PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

A Review of Philosophical Ideas and Trends

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JEAN RACINE'S FEUD WITH WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* AND *PHÈDRE*

RAYMOND J. WILSON III

A playwright can be influenced by the plays of an earlier playwright, even if the later writer has not read or seen the earlier plays. As I and my co-writer Jerre Collins pointed out with reference to Edward Albee: Commenting about the authors who critics said had influenced him, Albee says, "And the list of twenty-six included three playwrights whom I had not read or seen." The author adds that he "made a point of reading" the three playwrights that critics suspected had influenced him, even though he had not known them: "I found that I had indeed been influenced by them. Every play, I think, is written like this."  

Jean Racine may have had a similar relationship with William Shakespeare. If Racine did have an interaction with Shakespeare, the relationship would have been a feud. Racine incessantly feuded with all his living rivals. Why would he not have feuded with his most threatening predecessor? Racine's feuds were personal and professional. Racine once lured an actress away from Molière's company to a rival company which was performing Racine's plays; Thérèse du Parc, the actress in question, had also been loved by Pierre Corneille, who wrote at least three love poems to her. Thérèse may even have been Corneille's mistress. Racine made Thérèse his mistress. While other motives beyond rivalry might have been involved, we know that Jean Racine, who lived from 1639 to 1699, was a very contentious person.  

His feuds with Molière (1622 to 1673) and Corneille (1606 to 1684) provide ample evidence that Racine was prone to feuding, and these feuds establish a background to the suggestion that, as Racine wrote *Phèdre*, he was conducting a feud with Shakespeare even though Shakespeare lived from 1564 to 1616, meaning that Shakespeare died twenty-three years before Racine was born.
THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN ROMAN INGARDEN’S THINKING

GLORIA VERGARA

Roman Ingarden is a crucial thinker in the debate about literary reception. I agree with those who, like Gerald Nyenhuis, Rolf Fieguth, and José María Pozuelo Yvancos, affirm that Ingarden laid the foundations for the development of a theory of the structure of literary works of art while establishing the principles of their reception. However, theorists of the aesthetics of reception, such as Rainer Warning, declare that, despite the way it borrows the concept of “concretization” from him, Ingarden himself would have rejected any association with that theory. According to Warning, this has created negation with respect to Ingarden’s phenomenology due to the fact that it refers to a faithful concretization—admitted or adequate—of the literary artwork. But beyond this Ingardenian determination, and apparently classicist vision of literature, Warning holds that weaknesses in Ingarden’s metaphysical aesthetic appear when the analysis of the reconstruction leads to questioning the artistic value of the work of art. There arises the unequivocal trend to have this aesthetic value primarily consist of metaphysical qualities and only secondarily of a possible, broad field of variation of the possibilities of concretion.

It is important to note that Warning bases his views on his reading of Ingarden’s Das Literarische Kunstwerk (The Literary Work of Art) in a very general way. He does not, however, refer, as I do, to Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kunstwerks (Cognition of the Literary Work of Art), for his analysis, or to where Ingarden broadly sets forth what would indubitably be an aesthetics of reception, particularly when he lays out in detail the process of concretization and the constitution of the aesthetic object and the aesthetic experience. Warning does emphasize Jan Mukařovský’s ideas about the work of art as an aesthetic object, but he does not mention that the concept of aesthetic object was taken from
the German philosopher Broder Christiansen and the Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden.7

If we consider what was previously said, Ingarden can perfectly well be seen as a precursor of the theory of literary reception. According to Pozuelo Yvancos, the Polish philosopher has served as a bridge between phenomenology and hermeneutics as originated in Husserl and Heidegger and literary scholarship, through his influence on members of the Constance School of reception aesthetics, particularly on Wolfgang Iser.8 With this in mind, it becomes easier to identify clearly the development of his ideas with regard to some of Mukařovský’s and Jauss’ assumptions, and particularly with regard to Iser’s The Act of Reading.9

According to Pozuelo Yvancos, what Jan Mukařovský and his disciple Felix Vodicka accomplished within the Prague School was to strengthen Ingarden’s method by taking it away from its ahistoricism and individualism to submerge it within the historicCO-collective process.10 Mukařovský speaks about a shifting phenomenon of concretization that updates a series of norms that are social in nature.

