unintentionally shoot one's father. The position has the ring of question begging.

Beardsley offers a counterexample to the claim that in order for one to say something one must have (even unconsciously) intended to say it.

Consider Senator Dodd's remark to the senators investigating the tax-free personal funds he obtained from four "testimonial dinners" that were advertised as political fund-raising events. He said: "If there is anything more common to Connecticut than nutmeg it is testimonial affairs, and they go on there every week." He certainly did not will to suggest that his testimonial dinners were as phony as the nutmegs sold by the old Yankee peddlers, who thus gave Connecticut its nickname. But that is what he did suggest.32
One can, contrary to one's intentions, suggest something. The distinction must be made, however, between an individual's suggesting something and the suggestions of a sentence (see section 4.3, below). The sentence Senator Dodd uttered will suggest to some what Beardsley notes it suggests, but this is distinct from Senator Dodd's (inadvertently) suggesting the same. To say that Senator Dodd suggested that his testimonial dinners were phony requires that there be some tie between the word sequence and Senator Dodd. Psychological facts about Dodd (e.g., if he did not know the connection between nutmeg and illegitimate enterprises in Connecticut) would make it odd to say that he suggested that his dinners were phony.

What has gone wrong with the intentionalist defense, I believe, is its reliance on the notion of intention to express the tie between a person and his utterance. That concept is just too narrow to do the job. In Chapter IV, below, I will argue that what is necessary for a text to mean such-and-such is that its author be responsible for its meaning such-and-such. The problems noted here will thus be avoided.

3.4 The Humpty Dumpty Argument

In Through the Looking Glass, Humpty Dumpty asserts that he is able to make words mean whatever he wants them
to mean. He is, of course, mistaken. The objection most often brought against intentionalism is that an author, like Humpty Dumpty, cannot make the words he uses mean what he intends them to mean.

Can't the artist be wrong? Suppose he meant to convey one proposition, p, but didn't succeed, or succeeded in conveying to his readers another one, q, which he never intended or even thought of. And if all readers agree that q is the proposition implied, are we still to say that if it is p that is implied because the author said so?33

It is an inescapable fact that the author or speaker can fail to write or say what he means.34

What a particular author meant by a word or an utterance on a particular occasion of its use does not give that word or utterance its meaning in a language.35

An author cannot, for example, say (within a text) "The sky is blue" and have it mean—merely by intending it to mean—that his lover is sad. Authorial intent is not sufficient for textual meaning. Although an author's linguistic intentions are probabilistically related to what his text ends up meaning, the evidence supplied by the text itself will always be stronger than evidence of intent. The latter type of evidence is thus irrelevant to determining what a text means.
First, it is true that a text can fail to say what its author intended it to say. No intentionalist of which I am aware, however, holds otherwise. The view is often attributed to Hirsch, yet I shall argue in the following section that he does not in fact hold that view.

Second, although an author's intending a meaning is not sufficient for his text's having that meaning, it does not follow that evidence of authorial intention is irrelevant in interpretive disputes. In those cases where a text can be read as having one or more incompatible meanings, an author's intent is sufficient to decide which of the competing interpretations is correct. This is what I take Hirsch's view to be. It is the view that I shall defend.

4. A Defense of Intentionalism

In this section I offer, first, an exposition of the view of E. D. Hirsch. I then consider objections presented by Beardsley. In order to answer these objections, I draw upon some remarks of Juhl and Marcia Eaton. I argue that in at least some cases central to literary criticism, the writing of a literary text can be construed as a type of speech act and, as such, the context in which a text is written and an author's intent can play a role in settling critical disputes over what a text says.
4.1 Hirsch's Intentionalism

In *Validity in Interpretation* and elsewhere, E. D. Hirsch defends an intentionalist position. Hirsch is in agreement with Beardsley that in order for the practice of criticism to be possible, a literary text must have a correct or "valid" interpretation, and the problem for critical theory "is to find a principle for judging whether various possible implications [of a text] should or should not be admitted." Hirsch argues that as soon as anyone claims validity for his interpretation (and few would listen to a critic who did not), he is immediately caught in a web of logical necessity. If his claim to validity is to hold, he must be willing to measure his interpretation against a genuinely discriminating norm, and the only compelling normative principle [is] understanding what the author meant.

If the practice of literary interpretation is to be possible, every text must be taken to have a correct or valid interpretation. An interpretation can be judged correct only if it conforms to an acceptable critical norm. The only norm that adequately discriminates between correct and incorrect interpretations is the norm of authorial intention. I will elaborate.
According to Hirsch, "meaning is an affair of consciousness." A sequence of words cannot mean anything unless it means something to somebody. In other words, it does not make sense to speak of the meaning of a statement simpliciter, it makes sense only to speak of the meaning of a statement to someone. "A word sequence means nothing in particular," says Hirsch, "until somebody either means something by it or understands something from it."40

On this assumption, we have the option of holding either that a text means what it meant to its author or that it means what it is taken to mean by some reader or readers. This second option is taken by what Hirsch calls "the theory of semantic autonomy," which equates the meaning of a text with the meaning sanctioned by the public norms of language. Hirsch contends, however, that the "public meaning" of a word, statement, or passage is underdetermined by the norms of language: "Almost any word sequence can, under the conventions of language, legitimately represent more than one complex of meaning."41

Given the laxity of public norms governing the public meaning of a text, any text will have a multiplicity of (perhaps contradictory) readings. Yet if a text has a multiplicity of meanings, it has no determinate meaning. Therefore, since a text has a determinate meaning, it cannot mean what it means to a competent reader of its
language. The only alternative then, is that a text means what its author meant.

This conclusion appears to equate textual meaning with authorial meaning, and Hirsch at points seems to endorse that thesis. He says, for example, that the "permanent" meaning of a text "is, and can be, nothing other than the author's meaning." Furthermore, he describes a case of a poem which some readers take to convey that the sea is wet, while to other readers it means that twilight is approaching. The poet, however, intended the poem to convey a sense of desolation. The case, as described by Hirsch, appears to be a paradigmatic case of one's failing to convey what one intended to convey. Yet Hirsch concludes that in this example "the only universally valid meaning of the poem is the sense of desolation." The meaning of the poem he takes to be its author's intended meaning even though the text in question (as Hirsch briefly describes it) fails to convey that meaning.

Elsewhere, however, Hirsch tempers this approach. He makes reference to Alice's encounter with Humpty Dumpty, and claims that

when somebody does in fact use a particular word sequence, his verbal meaning cannot be anything he might wish it to be. This very
general restriction is the single important one for the interpreter, who always confronts a particular sequence of linguistic signs.44

(Italics mine)

The interpretation of texts, Hirsch claims, is the elucidation of sharable meaning—the meaning in a text that can be conveyed by the words it contains. The meaning of a text is its sharable meaning consistent with authorial intent. This Hirsch calls a text's verbal meaning:

Verbal meaning is whatever someone has willed to convey by a particular sequence of linguistic signs and which can be conveyed (shared) by means of those linguistic signs.45

Suppose, for example, that I tell you that I am going to the bank. There are two things I might convey by my utterance: I might either let you know that I am going to the local savings institution or that I am going down to the river. The meaning of what I say depends on what I intend (will) to convey by my utterance—by what I am trying to communicate to you. If I utter that statement with the intent to let you know that I am going to the river, its verbal meaning would be just that. Yet there are some things that I cannot convey using that sequence of words. I cannot convey (in the usual case) that I have
That I have a headache can thus not be the verbal meaning of "I'm going to the bank."

The content of Hirsch's position depends, for one thing, upon the import of the 'can' of 'can be conveyed' in his definition of verbal meaning. On any plausible reading, however, his remarks on the abovementioned example (of the poem intended to convey a sense of desolation) seem to be inconsistent with his remarks on verbal meaning: the verbal meaning of a word sequence cannot be anything one might wish it to be. As Hirsch describes the case, the poem does not convey a sense of desolation to any reader, and this is one (reasonable) way to interpret the 'can'. To say that an utterance cannot convey p is to say that it would not convey p to any competent reader. "I went to the bank" cannot (in the usual case) convey that I have a headache: the competent speaker of English, that is, cannot reasonably be expected to gather this information from that remark.

This position is comparable to that suggested by Gerald Graff. He distinguishes a text's "possible" meanings from its "actual" meaning. The possible meanings of a text are determined by "practices, conventions and rules of language."

From among these possible meanings, the author of a text intends one or more, and this subset
of the possible meanings is a text's actual meaning. This view is identical to Hirsch's view if we take the 'can' in his definition of verbal meaning to mean 'can be conveyed in accordance with the public norms of language.' Disputes involving divergent interpretations of a text each of which are consistent with what the text can mean would thus be adjudicable on the basis of authorial intent. An author's intent, that is, would determine which candidate interpretation reveals a text's actual meaning.

Hirsch's position, however, is less restrictive on what can count as a possible meaning of a text. He does not restrict what can be conveyed to what, strictly speaking, the norms of language allow. Suppose that at dinner I say "Sass the Palt." Does this have as one of its possible meanings, "Pass the salt"?--or does it by the practices, conventions and rules of language, have no meaning at all? Although the sentence I uttered is, by dictionary standards, gibberish, one can convey what one wants by using that sentence. My success in this case depends, of course, on the context. On the other hand, suppose I write in a letter, "My day at the park was immemorial." This sentence in my letter will convey to the reader that my day at the park was memorable, although, of course, I have misused the word 'immemorial.' The fact
that my sentence involved a misuse of a word would seem to preclude it from the set of possible meanings by the criteria I ascribed to Graff, but does not preclude its conveying to the reader the appropriate sense, i.e., 'unforgettable.'

