

BOOK REVIEWS

THE LITERARY WORK OF ART. Translated with an introduction by George G. Grabowicz, Foreword by David M. Levin. Northwestern University Press. Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, pp. lxxxiii + 415. \$15.00.

This brilliant work, "an investigation on the borderlines of ontology, logic and the theory of literature" is now, over forty years after its appearance in German, the first major work by Ingarden to become available to English readers. It can be described as an account of all that must be given in a literary work if it is to be a literary work, Ingarden's investigation being carried out not in respect of a work's aesthetic value but of its ontological structure, for it is only by first revealing the elements essential to that structure that we can show the axes along which a mere 'literary work' can truly partake in the nature of a 'literary work of art'. Grabowicz in his able historical introduction shows the way in which Ingarden's ontological philosophy has influenced the conceptual framework of especially German and Polish literary criticism.

Ingarden's interest in the philosophy of literature arose out of his life-long attempt to grapple with the traditional ontological problem of idealism-realism, a problem which had been newly raised by precursors of phenomenology such as Brentano, Twardowski and Meinong. Through Husserl, with whom he had studied in Freiburg, Ingarden shared with these philosophers a common background, involving in particular the assumption that thought can create its own objects. This meant, for example, that for Ingarden it was unquestioned that when we read a novel we concern ourselves with objects: the novel's characters, etc., and not only with — as some positivists would claim — the mere words or word-shapes which make up the work, or the thoughts which ran through its author's mind in the process of creating it.

Husserl himself in the idealism-realism dispute had adopted the transcendental idealist position, claiming the ontological dependence of the real world upon acts of consciousness or, in other words, that thought creates all the objects of that world. But Ingarden, whilst he continued to utilise the insights and methods developed by Husserl (*The Literary Work of Art* is peppered with

references to Husserl and his early disciples Pfänder, Reinach, Conrad-Martius, etc.), felt the need to take up a position against the transcendental idealist doctrine believing that it could not be reconciled with the resistance to thought, the self-sufficiency (in Ingarden's terms: the 'ontic autonomy') of real objects as they are given to us in experience. He conceived the project of demonstrating how objects which were clearly dependent upon conscious acts (i.e., which were 'ontically heteronomous') — for example, the as-if-real objects brought into being by literary works — differ radically from real objects in ways which would point to the latter's possessing ontic autonomy.

In order to give some idea of the range of Ingarden's achievement we must first call to mind the central insight into the intentional nature of all thinking activity on which it rests. Every thought points beyond itself in ways precisely determined by the thought. Where the object of our thinking actually exists we might be tempted to identify this outward-pointing with the thought's simply having the given object as *referent*, but reflection on our thought about non-existent and non-present objects reveals a further component as being essential, not only to such acts, but to every act of thinking. This component Ingarden calls the 'projection' in the act of thought of an 'intentional objectivity', which we can think of as that which, whilst not itself being present to consciousness, is somehow the 'carrier' of those states of affairs, objects and properties which do become present to consciousness in a given thought. If we first consider thought about the purely imaginary — let us take the example of A's imagining a unicorn — then it is the projected intentional objectivity which maintains this (ontically heteronomous) unicorn in being for A having properties which depend precisely upon what A himself in terms of content had put into his thought the unicorn which A is being enabled to think about is precisely co-ordinated to A's 'stock' of its properties (being male; horned; four-legged; real, if A was not aware that unicorns do not exist; imaginary, if A was conscious of merely *imagining* a unicorn; and so on). Turning now to thought about real objects: let us take A's thought about an uncle, U, he is due to meet for the first time tomorrow. Here the intentional objectivity projected by A's thought is no longer required to maintain its object *in being*, but it still does play an

essential role, and this we can see if we question how we are to account for the difference between U as an unknown object present in the thought of A and as he is in himself, 'transcendent' to such thought. The intentional objectivity here serves the function of carrier for the uncle as determined with respect to the properties which he is known by A to possess and as otherwise totally "bare". We can say that it serves as the carrier for the *uncle-as-intended-by-A*, but A's thought is "about" the uncle *himself*: he is never *aware* of this carrier nor of its attendant "bareness". When the time comes for the uncle to become experientially present to A, whether as a voice on a telephone or as a bald man shaking A's hand, then the intentional objectivity on the one hand becomes enriched in ways precisely coordinated to A's experience of the uncle, and on the other hand, since the need for an intervening carrier of properties falls away, the intentional objectivity becomes inessential and completely 'transparent' allowing A's thought to pass directly through on to the uncle himself. We can say that the intentional objectivity falls back to the half-light of A's mind, he is thinking *immediately* about the co-present uncle.