Ingarden’s concerns moved in another direction, because he was fighting against psychologism’s attempts to detach the aesthetic experience from the possible and diverse aesthetic objects that, as a schematic formation, the work of art is capable of producing. As for the shifting, changing attributes of concretization, Ingarden was the first to talk about this, in The Literary Work of Art (1931), as well as in the Cognition of the Literary Work of Art (1936) and the expanded edition of it that appeared in the sixties. It is just that, Pozuelo Yvancos explains, for Mukařovský, this problem, like every form of signification, is cultural-historical in nature: the subjective forms of consciousness that the members of a collectivity share in common at a determined historical moment in response to stimulus from the textual object or artifact.11

From this vantage point, it is interesting to review the notion of “aesthetic experience” from within Ingarden’s theory itself, since the Polish philosopher covers this problem in detail in his text the Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, translated into English by Ruth Ann Crowley and published by Northwestern University Press in 1973.

To deepen our understanding of the aesthetic experience, we will begin with the clear assumption in Ingarden’s thought that it is necessary to differentiate the cognition of the work of art that occurs during the process of individual reading, in which the world it portrays reveals itself to us from “the cognitive attitude which leads to an apprehension of the essential structure... [and gives] us an experience of the actual qualitative constitution of a particular work.”12 A second type of knowledge will bring us to question the general nature of the work of art, notice its substantial differences, its phonetic patterns and, its sentence meanings, its intentional sentence correlates, its set of circumstances, etc. “It is a matter of apprehending the constitutive formal and material factors of such elements and the essential differences among the elements which follow from these factors, as well as the various interrelations and connections among the elements.”13

This knowledge cannot be achieved through an ordinary reading, Ingarden says. We can actually even think of this as knowledge required by the aesthete reader whose object of study is the literary work of art. Thus, a type of mediation proves necessary that contemplates the analysis a priori directed toward a general idea of the literary work as well as the capturing of the complete meaning of sentences that goes beyond its schematic attributes. In other words, comprehension cognition starts with the aesthetic experience as it gives itself during the act of reading in a recurrent fashion. This leads us to a series of reflections anchored in the schematic aspects of the literary work.

The cognition process of the literary work of art requires an aesthetic attitude, previous pre-aesthetic knowledge, and an understanding of the aesthetic object. Ingarden analyzes these three concepts and asks how we can grasp the literary work and how it accomplishes “the primary function proper to the literary work of art [that] consists in enabling the reader... to constitute an aesthetic object which belongs to the aesthetic objects permitted by the work...”14 If this required function is met, then it will reveal a series
of qualities that Ingarden named aesthetic values. Hence, the revelation of the aesthetic object will make us think that the "idea" of a projected world has been apprehended.

But what role does the reader play in this process? Because, as Wolfgang Iser once said, if in reality, the texts possessed the meanings produced by interpretation, then not much would be left for the reader to do. The reader would only accept or reject those meanings. However, between the text and its reader, many more things happen than a requirement to make a yes or no decision.\(^\text{10}\)

According to Iser, the text cannot be reduced to a meaning that the reader has to discover. The meanings within a text are not hidden in it; they are produced during the reading process thanks to the interaction between the text and the reader.

The vision of this theorist of reception extends beyond Ingarden’s vantage point, but borrows many of his fundamental concepts and ideas: concretization, indetermination, and schematized aspects. For Ingarden, the work of art is a schematic formation that implies the co-creating activity of the reader. Thus

\[\text{the function of the reader consists in lending himself to the suggestions and directives proceeding from the work and in actualizing not just any aspect he chooses but rather those suggested by the work. Of course, he is never completely bound by work itself but, if he makes himself completely free of it, and does not bother about which aspects the world portrayed in the work would have itself viewed in, then his deviation from the work is almost assured, and an adequate apprehension is out of the question.}\]

This is closely related to the aesthetic attitude that Ingarden analyzes in depth. In other words, the reader has an impression of the objects portrayed and, by means of a concretization and actualization process within the schematic network of the literary work, perceives the artistic and aesthetic values. Nevertheless, as Ingarden explains, the reader’s apprehension and aesthetic attitude are grounded in diverse acts of comprehension that are not related only to the work of art, but are also anchored in previous knowledge and experiences that form part of pre-aesthetic knowledge and that we could consider in some ways related to the “historicity,” or what Iser considered to be the reader’s horizon.