This more lax criterion of the norm of language, of what a word "can convey" is, I believe, the sense Hirsch has in mind in his definition of verbal meaning. When Edgar Allan Poe wrote 'My most immemorial year' rather than 'My most memorable year,' Hirsch argues that the meaning of Poe's line should be taken to have the latter meaning. That meaning can be conveyed by Poe's line and hence it is part of his text's verbal meaning. Says Hirsch:

I tend to side with the Poes and Malaprops of the world, for the norms of language remain far more tolerant than dictionaries and critics.47

Again, this approach does not succumb to the pitfalls of the "Humpty Dumpty Affect." Poe's use of 'immemorial,' as it turns out, was a "successful disregard" of normal usage. This is to be distinguished, Hirsch notes, from unsuccessful word sequences of a freshman essay--those which fail to communicate any intelligible meaning at all.
In summary, Hirsch holds that literary texts are in general radically ambiguous if we use the public norms of language as our sole principle of interpretation. Acceptance of that principle as the standard for literary interpretation would therefore entail that literary texts have no determinate meaning. If the practice of interpretation (which presupposes that texts have a determinate meaning) is to be possible, there must therefore be an interpretive norm to decide among the readings of a text which accord with the norms of language. The only such interpretive norm is authorial intent. Thus, the correct reading of a text is the meaning that a text can convey which the author intended or "willed" to convey, i.e., its verbal meaning.48

4.2 The Debate Between Beardsley and Hirsch

I will here defend Hirsch's view against the counterarguments offered by Beardsley. We have at hand a "test case" of an interpretive dispute over the reading of Wordsworth's Lucy poem "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal":

A Slumber did my spirit seal;  
I had no human fears;  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.
No motion has she now, no force,
    She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
    With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The first interpretation is by Cleanth Brooks:

[Wordsworth] attempts to suggest something
of the lover's agonized shock at the loved
one's present lack of motion--of his
response to her utter and horrible inert-
ness. . . . He chooses to suggest it . . .
by imagining her in violent motion. . . .
Part of the effect, of course, resides in
the fact that a dead lifelessness is sug-
gested more sharply by an object's being
whirled about by something else than by
an image of the object in repose. But
there are other matters which are at work
here: the sense of the girl's falling back
into the clutter of things, companioned by
things chained like a tree to one parti-
cular spot, or by things completely inani-
mate, like rocks and stones. . . . She is
touched by and held by earthly time in its
most powerful and horrible image.49

The second is by F. W. Bateson:

But the final impression the poem leaves is
not of two contrasting moods, but of a single
mood mounting to a climax in the pantheistic
magnificence of the last two lines. . . .
The vague living-Lucy of this poem is opposed
to the grander dead-Lucy who has become
involved in the sublime processes of
nature. . . . Lucy is actually more alive
now that she is dead, because she is now a
part of the life of Nature and not just a
human "thing."50
Hirsch's claim is this: These two interpretations of Wordsworth's poem are compatible with the norms of language, give the poem a rich and coherent reading, but are incompatible readings. It cannot be true both that the poem conveys "the lover's agonized shock" and that it conveys, not the lover's shock, but a pantheistic affirmation of life. Given that the poem equally supports either interpretation, but only one can be correct, authorial intention must be invoked. Since, in this case

from everything we know of Wordsworth's typical attitudes during the period in which he composed the poem, inconsolability and bitter irony do not belong in the horizon [i.e., the author's "system of typical expectations and probabilities"],

Hirsch concludes that Bateson's reading is the poem's correct interpretation.

In response to Hirsch's challenge to internalism, Beardsley argues that the poem is not in fact ambiguous, that the textual evidence gives greater support to Bateson's interpretation. On the other hand, if one does not accept that the textual evidence is decisive, Beardsley argues, we must simply conclude that Wordsworth's poem is radically ambiguous, i.e., no rational decision between the two readings can be made. Appeal to Wordsworth's attitude is beside the point, for one cannot "will away ambiguity."
Beardsley's first claim is that we do not need to appeal to facts about Wordsworth to know that Brooks's reading is incorrect. The internal evidence supports Bateson's reading:

Lucy is not "whirled"; she is "rolled." She does not fall back into a clutter of things, but is placed among trees, which do not really suggest "dead lifelessness." An orderly "diurnal course" is not "violent motion."54

I am inclined to think, however, that Beardsley's knowledge of Wordsworth's beliefs has crept into his acceptance of Bateson's reading. Even if the text does not suggest bitterness, does it suggest pantheism?—Why not pananimism? or a comparable Eastern notion? Facts about Wordsworth (and not merely facts about the community within which he lived) makes the jump to pantheism seem more plausible.

The question here is whether the norms of language will in most cases give equal support to different interpretations of a text. Hirsch cites the widespread disagreement among internalist literary critics as evidence that this is the case.

It is an empirical fact that [public] consensus does not exist, and it is a logical error to erect a stable normative concept (i.e., the public meaning) out of an unstable descriptive one.55
There is general agreement that literary texts are not in most cases radically ambiguous. If interpretive disagreement is as widespread as Hirsch suggests, then the only recourse open to Beardsley is to claim widespread incompetence among internalist critics. But this seems dubious. In any case, I will offer further argument below that literary texts are in some important respects ambiguous. Examples will be offered where dual readings of a text are possible and appeal to an author's beliefs and attitudes is plausible. (See sections 4.5 and 4.6, this chapter.)

Beardsley's second point is that in cases of radical ambiguity, psychological facts about an author cannot reasonably be taken to resolve that ambiguity. Such texts just are ambiguous. He claims, in the Wordsworth case, that if

the two interpretations were equally supported by the text, we would simply have to conclude that the poem is radically ambiguous. . . . It would not help to turn to the poet and investigate his "typical attitudes" at the time of writing. An ambiguous text does not become any less ambiguous because its author wills one of the possible meanings. Will as he will, he cannot will away ambiguity.56

It is Beardsley's position that an author does not stand in a relation to his text sufficient for the resolution of ambiguities it might contain.
Juhl has criticized Hirsch's basic argument for intentionalism on the grounds that it fails to establish the tie between authorial intention and the meaning of a text: the tie in virtue of which an author might, in Beardsley's words, "will away ambiguity." In Hirsch's argument, the author's intention is tied to the meaning of a text only insofar as the appeal to authorial intentions constitutes the only "genuinely discriminating norm" for deciding between divergent interpretations. But, argues Juhl, appeal to authorial intentions is not the only possible norm consistent with literary texts having a determinate meaning:

It would be conceivable, for example, that a group of distinguished literary critics is appointed or elected to serve as arbiter in disputes about the meaning of literary works. The decision of a majority or plurality of those critics could then be taken as the criterion for determining what a literary work means. . . . Furthermore, such a criterion could in practice undoubtedly resolve a larger number of interpretive controversies than an appeal to the author's intention.57

Perhaps, as Hirsch points out, appeal to the author's intentions in settling critical disputes is the only "universally compelling" discriminating norm,58 but his argument fails to explain the intuition which makes it more compelling an arbiter than Juhl's tribunal. Hirsch
fails, that is, to specify the tie between an author and
his work that does not hold between a panel of critics and
a literary work. I will therefore turn to Juhl's theory
on how Hirsch's intuition that authorial intention can
resolve textual ambiguity is best explicated.

4.3 Disambiguating Utterances by Intent

In distinguishing sentence meaning from speaker meaning,
Beardsley considers a case involving an ambiguous sentence:

A man says, "I like my secretary better
than my wife"; we raise our eyebrows,
and inquire: "Do you mean that you like
her better than you like your wife?" And
he replies, "No, you misunderstand me; I
mean I like her better than my wife does."
Now, in one sense he has cleared up the
misunderstanding, he has told us what he
meant. Since what he meant is still not
what the first sentence succeeded in
meaning, he hasn't made the original
sentence any less ambiguous than it was;
he has merely substituted for it a
better, because unambiguous, one.^

Juhl argues that Beardsley fails to distinguish sentences
from utterances. The distinction is between what a sequence
of words can be used to convey and what, on a particular occa-
sion, it is used to convey. Suppose, to use my earlier
example, I say to you, "I'm going to the bank." Suppose
further that you know that today was my payday, that there
is no river nearby, and that on paydays I usually head off
to the local savings and loan. It is clear, given the context, what my statement means; it means that I am going to the savings and loan. Yet, one might note, the sentence I used to inform you of what I was about to do remains ambiguous. That sequence of words, that is, can be used to inform another either that one is going to the river or to a savings institution. What the context disambiguates in this case is not the sentence, but how that sentence is being used on this particular occasion. If there were any doubt in your mind about where I was going (if, say, the context had been different), it would not be because you did not know what the sentence means (you would recognize it as ambiguous), but there would be doubt about what I was saying, the meaning of my utterance. It seems that on Beardsley's use of 'sentence,' nothing can disambiguate a sentence. An utterance, however, can be disambiguated.

Not only can the context of an utterance disambiguate it, so too can information about the psychology of the speaker. If you knew, for example, that I was unaware that it was my payday, that I believed there was a riven nearby and that I enjoyed a sunny afternoon on a river's bank, you would interpret my utterance differently. Given this information (even if my beliefs were false) you would have
good reason to take me to be informing you that I was going to a river and not to a savings and loan. Similarly, if you knew that I believed my wife to be extremely jealous, but that I worshipped the ground she walked on, this information would disambiguate my remark that I like my secretary better than my wife (although, of course, this information would not disambiguate the sentence I used to inform you of my wife's attitude). It is possible therefore for an author to, in a sense, "will away ambiguity"—information about Wordsworth's typical attitudes can disambiguate what he is saying in the Lucy poem.

A brief summary of the key points that have been made is in order. First, I have agreed with Hirsch that texts, as word sequences, are ambiguous, allowing in at least some cases contradictory readings compatible with the internal evidence. Second, since Hirsch does not make the tie between author and work explicit (so as to explain how an author's attitudes can resolve such ambiguity), I have introduced the view of Juhl that literary texts are not to be treated as word sequences, but rather as utterances. As such, an author's intent has a bearing on what his text says.

There are, however, objections to identifying a literary text with an utterance, i.e., a speech act, of its author. I will now address these objections.
4.4 The Dramatic Speaker and Speech Acts

One might be willing to accept the distinction between sentences and utterances—between word sequences and speech acts—with regard to ordinary discourse, but deny it in the case of literary texts. If there are utterances in literary texts, they cannot be supposed utterances of a text's author.