Thought, therefore, always involves the projection of intentional objectivities which play an essential role wherever the object of thought is non-existent or non-present. One important species of thought is that which becomes, as it were, incarnated in language when we bestow meanings upon words and word-complexes: these project (or can, at least, be conceived as projecting) what Ingarden calls 'derived' (i.e. non-actual) intentional objectivities precisely correlated to the meanings of the given words and complexes. The 'actual' intentional objectivities projected when thoughts are activated in the reading or use of words will not be so precisely correlated, since they will possess subjective (e.g. intuitive) impurities: the derived objectivity of a given complex lies transcendent to all such actual objectivities projected when we think that complex, but it is in these latter that the derived objectivity has what Ingarden calls its 'ontic basis': that is to say, it is only through becoming actualised in consciousness that a derived objectivity becomes more than a mere empty possibility.

We have seen, by considering what must lie on the side of the objective linguistic formations, how we must conceive of an as it were "definitive" *derived* intentional objectivity being projected by a word-complex as precisely determined to its meaning, and how this derived objectivity must stand in correlation with, on the side of subjective consciousness, the *actual* (and more or less impure) intentional objectivities projected when we read or use words: the former standing 'transcendent' to the latter.

Let us now extend this two-sidedness to the word-complex which forms the literary work as a whole, approaching the work with respect to what must be contained on its side if we are to account for all the constituents given as essential to readings of it. Ingarden puts forward the concept of a 'concretisation' of a literary work, which is the structure of intentions and intentional objects constituted by consciousness in a given reading. A concretisation involves not only streams of sound-and thought-material passing through our minds, but also the characters, setting, actions, etc., of the work as made actual by the reader in a given reading to which he will have imported his own subjective impurities. Ingarden argues that given these arrays of actual constituents on the side of consciousness, we must conceive of their being on the side of the work itself corresponding derived constituents shorn of subjective impurity and lying transcendent to their actualisations. All these latter derived constituents taken together form what he calls the 'structure' of the literary work, and it is the recognition of this structure and the uncovering of its essential 'anatomy' that form the central accomplishment of Ingarden's investigation. He shows how we can distinguish in the structure of the work separate 'strata' of intentional constituents, separate 'voices' of the work which interact to produce a 'harmonious polyphony'. Essential to every work are:

(1) The stratum of word-sounds and higher-order phonetic formations. (Language is an essential element of literary works — as is seen most clearly in the case of poetry. But as an element of an intentional structure language must appear in intentional formations or '*Gestalten*' transcendent to all concrete aural material; otherwise, since all such material varies from reading to reading, we should have no intersubjective identity of a literary work. It will be observed here that Ingarden ignores any suggestion of a written or printed component as perhaps being essential to the structure of a literary work. In this he has been waylaid by the tradition, from Aristotle to Husserl, of assuming a special intimacy between speech and thought: Ingarden excludes from view the visual-symbolic component, surely essential to post-Homeric literature as is seen when we refer to such 'border-line cases' of the literary work as concrete poetry and works of mathematics or symbolic logic.)

(2) The stratum of meaning units. (Speaking ontologically, i.e., in terms of the constitution of all the strata of a work in readers' concretisations, it is the meaning stratum which is most important, and Ingarden devotes almost half his book in setting forth for us a complete phenomenology of meaning (and hence also of language). This is powerful enough, in letting what is essential to every different kind of meaning — especially where we

deal with word-complexes which are meaningful despite the lack of external referent, and here we must even include nonsense verse — come forward unmarred by any Ockhamist presuppositions, to include within itself many less far-seeing philosophies of language as special cases.)

(3) The stratum of represented objects. (We can see that a concretisation of a literary work involves a making actual of objects (characters, chairs, clocks, etc.) as engaging in certain actions and as located in certain spatio-temporal settings. In the structure of the work itself there belong, we can say, the definitive such objects, actions, settings, etc., which make possible their actualisation on the part of the reader.)