In step with the assumptions of the Prague School of thought, Hans Robert Jauss also expands upon this idea. In his article “Goethe’s Iphigenia and that of Racine,”\(^\text{17}\) he analyzes the different interpretations attributed to a literary work with the passing of time due to essential changes generated in the artistic conceptions of its time. Alluding concretely to Goethe’s Iphigenia, he finds that is interesting to observe how, after exerting a powerful influence, a work of universal literature loses its halo of perfection.\(^\text{18}\) Jauss analyzes the causes of this incomprehension and sees the need to clarify the interpretations that cover the original meaning of the work. That is why we need to keep in mind the history of reception and its effects on the pre-understanding of the contemporary reader.

To achieve this, Jauss proposes a set of considerations, wherein he clarifies that he does not share Ingarden’s vision. According to Jauss, to re-access to the nature of the work, the virtual structure of the literary work needs to be concretized, in other words, assimilated by those who receive it. But, the meaning of the work of art should not be conceived of as a timeless substance, but as a totality constituted within history itself. Jauss did not appeal to Ingarden’s concept of “concretion” in the strict sense Ingarden lent it: the work of the imagination that fills in the gaps and determines the indeterminate within the work’s schematic structure. This was in agreement with the Prague School’s structuralist aesthetic theory, understanding by such a term the meaning—new each time—that as an aesthetic object the work’s whole structure can adopt when the historic and social conditions of its reception change.\(^\text{19}\)

Jauss seeks out the historicity of art and sees the reader in a social space, participating in a communication process. Jauss tells us that as fiction, the work possesses that communicative dimension that conveys and incites certain social behaviors. Because of this, he considers that the aesthetic of reception should study this function by analyzing the most representative concretizations of a work and formulate within a system of norms and horizons of expectation.
whether it is capable of capturing the mediating function that the aesthetic experience exerts where practical knowledge and communicational behavior models are concretized.\(^{20}\)

Let me note again that these reflections about Ingarden are only based on \textit{The Literary Work of Art}, where the philosopher builds an ontology of the work. But looking at the text that concerns us today, we note that Ingarden clearly knew the historic dimension of literary reception. In the 1930s, he was still asserting that the aesthetic experience can generate changes in the reader. He discussed the temporality of the aesthetic object and of concretization. But, he considered that a "necessary correlate of this temporality and historicity of the literary aesthetic object is its absolute individuality, not only in its mode of being, but also in its full material determination."\(^{21}\) The object cannot be repeated because it depends on a series of conditions drenched in the historical moment, as Ingarden affirms. However, in what he has to say, the Polish philosopher narrows the field. His main concern is to direct aesthetic studies towards "establishing the possibility of an objective apprehension of the artistic and aesthetic values in literary art."\(^{22}\) This concern is understandable when we notice that a great variety of critical trends existed in those days, and the criteria regarding what should be considered as the literary work of art went out in several different directions:

With the tendencies to psychologism in aesthetics which were in still active at the beginning of the (20th) century (especially in Germany, for instance, in the works of Theodor Lipps and Johannes Volkert), and the aftereffects of the psychology and historicism of Dilthey, literary study was constantly diverted into other fields of investigation, primarily into a historically colored individual psychology of the poets.\(^{23}\)

Ingarden entered the debate on aesthetics of his time trying to answer two fundamental questions: How can we assess the structure of the literary work of art? And, what procedure will convey an understanding of the literary work of art? Besides serving him as a defense against the prevalent psychologism and positivism of the times, these questions allowed him to formulate his two most widely disseminated works: \textit{The Literary Work of Art} and \textit{Cognition of the Literary Work of Art}. It is in the latter that the Polish philosopher lends more clarity to the principles developed in his theory of reception. However, the anchoring of the aesthetic experience that we see in both the literary text's linguistic and its phenomenological dimensions can only be understood when we study both of Ingarden's works. Ingarden himself, as his Spanish translator acknowledges, presupposed familiarity with his first book in his second one; he constantly travels from the ontology to the phenomenology of the literary work of art. And it is precisely in this journey that he embeds his idea of aesthetic experience.