Whenever we confront a literary work, we necessarily are aware of the fact that we are dealing with a syntactically and semantically ordered subject. Habits of ordinary discourse cause us to ask, "What is being said here?" and related questions. Further, we know that if something is being said, then there must be someone saying it. We do not always, or even most often, want to assert that the author is the speaker. To do so would be to attribute irrationality, inconsistency, insanity, dishonesty, stupidity, and so forth, to many authors and poets.61

It is not Shakespeare who rants in King Lear, but King Lear; nor is it Frost who informs us that he "has miles to go before I sleep." To avoid this identification, the notion of a "dramatic speaker" of a text has been introduced. It is the dramatic speaker of a text, not its author, who asserts, laments, praises, suggests, recommends, etc. Says Beardsley, moreover,
The speaker is not to be identified with the author of the work, nor can we learn more of the speaker than he reveals in the poem, say by studying the life of the author.

The notion of the dramatic speaker thus insulates the content of a text from the intentions of its author, for any utterances in a text are the utterances of a dramatic speaker. The attitudes that matter, then, are not the author's, but those of the dramatic speaker. In discerning these one must rely on internal evidence alone, for the dramatic speaker exists only in the text.

Marcia M. Eaton has drawn upon the theory of speech acts in relation to the notion of the dramatic speaker in a literary work. In a similar vein, Beardsley has used that theory to elaborate on the nature of a literary text. I will argue, following Juhl, that in some cases central to literary interpretation we can treat literary texts as utterances. It is necessary, then, that I give some attention to the chief concepts of that theory. My explication, though incomplete, should suffice for my purposes here.

The general idea behind speech act theory is that the meaning of a sentence, taken in isolation, is its potential uses by a speaker of its language. A sentence gains a more particular meaning when it is used in a particular context or for a particular purpose. The meaning, in
general, of a linguistic object is the uses to which it can be put, its meaning as an utterance depends on how it is used on a particular occasion. Some further distinctions can be made.

When one utters a sentence, one's uttering it is a locutionary act. Of more importance here is an illocutionary act. The illocutionary act one performs depends on to what use one puts a particular linguistic object. For example, one can use a sentence to describe, command, promise, suggest, advise, request, etc. One can, for example, use the sentence "I will see you on Thursday" for different ends. What one has said—what illocutionary act one performs—by uttering those words will depend upon the surrounding context, the norms of language, and, in some cases, one's intent. If those words are uttered in the process of setting up a meeting time, for example, one has in effect promised to meet on Thursday. If, on the other hand, one utters these words to a fellow employee as one leaves work on Wednesday, one has not promised, but merely predicted, or perhaps just said goodbye. Finally, it is often the case that in performing an illocutionary act, one may hope to have some effect on one's hearer. In performing an illocutionary act one might attempt to enlighten, convince, please, insult, or otherwise affect
one's hearer. By uttering "I will see you on Thursday," I might deceive you. This aspect of our using words Austin calls **perlocutionary** acts.

Eaton invokes Austin's speech act theory in defense of a version of intentionalism. Understanding literary works, she claims, is "essentially similar" to understanding ordinary discourse. The correct interpretation of an utterance in ordinary discourse (ignoring, for simplicity's sake, slips of the tongue) is "the illocutionary act which the speaker or writer intended to perform." Authors, when they write down words, perform locutionary acts; when they make commands, assertions, etc., they perform illocutionary acts; when they persuade, stir up, etc., they perform perlocutionary acts.

Yet these three classifications do not suffice to account for all the acts that authors perform with words. The characters in novels and plays, for example, say things: they promise, request, command, etc., and attempt to affect other characters by means of their utterances. In such cases, the illocutionary or perlocutionary acts are not the acts of the author. In this light Eaton introduces a new category of speech acts. An author can perform **translocutionary** acts, i.e.,
the actions by which a writer transfers locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions (usually illocutions) to a dramatic speaker. For example, when Shakespeare transfers or assigns the locution "Get thee to a nunnery" to Hamlet, thereby causing Hamlet to perform the illocutionary act of commanding (or requesting), he (Shakespeare) is performing a translocutionary act.68

The illocutionary acts that the fictional characters in Hamlet perform depend upon the translocutionary acts that Shakespeare performed when writing down that play.

Eaton contends that authors can perform illocutionary acts in the writing of a text. She also suggests that in cases where the speaker in a text is not its author, the illocutionary acts of the dramatic speaker depend upon the translocutionary acts an author performs when he writes a text. If the first contention can be established, then some texts are to be treated as utterances, and hence authorial psychology will be critically relevant. If the translocutionary acts an author is able to perform also depend on his psychological characteristics, then in the case where a text is best read as having a dramatic speaker, biographical evidence will be pertinent to determining, in cases of ambiguity, the illocutionary acts of a dramatic speaker.

First, however, let us examine Beardsley's remarks related to the issue at hand. He denies that literary
texts are illocutionary acts, though he admits to some exceptions: the poems read at an anti-war rally, for example, carry illocutionary force; the sentiments in those poems are directly attributable to their authors. He contends that in the usual case poems are imitations of illocutionary acts, and imitations of illocutionary acts are not illocutionary acts.

To report an illocutionary act ("The President asked for the public's cooperation during the freeze") is to perform an illocutionary act. To tell a tale ("The Gingerbread Man said, 'You can't catch me.'") is not to perform an illocutionary act. It is playing with words, rather than working with them.\(^7\)

The writing of a poem is not an illocutionary act; it is the creation of a fictional character performing a fictional illocutionary act.\(^1\)

The "fictional character" in this account is what I called earlier the dramatic speaker, and it plays a similar role. Since a text is an imitation of an illocutionary act of a fictional speaker, the tie between an author and the meaning of his text is severed. By way of loose analogy, S's imitating a fall down the stairs does not warrant the inference that S is clumsy and, conversely, that a stand-up comic's favorite actor is Burt Lancaster does not give one good reason to conclude that a given impersonation of his is an imitation of that actor.
Below I first argue that an important literary genre, satire, is best construed as an illocutionary act of its author. In cases of irony, parody, and satire, that is, what a text says is more than can be captured by Beardsley's account. Second, I argue that even if we accept Beardsley's account, an author's psychology can still bear on the content of his text qua imitation of an illocutionary act. I consider the case of a text's alluding to something and argue that an author's psychology puts a limit on the translocutionary acts he is able to perform. A fictional character cannot allude to X, unless its author can allude to X.

4.5 Irony, Parody, and Satire

The related cases of irony, parody, and satire are literary concepts which present a serious obstacle to the defense of anti-intentionalism. I will not here attempt to distinguish their differences, yet they all seem to share the characteristic that their application to a text depends on their being a disparity between what is said in a text and what is meant. Irony can be roughly characterized as resulting from a tension between the tone of the dramatic speaker (who we suppose speaks in earnest) and the attitude of the author who through the dramatic speaker satirizes the practice or position of which the
dramatic speaker talks. The dramatic speaker performs (fictional) illocutionary acts: he (supposedly) informs, requests, suggests, advises, etc. But the dramatic speaker in a satire cannot be said to parody or satirize; in order for us to take a text to be a parody or satire, to see the irony, we must take the dramatic speaker as speaking in earnest. Otherwise the irony would be lost.

A satire will in general have a 'point,' a 'message,' or a 'moral,' and it would certainly be an anomalous case if we could not attribute that moral to its author. Where there is some doubt as to whether a work is satirical or not, we are faced with the decision as to whether it contains irony or whether we are reading that irony into the text. The decision would seem to turn on what we take the text's author to be saying: to read the text literally is to ascribe the literal sense of the text to its author; to read it ironically is to take its author to be saying something by means of imitating an illocutionary act.

It thus seems most plausible to treat a satire as an utterance of its author. Let us consider an example of William E. Tolhurst in support of this claim.

Swift's "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of the Poor People in Ireland from Being a Burden to their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public" is an essay which, when read literally, suggests
that certain social problems can be solved if Irish babies are eaten by the wealthy. Such a practice would not only supply an income for their parents, but also relieve them of the burden of raising them. Swift's essay is, of course, ironic—the suggestions made are not to be taken as an actual proposal that Irish babies be raised as food for the rich, but a commentary on contemporary attitudes and social conditions.

Yet consider the imaginary case in which an author, J*n*th*n Sw*ft, comes to write an identical sequence of words suggesting that the children of Ir*l*nd should serve as food for the rich. In this imaginary world the rules and conventions of language are the same, but the practices of infanticide and cannibalism are not considered morally abhorrent—and Sw*ft's proposal is readily adopted. In this case, even though the texts are identical word sequences in the same language, it would be incorrect to interpret Sw*ft's essay as ironic.

The moral that Tolhurst draws from the above two cases is that a text cannot be identified with a word sequence within a language. The same text cannot be both ironic and non-ironic. Hence, the identity of a text must, at least in part, be determined by the context in which it was produced. The difference in meaning of the text of Swift
and the text of Sw*ft is a difference resulting not from
the linguistic norms operative in their respective communi-
ties, but the moral values embraced in those communities.
The meaning of a text, Tolhurst concludes, "transcends word
sequence meaning and is a function of the context of dis-
course as well." Swift and Sw*ft have said different
things.

Tolhurst's example has, I should note, come under
attack. Daniel O. Nathan argues, first, that Tolhurst's
readings of Swift's "Modest Proposal" is superficial--
there is internal evidence enough to support the ironic
reading:

In the face of such a condemnation of
abortion as savage and insensitive, and
[the statement that babies as food
would be "very proper for Landlords, who,
as they have already devoured most of
the Parents seem to have the best Title
to the Children"], the suggestion of
preparing babies in a delicious ragout
or fricassee can only be read as ironic--
whatever the attitudes of Swift and his
audience may have been.73

But surely Nathan is wrong here. We can imagine attitudes
which would make these apparently inconsistent comments
consistent--perhaps the members of Sw*ft's community have
bizarre beliefs about pre-natal life, and maybe landlords
are there known to eat the Ir*sh parents!
Nathan's second response in defense of internalism is that Tolhurst's case depends on an "impoverished conception of the appropriate linguistic rules":

In the Swift-Sw*ft comparison, surely the language is different, if gloves and boots of infant carcasses do not present a distasteful suggestion, if 'buying the Children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting Pigs' does not also carry connotations appropriate to the ironic tone of the speaker's proposal.74

And, he concludes,

reliance on word-sequence meaning alone (given an enriched conception of public linguistic rules) has not been shown to be inadequate for proper interpretation of a text.75

I have some inclination to agree with Nathan that our attitudes are reflected in the meanings of our words. Yet Nathan's enriched notion of public linguistic rules are so enriched that it is odd to call them linguistic at all. If Sw*ft, with his perverse attitudes and beliefs, were among us, it would be a mistake to say that he spoke a different language.