(4) The stratum of sequences of schematised aspects. (All objects appear in one aspect or another (as coloured, as red, as an apple, as mine, etc.). Real objects appear in a continuous manifold of shifting and merging concrete aspects which depend on what, from moment to moment is thematic to our consciousness. Such concrete aspects can clearly have no place within the structure of the literary work itself since the stratum of objects of that structure has the full extent of its being determined by only a finite number of sentences; in this sense literary aspects will always be 'skeletal' or 'schematised', possessing 'spots of indeterminacy' which will, to some extent, become filled by readers importing subjective, e.g. sensory data to their concretisations.)

Having moved, with Ingarden, from the readings which we experience to the transcendent structure of the work which make those readings possible, we can now return to the experiential level and see what light is thrown upon reading literature when we become conscious of stratification, of schematisation, and of the projection by word-complexes of intentional objectivities. As we read a literary work the stream of conscious thought and intentions activated by the work is accompanied by an ever-growing, ever-changing projected *manifold* of intentional objectivities: this manifold serves as the carrier of all the interrelated elements released in the unfolding of the work — including the represented objects, the represented space and time in the work, and so on — from the experience of which we derive aesthetic appreciation of the work. First of all this intentional manifold effects a 'colouring' of our thoughts derived from phonic qualities in the work: in poetry, for example, our experience is coloured by factors such as verse-melody, rhyme, rhythm and assonance. Secondly the manifold of intentional objectivities has embodied within it aesthetically valent qualities deriving from the meaning-stratum of the work; our experience of the world of a literary work is *mediated*

by the meanings formed by the author. The peculiar *style* of this mediation in a given work depends on the fact that meanings can be formed so as to be, for example, systematically opaque, indeterminate, or ambiguous: in such cases intentional objectivities give their objects as it were only through a haze or, in the case of ambiguity, the intentional objectivity is 'opalescent', it gives a double object in a shimmering way which provokes us to shift from one lived intention to another. The author can thus create an aesthetically satisfying background of indeterminateness or impossibility in our concretisations of the work;

(Garlic and sapphires in the mud)
(Clot the bedded axle-tree . . .)

or he can create, by choice of precise meaning-formations, an air of sharpness or optimism in our concretisations. Finally the manifold maintains in being for us the objects, most especially the characters in the work and the properties which they possess. As we begin to read about, say, Mr. Pickwick, the manifold of intentional objectivities projected by our intending Dickens' words and sentences brings before us a Mr. Pickwick who is, in terms of the content of our thought about him, at first totally bare (although this bareness is never something of which we are conscious); but in the course of our reading this manifold becomes the carrier of ever more and more richly determined qualities given as possessed by Mr. Pickwick, such that Mr. Pickwick can himself become the object of aesthetic appreciation. But he is not an object which we can view "from all sides": he is accessible to us only as presented within the schematised aspects held in readiness in the structure of the work, as partaking in those actions and relations determined by his author, and we can say that the sequences of aspects in which Mr. Pickwick is given can also themselves become the object of aesthetic appreciation. A truly aesthetic concretisation of a work, then, is constituted in a reading which is faithful to all that is given in each of the strata of the work and which takes unto itself, as the work unfolds, all the aesthetically important interrelations between the strata such that the work is concretised as a harmonious unity of all its constituents. Such a concretisation is to be contrasted with a partial concretisation when the reader as it were gets "lost" in just one stratum of the work by becoming absorbed, say, in the style of its author or in the adventures of its characters.

In adopting his deliberately narrow scope Ingarden has produced a remarkable well-rounded work, but its significance extends far beyond the theory of literature. Ingarden develops, for example, an extension of Husserl's demolition of psychologism in logic such that we can now see the way out of psychologism in

aesthetics, and we have already referred to his philosophy of meaning which reveals hitherto hidden components of language in both its phonetic and its cognitive aspects. Indeed, besides Ingarden's own three-volume *Hauptwerk* on *The Controversy over the Existence of the World*, this work is challenged in suggestiveness only by the major works of Heidegger, Sartre and, of course, Husserl himself.

In the present review we have been concerned to outline Ingarden's ontology of *The Literary Work of Art*; discussion of the influences upon Ingarden in this

work and of its reception in the wider world is to be found in Grabowicz's admirable Introduction — but perhaps for English readers it will be useful to refer here to the little-acknowledged indebtedness to Ingarden of René Wellek in his *The Theory of Literature* (written with Austin Warren) and to the review in *Mind*, 1932, which seems to have sunk without trace. The first valuable review, written by Spiegelberg, is to be found in *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, XXV, 1931.

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