\textbf{Aesthetic Experience and Pre-aesthetic Knowledge}

As I mentioned before, to arrive at the comprehension of the literary work, we have to have an aesthetic attitude, since, according to Ingarden, the form of literary language itself forces this upon us when we read predicative sentences as judgments. But judgments as they exist in literary language are not true in the sense of being a reality outside the text. They exist as quasi-judgments.

Iser also takes up Ingarden's idea again when he affirms that the situations of the life-world are always real, and literary texts are, on the contrary, fictive; for this reason, they can only be cemented in the reading process, not in the world.\(^{24}\) Iser adheres more to the Polish philosopher's ideas when he concedes that the literary work of art is a schematic formation that must be distinguished from its concretizations, which cannot be compared either with real objects from the "life-world" or with the reader's own experiences of it.\(^{25}\)

Thus, the aesthetic attitude remains closely connected to the competence required to enter the fictive world. In many ways, the adequate revelation of the world projected by the work depends on it. If the reader does not possess this aesthetic attitude to uncover the artistic values, as suggested throughout the schematized aspects, his imagination will be outshined, and he will hardly be able to perceive those values. Then, Ingarden tells us, the aesthetic
apprehension of the work of art will remain incomplete and it will not be fairly judged.

To arrive at an appropriate aesthetic understanding of the literary work of art, an adequate concretization of its represented objects is necessary. This is not easy; even the reader can create aesthetic objects that escape the framework of the literary work. If we validated an interpretation based on the reflection of these objects, we would become victims of the psychologism that Ingarden seeks to avoid, and we would be building a series of aesthetic values that would not have a foundation within the text's own inherent artistic values and attributes. On the other hand, from Ingarden's perspective, aesthetes readers that make the literary work of art their subject of study are in need of a competent aesthetic attitude as well as pre-aesthetic knowledge. It would not be possible to allude to a fair literary critique without, for example, aiming for a faithful reconstruction of the literary work.

With the *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, Ingarden approaches the issues encountered when discussing indetermination, concretization, schematized aspects, etc. with the idea being to achieve a faithful reconstruction of the literary work of art. It is no surprise that the revelation of the literary world turns out to be a difficult matter. "The objectivities portrayed in a literary work (people, things, processes, events) are not in general immutable and are usually not portrayed in just one temporal phase or in one state..."26 They will often change drastically when in contact with other objects portrayed. For this reason, Ingarden affirms that aside from the aesthetic attitude, the reader needs a series of skills to carry out a "synthesizing" objectification capable of revealing the wholeness of a singular, unique world. "Only by virtue of the synthesizing objectification do the portrayed activities take on a quasi-reality of their own for the reader."27

We should not overlook this activity as an obvious/passive exercise. Ingarden clearly distances himself from the idea of the passive reader when he affirms that both the aesthetic attitude and the apprehension of the literary work are based on the acts of cognition that the reader carries out. In this situation, while facing the work, several factors intervene. Some help, others hinder the process of comprehension; however, the aesthetic attitude remains decisive in determining the course of operations fulfilled by the reader.

All this goes beyond the purely passive understanding of the meaning of individual sentences and requires of the reader not only a special activity but also various abilities which must be adapted to the characteristic structure of the literary work of art. Without this activity and without the proper performance of a synthesizing objectification, there will be no constitution of the world of objects portrayed in the work. And for just this reason, there will be no direct cognitive or aesthetic intercourse with this world on the part of the reader. Consequently, there are readers who certainly understand a text in a purely literal way but who still do not know what sort of portrayed world they are dealing with. Their aesthetic reactions are either not realized at all, or, if they are, they are not at all adapted to the world revealed in the work.28

Ingarden's vision is directed toward the reader as co-creator. In paragraph nine of the text cited, the philosopher clearly manifests the need to differentiate between a passive reading and an active reading. The literary work of art demands an active reading in which the reader goes from automatically apprehending the objects portrayed in the work through the meaning shown by the sentences to the synthesizing activity that gives unity and singularity to the fictive world emanating from the aesthetic object.