But, as Nathan correctly notes, the Sw*ft case does not establish that an author's intention can disambiguate a text-as-utterance. Let me offer a more ordinary case. Consider an essay which expounds the views of the Moral
Majority on homosexuality. Suppose that the essay could be read either as ironic or non-ironic. Whether or not we give it an ironic reading would normally depend on the context in which we encountered it (e.g., in the National Lampoon or on a newspaper's editorial page). If its content was of no help, however, the suggestion of whether it is or is not a satire, whether it is or is not to be read ironically, would I think, be settled by the discovery that the essay was written by Jerry Falwell. If, on the other hand, we found it to be written by one opposed to the views of Falwell's group, our answer would certainly be different. Though the fact that its irony was not explicit might lead us to judge it a poor satire, it would be a satire nonetheless. And the discriminating characteristic is the author's intention.

4.6 Allusion

We find in literary texts allusions to particular persons, places, events, passages in other literary works, etc. I will here consider three ways of accounting for allusion in literary works. First, one might treat a literary allusion to X as a text's author alluding to X. An author can use words to allude to, say, another literary text. This is Juhl's view. Second, one could take a literary allusion to be a text's dramatic speaker alluding. Both Eaton and Beardsley take this option. Eaton, however,
makes the connection between an author and the dramatic speaker explicit: the speech acts a dramatic speaker performs depends on the translocutionary acts its author performed when writing the text. Beardsley's view, on the other hand, admits of no such connection.

I shall first argue that if we take a literary allusion to be its author alluding, the allusions of a text will depend upon its author's psychology. Second, I argue that if we take literary allusions to be the speech act of a dramatic speaker, the scope of those allusions still depends upon facts about an author. This is to show that what a dramatic speaker alludes to depends on the translocutionary acts its author performs. The arguments I offer in this regard show that Beardsley's view is false; there is the connection between an author and his dramatic speaker that Beardsley denies. Finally, I present what I take to be other apparently insurmountable problems for Beardsley's view.

Suppose that an allusion to X in a literary text is taken to be its author's alluding to X. One cannot allude to X, however, unless one is aware of X under the description supposed to be an allusion to X. In one sense, I can allude to the 49th president of the United States. I just did so. On the other hand, if I were today to write a novel set in the 18th century and a description of an individual I offered
just happened to fit the 49th United States president to a tee, it would certainly be a mistake for the interpreters of my work in 2030 to take the passage in question to allude to that particular president.

Some people take some texts written in the distant past to refer to the future. Passages in the Bible, for example, are taken to allude to the specific details about the end of the world. It makes sense to find allusion to those passages, however, only if one assumes that the writers of those texts had access to knowledge that others lacked. Supposing a writer to be a prophet allows one sensibly to call his passages allusions. It is sometimes said, moreover, that Jules Verne, in his novels, foresaw space travel. Perhaps some passages of his can be said to allude to present space travel. We do, however, draw the line. Verne did not allude to the actual Soviet satellite Sputnik. We draw the line as to what an individual can allude to on the basis of what that individual was aware of or could have known about.

Hence, if an allusion in a text is its author alluding, the limits of what a text can allude to are determined by what that author was aware of. Where the allusion of a passage in a text is indeterminate, evidence of what an author was familiar with establishes the limits of what we can take that passage to allude to. If specific evidence is lacking, an author's text alluding to X requires at least a presupposition that the author could have been aware of X.
Conclusive evidence that an author could not have been aware of X is conclusive evidence that no passage in his works allude to X. This is not to say that when writing a passage which alludes to, say, another literary passage, that the author must have had that literary passage explicitly in mind as he wrote. One can perhaps allude to something with which one is acquainted but which one does not, at the time of alluding, consciously have in mind.

These arguments hold for literature only if we take literary allusions to be alludings of their authors. The conclusion must now be drawn for translocutionary allusions, i.e., it must be shown that if we take literary allusions to be the allusions of a dramatic speaker, psychological facts about an author still bear evidential weight with regard to the possible referent of those allusions. This conclusion does follow, I suggest, because a dramatic speaker of a text can allude to X (where X exists or existed outside the speaker's fictional world), only if the author of that text can allude to X.

First, I do not think it makes any more sense to say that the dramatic speaker of Jules Verne's *A Trip to the Moon* alluded to the Soviet's launch of *Sputnik* than to say that Verne did. I have said that the interpreters of my (imagined) novel who, in 2030, interpret it to allude to the 49th U.S. president would be making an interpretive mistake. It would not do in defense of that interpretation, moreover, to cite the fact that although I could not have alluded to the 49th president, the dramatic speaker of my novel could have.
What one can allude to is limited by one's knowledge. The question here, then, is the limits on the knowledge of the dramatic speaker in a literary text. My cases above show at least that taking the dramatic speaker to be omniscient will not work. Perhaps a reasonable alternative open to the anti-intentionalist is that the dramatic speaker of any text knows what any knowledgeable reader of the author's language community could reasonably be expected to know. A thought experiment will show that this approach is also unacceptable.

Some passages in T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" are allusions to Dante. Suppose, however, that from childhood Eliot was denied access to any of Dante's work or works which alluded to Dante. Suppose, furthermore, that Eliot still composed "The Waste Land" as it is in its present form. In this case, it seems to me, even though a knowledgeable reader might take the passages in question to allude to passages in Dante, our imagined text would not allude to those passages. This is to say that neither Eliot nor the dramatic speaker of "The Waste Land" can allude to Dante in this case. The only reasonable explanation here is that the limits of Eliot's knowledge are the limits of the knowledge of his dramatic speakers. Where the first is not in a position to allude to something, neither is the second.

The above arguments show that Beardsley's denial of a connection between an author and the speech acts of his
dramatic speaker is mistaken. Should one find the above arguments unconvincing, however, I offer the following arguments to show conclusively that Beardsley's position is untenable.

When Beardsley defines a literary text as an imitation of a compound illocutionary act, he notes that "Imitation" must be taken here in what might be called its "depicting" rather than "portrayal" sense. 77 For an account of what he means by 'depiction', he refers the reader to his account of visual representation in his Aesthetics. I will not here explicate that view, but merely note that Beardsley allows that frost on the window pane or dried and twisted roots can visually depict a man. 78 What something depicts, and, therefore, what illocutionary acts a text is an imitation of, does not depend upon its genesis.

How, then, is the critic to determine, on Beardsley's view, that one text alludes to a passage in another literary text? The answer would have to be, it seems, on the basis of a similarity of the texts' phrasing or structure. If a passage in a text, A, is very similar to the phrasing in a text, B, then the critic can conclude that the passage in A alludes to the similar passage in B. This criterion for confirming literary allusion has untenable consequences. First, the relation of similarity is reflexive. If the
phrasing of a passage in A is similar in the appropriate respects to a passage in B, then B is similar to A in the same respects. Thus, Beardsley's view commits us to the clearly incorrect critical principle that whenever a text A alludes to a text B, B also alludes to A.

Moreover, if similar phrasing of a text were sufficient evidence of an allusion, then a critic could in fact create evidence for an interpretation of a poem. In general, a reasonable defense of an interpretation of a poem is that the poem clearly alludes to another poem which has connotations similar to those attributed to the first by one's interpretation. If a similarity of literary structure were sufficient to establish the presence of an allusion, then it would make no difference if the poem alluded to was created by the critic for the very purpose of supporting his interpretation. But, of course, it does make a difference. A literary text cannot allude to another text of which its author was unaware.

There will be cases where an interpretive decision must be made as to whether a literary text alludes or does not allude to some other literary work. Evidence about the extent of an author's knowledge is thus pertinent to settling such disputes. This conclusion holds, moreover, if we take allusions in literary texts to be those of the author or those of a fictional dramatic speaker.
5. Conclusion

I have in this chapter attempted to refute arguments often brought against the position of intentionalism with regard to literary interpretation. In addition, I have presented an account of the ways in which psychological facts about an author can reasonably be brought into play in resolving literary disputes. Literary texts, I have argued, can be read in more than one way consistent with the norms of language. I have argued, furthermore, that it is reasonable in at least some cases central to literary interpretation to allow facts about an author to settle critical disputes arising from such textual ambiguity.

I should note, moreover, that in defending this position I do not wish to suggest that we not read into literary texts a richer meaning beyond what the author could have intended. In "The Intentional Fallacy" Beardsley and Wimsatt say in a foot note that change in the meaning of words

after a poem is written may contribute meanings which if irrelevant to the original pattern should not be ruled out by a scruple about intention.79

With this I do not disagree. But applying new connotations of a word to a poem's original meaning requires that we first know its original meaning. And determining a poem's original meaning requires that we make certain presuppositions about the author's intentions.
IV. ART AND ARTISTS

There is a basic similarity between my central arguments against internalism in Chapters II and III. I argued in Chapter II that the way one describes a work depends on the psychological set with which one approaches it. A work of art's aesthetic features are in this sense underdetermined by its internal features. In Chapter III, I made the comparable claim regarding literary works. There is usually more than one way a text can be read consistent with its internal features. Yet some ways of seeing or ways of interpreting a work are mistaken. When the internal properties of a work suggest different approaches, we do in fact make an appeal to external evidence. What must be shown is that citing psychological facts about a work's artist gives good reason to accept one construal of a work over its competitors. What I hope to accomplish in this chapter is to show that our conception of a work of art presupposes a tie between an artist and his work which makes an appeal to an artist's beliefs, desires, and attitudes a reasonable appeal.

An artist's intentions alone are neither necessary nor sufficient for a work's having the features it does. Public
criteria of success make this the case. On the other hand, however, being a work of art requires having an artist. Not just any object that has all the exhibited properties a work of art usually possesses is a work of art. A replica of a Henry Moore sculpture formed by wind erosion, for example, would not in virtue of its resemblance be a work of art. Though it meets the criteria for sculpture in its appearance, it fails to have the right kind of origin. An object's being art requires that it stand in a certain relation to some person or persons. I shall argue below that this relation is one of responsibility. A work's artist is that individual responsible for a work's artistically relevant features. Since an individual's intentions have a bearing on his responsibility, an artist's intentions can determine which of competing descriptions or interpretations are appropriate to his work.

1. Artistic Responsibility

In this section, I introduce the notion of artistic responsibility. I will not, however, attempt to give an explicit definition of that notion. A few introductory remarks here will perhaps eliminate some possible misunderstandings of how I will use that term.

When we claim that an individual is a work's artist, we are making a factual claim. We are claiming that the individual in question stands in a particular relation to
that work. My aim in section 1.1 is to discern what this relationship is. I proceed by considering objects which would be works of art were it not for their having a certain genesis. I conclude that to be a work of art, an object must have some individual responsible for its artistically relevant features.

A test for whether a person is morally responsible for an action is whether or not he is deserving of praise or blame for the morally relevant features of that action. I use the comparable criterion to determine under what conditions a person is responsible for a work's artistic features. We can tell that an individual stands in that relation to a work by determining if that individual is accountable for that work's artistically relevant features. In section 1.2, I compare the exonerating conditions for moral responsibility with those of artistic responsibility.

Finally, I should emphasize that I am not claiming that an artist is responsible for any feature of his work one might note. An artist may not, for example, be subject to praise for the influence his work exerts two hundred years after its completion. This feature of his work is part of its art-historical value, but is not a feature relevant to appreciating or evaluating his work's artistic value (see Chapter I, section 1). This is the point of my qualification that an artist is responsible for his work's artistically relevant features.
1.1 Art as Artifact

Any attempt to define what a work of art is which does not require a work of art to have a certain type of genesis is doomed to fail. In the case of literary works, the identity of a literary text depends upon its language. Looking and reading like an English text is not logically sufficient for being an English text. In the case of the non-literary arts a work's genesis also matters. Consider, for example, Clive Bell's definition of art: something is a work of art if and only if it has significant form, an organization of line, color, and shapes which elicits "the aesthetic emotion." One key problem with Bell's definition is that natural phenomena can have significant form. In response, Bell argues that

some people may, occasionally, see in nature what we see in art, and feel for her an aesthetic emotion; but I am satisfied that, as a rule, most people feel a very different kind of emotion for birds and flowers and the wings of butterflies from that which they feel for pictures, pots, temples, and statues.

Butterfly wings (as a matter of fact) lack significant form and hence are not art. It is certainly possible in principle, however, that an object of natural origin have significant form.

What nature might not produce, an accident could. Imagine, for example, what might remain after a terrorist
bombing of an art supply store. Scores of (apparent) abstract expressionist paintings might result, perhaps several perceptually indiscernible from well-known works of this type. None, however, would be works of art. It is significant that we would hesitate even to call such by-products paintings.

The natural response to this problem is to claim that for something to be a work of art it must be "manmade." A work of art must be produced by someone. But what exactly do we have in mind when we say this?

Imagine a scenario in which a painter's paint rag, by some bizarre turn of events, ends up hanging on an art gallery wall. Perhaps a janitor found it on the floor and, thinking it had fallen from the wall, neatly tacked it up in a vacant spot. Apart from our knowledge of its origins, the paint rag is by coincidence what we would take to be a work of art. Its being of human production does not suffice as the genesis necessary for its being a work of art.

By way of revision, we might require a work of art to be of deliberate human production. This requirement, however, is in one of its senses too weak, and in another of its senses too strong. In its weaker sense, the paint rag is of deliberate human production. The painter deliberately wiped his brushes on it. The conglomeration of paint and cloth was the result of deliberate human
activity. Four hundred years from now, were it to survive, archeologists would certainly deem it an artifact, perhaps just in virtue of its being cloth.

Yet on the stronger, more natural reading of 'deliberately produced', the paint rag is not of deliberate manufacture. A work of art, suggests Gene Blocker, is "an object deliberately designed to be an object of aesthetic attention." The paint rag fails to be art because its aesthetically relevant features were not deliberately designed. The painter, while cleaning his brush on the paint rag paid no attention to how the paint collected there. The resulting organization of shapes and colors was unintentional.

To require that a work of art be deliberately designed or produced by someone, however, is too strong a demand. First, if being deliberately produced requires that an artist have a plan in mind or have intended his work to have the features it does, this would preclude works whose origin is the result of inspiration. Some works of art, it is said, come to mind spontaneously and in their entirety. A piece of music might come into a composer's consciousness apparently beyond his control. It would be misleading to say that the organization of notes in such a case was deliberately designed.
Second, to require a work of art to be deliberately made or produced appears to deny the status of art to found and chance art. Found art, or "ready-mades," are not produced by the artist at all. An ordinary object, manufactured or natural, is presented as art. In chance art, an artist introduces chance into the production of an art object, thus making some features of the end product beyond his control. These two types of art present an apparent threat to the traditional conception of the tie between an artist and his work. Says one art historian, "the umbilical cord between the object and its creator is broken."  

Alan Tormey addresses this apparent threat as it applies to art produced by chance methods. What the traditional artist and the contemporary chance artist have in common is that both are responsible for the features their work possesses. The traditional artist is responsible for the features of his work in virtue of having chosen to give it certain features. On the other hand, the artist's responsibility in the case of chance art can be compared to one's moral or legal responsibility for some unforeseen consequences of one's choices.

To the extent that it is feasible to claim that our moral or legal responsibility should extend to the unpredictable but calculatedly random effects of
our actions, it is also defensible to claim that artistic or authorial responsibility should extend to the intentionally random consequences of our aesthetic choices. One may, then, in this sense, be responsible for the content of a work even if he is innocent of having structured any of the actual sounds or images that are contingently constitutive of that work.6

Suppose an individual chooses to place a time-bomb in some randomly chosen spot in a city. The fact that he cannot foresee its consequences in detail does not alleviate his moral responsibility for its morally relevant consequences. In such a case, his not specifically intending to cripple Richard Roe does not entail that he is not accountable for Roe's being crippled by the ensuing explosion. Likewise, if an artist initiates a process to create an artwork, he/she can still be held artistically responsible for its specific features even though it was impossible to foresee in detail the aesthetic consequences of the process initiated.

I will have more to say about "artistic responsibility" in a moment. For now, let us turn to the case of "found art." As the term is usually used, it refers to an artist transforming a pre-existent object into art by "presenting" it as such. This is a correct description in some cases, but not in all. To call all cases in which an artist "presents" an object "found art" is misleading. Cases
must be distinguished in which the object presented becomes art from cases where the presentation, the gesture, is most properly construed as the artist's work. I will refer to the former as found art and the latter as "gesture" art.

The relation of the artist to the "work" differs in each case.

"Natural objects," George Dickie claims,

> can become works of art if any one of a number of things is done to them. One thing which would do the trick would be to pick a natural object up, take it home, and hang it on the wall. Another thing would be to pick it up and enter it in an exhibition.7

Without some qualification, Dickie's claim is false. The fisherman's hanging a hunk of salmon meat on his wall to dry does not make it art. Suppose, on the other hand, that the fisherman hangs the salmon meat on his wall for the purpose of admiring its aesthetic features. I do not want to claim (as Dickie might) that it thereby becomes art, but there is in this second case an important difference from the first. In this second case the fisherman would be liable to censure. We would not, I think, be completely out of line in noting his lack of taste. In endorsing some item as aesthetically valuable, one is subject to praise if the item chosen is aesthetically pleasing, but subject to blame if it is not.
This is probably what Dickie has in mind when he says,

In conferring the status of art on an object one assumes a certain kind of responsibility for the object in its new status; presenting a candidate for appreciation always faces the possibility that no one will appreciate it and that the person who did the conferring will thereby lose face.⁸

How Dickie's point applies to found art is illustrated by an exhibit at The Ohio State University entitled "The Junk Object." Various items previously discarded as trash were neatly displayed within the gallery's setting. We were, in effect, asked to admire the aesthetic features of the objects there displayed. If the objects chosen had been grossly unaesthetic, the displayers would have been liable to blame.

The type of responsibility Dickie refers to is not limited to cases of art. One is subject to praise or blame for the jokes one tells, the clothes one chooses to wear, or the music one plays in the presence of others. Nor is this type of responsibility as it applies to art limited to cases of found art. In exhibiting one's painting, for example, one endorses it as finished and takes responsibility even for those features one failed to notice. I will return to this point.
In "found art," it is the object one presents that is to be appreciated. Dickie makes the mistake, however, of treating all cases in which an object is presented in the gallery setting to be of this type. In some cases he misidentifies the work. For example, he identifies Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* with the urinal itself. For this reason he notes its "gleaming white surface, the depth revealed when it reflects images of surrounding objects, its pleasing oval shape."\(^9\) To focus on the urinal's surface qualities is to miss the point. The artwork in this case seems more accurately described as Duchamp's *gesture* in displaying it within the gallery context. "The work itself has properties that urinals themselves lack," says Danto, "it is daring, impudent, irreverent, witty and clever."\(^{10}\) Duchamp is responsible for *Fountain* since he is responsible for his actions. One's making a gesture entails that one is accountable for its significance.

Before concluding this section, an objection brought against Dickie's treatment of found art is worth noting. Suppose, an artist, by uttering the appropriate remarks in the appropriate setting, were to christen everything art. On Dickie's approach everything would thereby become art. It has been argued that this entailment is absurd and hence Dickie's approach mistaken.\(^{11}\) There is an actual
case which approximates the one imagined. Consider Claes Oldenburg's work in the show March 1-31, 1969 (the "first exhibition to exist in catalogue form alone"): "My Work: Things Colored Red". To treat Oldenburg as presenting all things colored red for our appreciation would entail the absurd consequence that my red cigarette lighter is art. It is not art, and its smooth, shiny surface is not a good-making characteristic of Oldenburg's work. Two points can be made. First, I think it would be uncontroversial to call Oldenburg's work a theatrical gesture. Second, I think one reason that we do take it as a gesture is that all red things cannot be Oldenburg's work. He can no more take responsibility for the aesthetic features of my cigarette lighter than Humpty Dumpty can give words meaning by fiat. One can, as Tormey notes, take responsibility for the sounds that result from chance processes. But it seems that there are limits. What can be part of one's work is limited by what one can reasonably be held accountable for.

What I have tried to do in this section is to show that even given new developments in contemporary art it can still be maintained that a similar relation holds between all artists and their work. Natural objects and accidentally produced "paintings" fail to be art because no one is responsible for their artistic features. A necessary
condition for something's being art is that some person or persons be accountable for its artistic features.  

1.2 Moral and Artistic Responsibility

There are conditions which can absolve one of moral responsibility. Sometimes a person performs an action of some consequence for which he ought not to be held accountable. In this section, I compare the conditions which exonerate moral responsibility with those which undermine artistic responsibility. Though my remarks in this section are not crucial to my central argument in this chapter, they help clarify the notion of artistic responsibility.

1.2.1 Compulsion

If one is compelled to perform an action, one cannot be held morally accountable. Some cases of compulsion involve the circumstances surrounding an agent's action. Patty Hearst was not morally blameworthy if her robbing the bank was the result of her being forced at gunpoint. If I am shoved in a crowd and step on your foot, I am not to blame. And, it seems, if one is forced by threat of physical harm to write a check to the National Heart Association, one would not be praiseworthy for so doing.
Consider the case where an artist is forced at gunpoint to produce a drawing. If the drawing turned out to be a poor drawing, certainly the artist would not be blameworthy. But the reason is not that he was coerced to draw, i.e., that he could not reasonably be expected to have refused the demands. A better explanation would be that his nervousness caused a lack of concentration. On the other hand, if the drawing was a good drawing, the fact that it was produced under threat of harm would not make praise of its artist unjustified.

If one's actions are "out of one's control" for psychological reasons, one can be morally exonerated. A kleptomaniac's theft is excusable. It is a bit less clear whether the same is true of normally praiseworthy actions. Is the compulsive philanthropist as praiseworthy as one who just occasionally gives to charity? I tend to think not.

The fact that an artist works from psychological compulsion, however, does not free that artist from praise or blame for the aesthetic features of his/her work. The Romantic conception of the artist is that of an individual who suffers social ostracism and sub-standard living conditions for the sake of producing his art. The artist
endures these indignities because he is driven by an inner need to create. Though this portrait of the artist is more myth than reality, what is important here is that even if it were accurate, it would not undermine our praising artists for their work. A related case is that of inspiration. Though a musical composition might have come to Mozart apparently beyond his control, this does not make praise of Mozart unjustified.

The discrepancy here between moral and aesthetic responsibility can in part be explained by what above I referred to as an artist's endorsing a work. If a musical composition comes to a composer "full blown," the composer always has the option of rejecting it. To publish or publicly perform such a piece is to endorse its value and thereby make oneself liable to praise or blame. Consider, in analogy, the case of the kleptomaniac who after a compulsive act of theft denies that it is wrong to steal or asserts that he ought to have stolen the item he did. In endorsing his compulsive act as morally correct, he undermines his excuse. We think of the compulsive artist as driven by his belief that his work is of value.¹⁵

1.2.2 Ignorance

In some situations, ignorance of the consequences of one's actions can absolve one of moral responsibility.
If a chef serves a casserole containing tiny bits of shrimp to an individual he knows to be allergic to shrimp, the chef is morally blameworthy. If he was unaware of the allergy, he is not to blame for the consequences. If Sue attempts to poison Sam and as a result Sam's cancer is cured, Sue does not deserve praise for curing Sam's cancer. A qualification must be made, however. Not all pleas of ignorance exonerate an individual. One's ignorance must itself be excusable.

The chef who adds a half pound of pepper to his casserole is not exonerated in light of his plea that he did not know its probable effect. Consider the case of a philosopher who presents a paper in epistemology. The contents of the paper reveal that he is not familiar with the relevant literature. In such a case, the philosopher would be subject to blame for the omissions in his paper. Were a student in an introductory philosophy class to write the identical paper, however, she would not be liable to blame for the same omissions. Although the literature in question was available to both, the student could not be expected to be aware of it. The philosopher, on the other hand, should have been aware of all or most of the recent writings in his field.
Suppose we criticize a painting's colors as being too muddied and clouded. If the painting's artist were standing nearby and claimed, "Yes, they are. But I didn't know that when they had dried their color would have changed so drastically." The artist's position vis a vis his work is here analogous to the epistemologist's to his paper. The artist might have been ignorant of how the paint's color would change, but he, in his role as artist, should have known more about paints. He is still accountable for the qualities his work possesses.

Suppose a painter in the process of painting accidentally touches his brush to the canvas and leaves a streak of blue in the painting's lower right corner. Suppose further that he exhibits the painting without noticing the unintentional blue streak. If as a result of the accidentally placed slash of blue the painting was visually unbalanced, the fact that it was placed on the canvas accidentally does not absolve the painter of blame. He should have noticed its effect. Note that the case is different if one were observing the painting in progress—were one to observe the defect of the painting while the work was in progress, the artist's comment that it was accidental would absolve him of blame. Criticism of an unfinished work might help an artist rectify mistakes,
but the claim that it is unfinished can always serve as a legitimate excuse for the presence of undesirable features in the work.

It is important that once a work has been deemed finished, has been published or exhibited, matters change. The claim that the streak of blue was the result of accident no longer carries any weight. Beardsley notes a case in which a printer's error changed Hart Crane's "Thy Nazarene and tender eyes," into "Thy Nazarene and tinder eyes." If the occurrence of 'tinder' in Crane's poem was detrimental to its effect, Crane would not be subject to blame. One would have to retract one's criticism of Crane's poem if the error were found out. Yet, as it turned out, Crane let the word 'tinder' remain. In publicly endorsing its occurrence within the poem, Crane became subject to any praise or blame its occurrence in the poem would warrant.

2. Description, Interpretation, and the Artist's Responsibility

Both literary and non-literary works of art allow more than one description or interpretation. I have argued that a necessary condition for something's being a work of art is that its artist be responsible for its artistically relevant features. In this section I argue that a work's
artist can be held accountable for the features of a work only under some descriptions or interpretations of it. A description or interpretation of a work of art is a correct construal of it as art only if its artist is responsible for its artistic features as so described or interpreted. Some examples from outside the realm of art will make my point more clear.

2.1 Responsibility and Description

Whether a person is responsible for an action depends on how that action is described. Some actions are susceptible to more than one description, and an individual will be responsible for the action only under some possible descriptions of it.

Suppose that my wife and I are driving down the road. Unbeknownst to my wife, the car's turn signal lights are broken. I am aware that they are broken, however, and since I am about to make a left turn I signal a turn with my left arm. My wife spots a young woman walking to the left side of the car, and complains about my gesturing to the woman. Given what she notices in the situation, my wife has grounds for her complaint. My action can be seen as a wave. But in this case my wife has misinterpreted my action as a flirtatious wave. When I tell her what I was doing, she has good reason to see my action differently.
Unless it is the case that one ought to have been aware of one's action under another description, one is accountable for an action only when it is described consistently with what one conceived oneself to be doing. Once my action is correctly described, my wife's grounds for complaint disappear.

I should note also that it does not make a difference whether the car's turn signals were broken or working properly; nor does it matter whether I actually made the left turn as I planned. If the car's turn signals were not broken, and the turn not made, this would be evidence that I was in fact waving to the woman. It is evidence that I was waving, however, only because it is evidence of what my beliefs and intentions were. The circumstantial evidence may suggest that I intended to wave, but if I conceived myself to be signalling a turn, I was signalling a turn.

Except in the case of art works best construed as gestures, we describe or interpret art objects rather than actions. A parallel case involving the description of an object can be given. Consider the case of an individual, Sam, who builds a mousetrap and gives it to Sue. He does not, however, tell Sue that it is a mousetrap. Let us suppose that Sue takes it to be a can opener, and she might have some justification for doing so. As a can opener, Sam's moustrap might work reasonably well, but sometimes
slips or jams. When Sue complains, Sam would naturally reply that he did not intend the device to be a can opener. Under its description as a can opener, Sam is not accountable for the success or failure of his device. I should note that the device may in fact turn out to be a better can opener than mousetrap. In the latter role it may not work at all. Nonetheless, Sam is not responsible either for its success or failure as a can opener. He is responsible for its features only under the description consistent with what he conceived himself to be doing when he built it.

In general, then, if an object can be described in more than one way, the individual who created the object may not be accountable for its success or failure under all of those descriptions. What an individual conceived himself to be creating determines under which description of the object he is accountable.

2.2 Describing Art as Art

Consider now a case closer to the arts. Hungerland gives a clear example of a situation in which knowledge of intent calls for a reassessment of one's initial construal of a performance.

I overhear a singer doing what I take to be singing a scale and doing it very badly. I later learn that the man was not trying to sing a scale at all--he
was just doing vocal warming up exercises. Under these circumstances, I would presumably change my appraisal of the performance.16

It would be a mistake in this case to maintain one's initial judgment that the singing was quite poor. Hungerland concludes from this case that "we cannot appraise the skill of a performer or producer without knowing what his objectives were."17 This is true, but it points out a possible misunderstanding of my position here. It has been objected that the intentionalist confuses judging a work of art with judging its artist. I am not making that confusion.

We can characterize one's judgment in Hungerland's case without construing it as a judgment of skill of the performer. We are judging the voice we hear. We hear it differently, and we judge it differently, depending on how we hear it. We can judge the vocal sounds as the singing of a scale, or as a warming up exercise. We hear the sounds in a certain way and make our judgment of the sounds in the category in which we take them to be. We can evaluate Sam's mousetrap as a mousetrap or as a can opener. In doing so we need not be judging Sam's skill per se. What differs in each case is Sam's relationship to the object as described.
Consider again Walton's example\textsuperscript{18} of the society which does not have painting as a traditional medium, but does produce "guernicas" (see section 3.2, Chapter II). Guernicas all share with Picasso's \textit{Guernica} its size, shapes and colors, but guernicas differ from Picasso's \textit{Guernica}, and from each other, in how their surfaces are molded. Picasso's \textit{Guernica} can be seen either as a painting or as a guernica. When seen as a guernica, it would be best described as cold, stark, lifeless. When seen as a painting, it is violent and dynamic. The question we are now in a position to answer is why the fact that Picasso painted \textit{Guernica} makes the latter description its correct description. A work of art is correctly described as art only if its artist is responsible for its artistically relevant features under that description. Picasso, however, is not responsible for the features of his \textit{Guernica} when it is described as a guernica. Hence, to describe that painting as a guernica is not to describe it correctly as art. The art critic in the alien society who describes Picasso's \textit{Guernica} as dull and lifeless would be misdescribing Picasso's work, for Picasso is not accountable for that painting as so described. The work's features when seen as a guernica are thereby mere accident.

The difference between this example and the mousetrap example is that our conception of art requires a work of art to have an individual responsible for its artistically
relevant features. Our descriptions of Sam's device as a mousetrap and as a can opener both correctly describe it as a household appliance. Being a household appliance does not require any particular type of genesis. Our descriptions of Picasso's Guernica as a painting and as a guernica do not, however, both correctly describe it as art. Under the description of that work as a guernica, it no longer stands in the appropriate relation to its creator.

In this light, the fact that we ordinarily invoke an artist's intent in critical argument can be explained. Suppose an individual comments upon Picasso's Woman Dressing Her Hair (1940), "Just look at the man's idea of anatomy—if a real woman had legs like that she'd be in a hospital for surgery (or an autopsy)." Our usual response to this remark would be that Picasso did not intend his picture to be a realistic rendering of a woman. The fact that this is not how he conceived his painting (together with the fact that it can be seen as he conceives it) is evidence that he is not responsible for its features when so described. Works of art can be seen in more than one way. Since evidence of intent is evidence for in which of these ways an artist can be held accountable for the work's features, it is evidence for the way it is correctly viewed as art.
It will not suffice, I should note, to claim that a work is correctly described as it fares best aesthetically. But, given assumptions about normal competency, this is still a good rule of thumb. More than likely an artist will have intended his work to be seen the way it is best seen. This principle of charity, however, can be overridden by external evidence about an artist's intent. The Guernica case shows this. The flat Guernica might fare better aesthetically when seen as a painting, but the features one sees in it when one sees it as a painting are there by mere coincidence—the object may just as well have been formed by natural processes. I am not suggesting that if we encountered the flat Guernica that we ought not to see it as violent and dynamic—we probably couldn't help but do so. Rather my claim is that as a work of art it is correctly described as cold and lifeless, even though it fares better when seen as a painting.

2.3 Responsibility and Literary Interpretation

I mentioned in Chapter III that an author's intending a passage to mean such-and-such is not a necessary condition for its meaning such-and-such. Linguistic ineptitude can lead to an author's text saying something contrary to his intention. We expect authors and poets to know the language in which they write. If a word is grossly misused in a poem, its poet can be held accountable for his
poem being read in a manner different from the way he intended. When we do come across an apparent misuse of a word or phrase, and accept it as part of a text, we presuppose that its author is responsible for its use. The usual alternative is to treat the misuse as a printer's error.

One is subject to praise or blame for what one says. If I seriously suggest to my students that they ought to cheat on exams whenever possible, I am deserving of censure. One is subject to praise or blame if what one says is witty, profound, clever or trite. This is so, however, only if one's remark is correctly interpreted. Suppose I find in a student's paper what I take to be a subtle and successful argument, and I grade his paper accordingly. On talking to him later, however, it might become very clear that he actually had no idea of what he was doing. As it turned out, I had read the argument into his text. It was my argument, not his; his words had just suggested the argument to me. He was not responsible for the argument I found, and hence not deserving of the praise I was ready to offer.

To treat a literary text as an utterance is to take what it suggests, implies, or conveys as something its author is suggesting, implying or conveying. Which of
incompatible interpretations of a text is the correct interpretation can thus be settled by appeal to an author's typical attitudes, for these will be evidence of what an author is likely to suggest, imply or convey. An author's intent can disambiguate his text as in ordinary conversation one's statement of intent can disambiguate one's utterance.

But, in principle at least, it need not be the case that a text expresses the actual attitudes of its author. Consider John Hospers' remarks on the relevance of the origins of _Uncle Tom's Cabin_ to our assessment of it.

If we should discover that _Uncle Tom's Cabin_ was written by a wealthy Southern slaveowner on a wager to prove how well he could present the feelings of "the other side." . . . Our judgment of the work would not be changed; or, at any rate, I submit, it should not—for the novel, after we have made this discovery, would be just the same as before; not a jot or a tittle of it would be changed by our discovery. And as long as it is the work which we are judging, surely our judgment should remain unchanged as long as the work is unchanged.20

We must, I think, agree with Hospers that our judgment of the work is not in need of revision in this case. The thesis of the novel, that slavery in America is an unjust institution, continues to be the thesis of _Uncle Tom's Cabin_ even though this does not express the actual attitude
of its author. First, that such a case is possible does not show that we are not in the typical case justified in treating works as reflecting the attitudes and beliefs of their authors. Second, though the Southern slaveowner is not himself suggesting that slavery should be abolished, he is responsible for the novel's suggesting it. That its author was insincere concerning the work's thesis does not preclude his being liable for praise or blame for the message it does convey or for other of the work's literary features. On the other hand, since the author was ignorant of the Civil Rights Act, he could not be responsible for a text which alluded to that law.

In some cases it is reasonable to take a text to be an utterance of its author. A poem or novel which has a clear thesis or "message" will in the usual case be a thesis its author is committed to and is attempting to convey. This is just a fact about how people are likely to behave. On the other hand, we can treat a text as a "construct," something its author has made in the medium of words. While the painter manipulates paint to achieve a certain effect, the poet draws upon the meanings, suggestions and connotations of words to create a product with certain linguistic properties.

"The real basis for intentionalism," Mary Sirridge remarks, "is a conception of the nature of the work of art
as a kind of communication." That an author communicates through his text is the basis of Juhl's text-as-utterance approach. Beardsley, on the other hand, opts for the text-as-construct model. It is my position that intentionalism is true regardless of which model one adopts. The text-as-construct is an artistic product which contains a complex of interrelated linguistic properties. To interpret a text correctly as a work of art is to construe its properties in such a way that its author is responsible for the text as interpreted.

In response to Stoll's remark that the "poem is not the critic's own," Wimsatt and Beardsley reply that

the poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it). The poem belongs to the public.

Stephen Davies makes a comparable point. In one sense, he says

all poets give up ownership of their poems when they make those poems public. Works of art presented to the public as such belong to everyone who cares to interpret and interest themselves in them as much as to their creators.

These claims of ownership need some clarification. No one literally owns Milton's Paradise Lost. One might own the original text, but not the work itself. Our use of the
possessives when we speak of Picasso's Three Musicians, Brancusi's Bird in Flight or Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is comparable, I think, to its use in 'Joe's mess,' 'Hitler's atrocities' or 'Kant's argument.' It is an attribution of responsibility. It cannot, I should note, be construed merely as indicating who caused a work to come into existence. Engineers built Oldenberg's Crusoe Umbrella, but the work of art is Oldenberg's, not theirs.

In this sense, a poet cannot give up ownership of his poem. Tolstoy may have late in life denied the value of some of his works, but this denial does not make him any less responsible for what he wrote. On the other hand, I am unsure of what sense can be made of the claims that a work of art "belongs" to the public. In making the point above, Davies considers Blake's Jerusalem. The word 'mills' occurs in that poem, yet because there were no factories at the time Blake wrote Jerusalem, he could not have intended 'mills' to refer to factories. One might, for the sake of aesthetic interest, read 'mills' in Blake's poem as referring to modern factories. Concerning this anachronistic reading, Davies remarks that

What would be illegitimate in such cases would be the claim to be interpreting the poet's poem, or that the poet could be held responsible and praised for the
aesthetic rewards following from such readings. . . . The aesthetic concern is with a public object which belongs to the poet only in the aesthetically unimportant respect that he caused it to exist.24

I take the claim of ownership to be a claim about rights. What belongs to the public is the sequence of words which Blake caused to exist. The public owns that poem in the sense that anyone has the prerogative, if one's aim is aesthetic appreciation, to read the poem as one wishes. Finally, Davies concludes,

any attempt to restrict aesthetic interest merely to aesthetic objects which can be identified as the works of artists would be no more than legislative.25

Davies and I are in agreement in some respects. First, to interpret a poem anachronistically is not to interpret the poet's poem, i.e., the poem for which the poet is responsible. Second, the demand that we give up aesthetic attention to objects other than works of artists certainly would be an absurd demand. I am not recommending this. I am concerned instead with the narrower task of interpreting texts with the aim or understanding them as works of art. To treat a text as a work of art is to do more than to treat it as an object its author caused to come into existence; it involves distinguishing the literary features for which the author is responsible from
those for which we are the source. I am not making the further claim that we ought always to treat texts in this way. Reading 'mills' in Jerusalem to allude to modern factories is not a mistake if one's aim is aesthetic appreciation, but it would be a mistake for the literary critic to interpret Blake's poem in that way. In the role of critic, one's task is to interpret a work of art, and thus one is denied the liberties of the casual reader.

3. Conclusion to this Dissertation

My chief argument against internalism in Chapters II and III was that the internal features of a work of art will in general equally support more than one description or interpretation. Thus, internal evidence will not suffice to verify critical descriptions or interpretations. An appeal to external evidence must be made to determine which of competing descriptions or interpretations is correct.

In this final chapter, I have attempted to show why the appeal to an author's intentions to "disambigutae" a work is a reasonable appeal. Our ordinary conception of a work of art requires that some individual, the work's artist, be responsible for the work's artistically relevant features. Since only under some descriptions or interpretations can an artist be held accountable for the features attributed to a work, the range of acceptable critical descriptions and
interpretations of works of art is determined by the limits of an artist's responsibility. In the ordinary situation, appeal to an individual's intention can resolve questions of his responsibility, and in the same way appeal to an artist's intentions can be used to settle critical disputes. A critic's appeal to an artist's intent is evidence that the way the critic sees or reads the work is consistent with the artist's being responsible for its features as so described or interpreted.

After offering several construals of the work of Jasper Johns, Leo Steinberg remarks

And now I'm faced with a number of questions, and a certain anxiety. What I have said—was it found in the pictures or read into them.26

He reflects here an anxiety I take to be endemic to our encounters with works of art. We are presented with options. More than one way of construing a work will "fit" the features of the work which meet the eye. That one's interpretation fits a work's exhibited features is no guarantee that one is not reading into a work what is not there. The distinction, as I have construed it, is the difference between what we put into the work and what the artist is responsible for our seeing or thinking. When we are reading into a work, we are the source of the features we appear to
find. On the other hand, we discover features within a work when its artist has put them there, i.e., when he and not his audience is accountable for the work's artistic properties. This is what distinguishes our viewing of art from our interpreting shapes in the clouds.
NOTES

CHAPTER I

1 Artforum (March, 1983), p. 4.


5 Dickie, p. 120.


7 Dickie, p. 54.

8 Dickie, p. 55.


11 F. Elgar and R. Maillard, p. 56, quoted in Kulka, p. 337.

12 I should note that Kulka mentions such features of contemporary conceptual art. He distinguishes "artistic or art-historical" value (p. 338) from aesthetic value, and in effect marks out two categories where I would note three. A work's art-historical value is its value in influencing new directions in art.
A work's artistic value is its value in virtue of its features which are not aesthetic features narrowly construed (i.e., non-perceptual features). My argument in Chapter II against internalism is (in part) that the verification of the presence of some features relevant to a work's artistic value require evidence external to the work itself.


18 Margolis, p. 190.


22 This example is taken from J. L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words (Harvard University Press, 1962).

23 Matthews, p. 7.

24 Matthews, p. 8.

25 Matthews, p. 10.

27 Hancher, p. 484.


29 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 9.


32 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 10.

33 Matthews claims that although Beardsley's distinction "is roughly congruent without usage of the terms 'descriptive and interpretive'" (p. 10), it does not explain why statements of meaning are usually interpretive.


35 Hungerland, pp. 736-737.

36 Beardsley, "The Limits of Critical Interpretation," p. 76.


Barnes makes this point in a footnote to "Some Remarks About the Obvious."

See, for example, Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).


Ellis, p. 255.

Ellis, p. 254.

Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 77.


Beardsley, "The Limits of Critical Interpretation," pp. 73-74.


Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 44.


Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 42.

Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 43.

For further argument that literary texts have one and only one correct interpretation, see Juhl, pp. 196-238.

58 Stevenson, p. 127.
59 Stevenson, p. 128.
60 Stevenson, p. 128.
61 Stevenson, in a footnote in reference to his "Interpre-
tation and Evaluation in Aesthetics," p. 129.
62 Margolis, pp. 184-185.
63 Joseph Margolis, "The Logic of Interpretation," in
Philosophy Looks at the Arts, pp. 108-118.
64 Margolis, "The Logic of Interpretation," p. 113.
67 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 43. The
quotations are from Samuel Hynes, "Whitman, Pound,
and the Prose Tradition," in The Presence of Walt
Whitman, English Institute Papers (Columbia
University Press, 1962), pp. 129-130, and Hirsch,
p. 137.
68 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism," p. 44.
69 Margolis, "The Logic of Interpretation," p. 112.
70 Margolis, "The Logic of Interpretation," p. 113.
71 Matthews, pp. 10-11.
72 Matthews, p. 13.
73 Matthews, p. 13.
74 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, pp. 57-58.
75 Hirsch, p. 77.
76 Hirsch, Appendix I, p. 238.
77 Juhl responds in detail to the claim that interpretive
reasoning is necessarily circular in the appendix
to his Interpretation.
NOTES

CHAPTER II


3 Mellow, p. 80.

4 Mellow, p. 80.

5 Beardsley, p. 28.

6 Beardsley, p. 28.

7 Beardsley, p. 20.

8 Beardsley, p. 20.

9 Beardsley, p. 3.

10 Beardsley, p. 31. The features of the perceptual object not open to direct sensory awareness are those relating to its causes and effects.

11 Beardsley, p. 32.

12 Beardsley, p. 33.

13 Beardsley, p. 64.

14 Beardsley, p. 64.

15 Beardsley, p. 64.

16 Beardsley, p. 75.

17 Beardsley, p. 83.
18 Beardsley, pp. 33-34.


23 Beardsley, Aesthetics, pp. 52-53.

24 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 53.

25 Beardsley, Aesthetics, pp. 50-51, 52.

26 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 53.

27 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 52.


31 Walton, p. 343.

32 Walton, p. 346.

33 Walton, p. 349.

34 Walton, p. 350.

35 Walton, p. 347.
36 Walton, p. 347.

37 Walton, pp. 355-356.


39 "Revival of Realism," *Newsweek* (June 7, 1982), p. 70.
NOTES

CHAPTER III


6 Stevenson, p. 135.

7 Beardsley says, "What we attacked [in 'The Intentional Fallacy'] under a single name (intentionalism) were in fact two closely related forms of unsound argument: that which attributes a certain meaning to a work on the ground that the artist intended the work to have that meaning, and that which appraises the work at a certain value on the ground that it does or does not fulfill the artist's intention." "On the Creation of Art," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 23 (1965), p. 301.

8 Ellis, p. 316.

9 Ellis, p. 321.

10 I have in mind here a frequency interpretation of probabilities. The subjectivist interpretation (which assigns probabilities to the occurrence of an event on the basis of one's willingness to agree to a bet) would perhaps answer differently in this particular case.
11 Ellis, p. 316.
12 Ellis, p. 322.

14 This is how Juhl uses the notion of authorial intention. Hirsch, however, draws upon the Husserlian conception of intention. To say that an author intended a particular meaning is to say that the author stood in a certain relation to a meaning, which is an object of consciousness.

15 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 16.

17 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 57.
18 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 145.
19 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 145.

21 Wimsatt and Beardsley, p. 92.
22 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 33.
23 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 33.

25 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 34.
26 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 34.
27 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 76.

29 Hirsch, p. 22.


36 Beardsley (The Possibility of Criticism) and Tolhurst ("On What a Text Is and How it Means") attribute this view to Hirsch.


39 Hirsch, p. 4.

40 Hirsch, p. 4.

41 Hirsch, p. 4.

42 Hirsch, Appendix I, p. 216.

43 Hirsch, p. 12.

44 Hirsch, p. 38.
In order to concentrate on the role of authorial intention in Hirsch's account, I here ignored some complexities. He offers four interpretive principles: (1) the criterion of legitimacy: "the reading must be permissible within the public norms of the langue [i.e., the system of linguistic possibilities] in which the text was composed" (Appendix I, p. 236); (2) the criterion of correspondence, comparable to Beardsley's principle of plenitude; (3) the principle of generic appropriateness: the text must be read in accordance with the conventions of its genre; and (4) the principle of coherence. More than one reading of a text will meet (1)-(4), and hence the author's typical attitudes and expectations must be appealed to to decide between those readings. Compare my remarks on Hirsch and the hermeneutic circle in Chapter I, section 3.4.


It might be argued that these two interpretations can be consistently reconciled. Hirsch argues that they cannot (Appendix I, 227). See also Juhl, p. 200.

Hirsch, Appendix I, pp. 239, 231.

Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 29.

Beradsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 29.

"the alternative to intentionalism is universal interpretive ambiguity" (p. 138), and offers examples in behalf of that claim.

In section 1.1 above I argued that the intentionalist/anti-intentionalist debate was not, as Ellis claimed, merely a clash of attitudes about poetry. I there claimed that the debate could be grounded on our intuitive agreement about what a poem can and cannot mean. This fact is not inconsistent with Hirsch's claim that the principles of internalism has led to widespread disagreement in literary interpretation. There is pre-theoretic agreement that literary texts are in fact not radically ambiguous, and the argument here is that application of the internalist's principles entails that they are. On the other hand, there is enough agreement about a text's meaning in cases designed to emphasize specific features of texts to check critical principles. Some progress, I think, is made in this chapter. In light of examples given we find the internalist forced to admit that the values in a community are part of its linguistic norms. (See Nathan's response to Tolhurst, section 4.5, below.)

56 Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism, p. 29.

57 Juhl, p. 20.

58 Hirsch, p. 5.

59 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 25.

60 Juhl, p. 54.


62 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 238. Beardsley points out some cases where we can identify a narrator of a text with its author, for example, when a poem contains proper names.

Some texts can be treated as utterances of their authors, and others cannot. I will try to give a more general account in Chapter IV which explains this to some extent.

Marcia M. Eaton, "Good and Correct Interpretations of Literature," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 29 (1970-71). In a later article on the same subject ("Liars, Ranters, and Dramatic Speakers"), Eaton suggests that an author's intentions can help but are not decisive in formulating an interpretation.


Eaton, "Good and Correct Interpretations of Literature," p. 228.

Eaton, "Good and Correct Interpretations of Literature," p. 228.

Eaton, "Good and Correct Interpretations of Literature," p. 231.


Tolhurst, p. 9.


Nathan, p. 249.

Nathan, in a footnote, p. 256.

This appears to be the view of Gene Blocker in "The Meaning of a Poem."
77 Beardsley, "The Concept of Literature," pp. 31-32.

78 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p. 270.

79 Wimsatt and Beardsley, p. 98.
CHAPTER IV

There might be reasons why any attempt to define 'art' is doomed to fail. Morris Weitz argues that the concept 'art' is an open concept. Since what we are willing to countenance as art is open to revision, no set of logically necessary and sufficient conditions can be given for that concept. It is central to our current conception of art, however, that a work of art, to be a work of art, must have an artist. It is our current practice with which my points are concerned. See Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 15 (1956).


2 Bell, p. 20.


7 Dickie, p. 108.


9 Arthur Danto, pp. 93-94. Ted Cohen has also suggested that Duchamp's *Fountain* be considered as the gesture of presenting the urinal within the gallery's setting.


13 I will not consider cases where a work has more than one artist. In the case of cinema, for example, different individuals will be responsible for different features within a film. In cases of joint responsibility, there will be some individual responsible for any of a work's artistically relevant features.


15 There are probably artists who deny that what they have done is of any value. This does not, however, entail that they are not responsible for the features their work might possess. One's denying that one's heroics were anything special does not entail that one is not deserving of praise.


17 Hungerland, p. 740.


19 From a letter to the editor concerning a work by Picasso, *Newsweek* (September 27, 1982).


24 Davies, p. 69.

25 Davies, p. 69.


----------. "The Logic of Interpretation," in Philosophy Looks at the Arts.


Mellow, James R. "Sun, Surf, & Subversion," Art News (December, 1982).


"Revival of Realism," Newsweek (June 7, 1982).