According to Ingarden, the passive reader remains within the sphere of meaning although the objects show themselves automatically. "In purely passive reading... one does not attempt to apprehend them or, in particular, to constitute them synthetically. Consequently, in passive reading, there is no kind of intercourse with the fictional objects."29 However, in "a reading which is properly carried out, the content of the work is organized quasi-automatically into an internally coherent whole of a higher order and is not merely a random conglomeration of separate sentences meanings which are completely independent of one another."30
If we stop for a moment at this point, we shall notice that the work itself possesses a framework that allows the reader to comprehend its projected world, since "words do not appear in isolation; rather they join together in a certain arrangement to form whole linguistic patterns of distinct kinds and orders." It turns out, as it happens with the following verses, and as Ingarden explains, that their arrangement responds to phonetic forms that point to sequences of sounds, generators of unified patterns. These arrangements that, apparently, are not channeled directly to the meaning, create, nevertheless, important effects in the rhythm, rhyme and melody that at the same time make us perceive intuitive qualities such as the softness or harshness of its "synthesized" totality. The phonetic patterns that we find in the poems of the Mexican writer Xavier Villaurrutia, for example, constitute an aesthetically important attribute. If we follow the verbal play in "Nocturno en el que nada se oye:"

```plaintext
cae mi voz  
y mi voz que madura  
y mi voz quemadura  
y mi bosque madura  
y mi voz quemadura
```

Despite noticing a phonetic pattern that highlights the artistic quest, we still need to link it within the synthesizing activity with other linguistic patterns. Let us say that the phonetic pattern constituting this part of the poem is artistically valuable as long as it reveals to us these Gestalt-aesthetic qualities, as Ingarden refers to them. This is also important because in its contextualization, it uncovers other aspects and qualities from the poem as a totality. This is how we realize that the elements portrayed around the voice, slumber and death start intertwining in the interpretation and, what can be seen from the beginning as a mere "incident" forces us to give it our attention. Thus, we find ourselves with other phonetic elements, such as: "el latido de un mar en el que no sé nada / en el que no se nada" or "hasta ciento en el pulso de mis sienes." The play between sound and meaning in these verses becomes evident when we follow the patterns that the poem itself provides us with by revealing the lyric subject between not knowing and not swimming, between feeling and counting in a moment that corresponds to slumber as well as death. By noticing this play that caresses and snatches, the voice, as Ingarden would affirm, performs an important role in the aesthetic reception of the work.

The aesthetic attitude and the pre-aesthetic knowledge have to do with Ingarden's concern about the literary work itself providing us with sufficient resources to establish true, intersubjective, communication with the projected world. The values that correspond to the artistic focus, as Iser refers to it when speaking about the role of the author as a creator, stimulate the appearance of aesthetic values in the co-creator reader, provided there is an adequate reading within the intersubjective activity, as Ingarden elucidates.

But what is the importance of this intersubjective platform? First, it functions as a foundational block against the psychologist posture that would make us look for the content within the mental experiences of those who write or speak. Ingarden makes us see that we understand the literary work of art only through the apprehension of the aesthetic object that emerges from the concretization and each concretization differs one from the other. However, the possible number of aesthetic objects that the work can generate is not infinite, nor are its concretizations or aesthetic objects identical within the work. Because of this, it becomes futile to try to understand the contents of someone else's mental experience, since these contents suffer constant change within the reader's flow of time. On the other hand, the author's intentional acts, which in any case are responsible for the literary work, are linguistically fixated to it and remain as "quasi-static" units, until a new meaning is transferred to them during the concretization.

Iser plays an important role in this vision when affirming that in the fictional text, the aesthetic value conditions the repertoire's choices, a fact that he says "deforms" the chosen element's data to present us with a system of equivalences specific to each text, in this regard configuring the concave shape constituting the text that we acknowledge alongside the implicit reader concept. And it
is by virtue of what Ingarden calls "synthesizing activity" and what Iser refers to as "coherent deformation" that the work's world rises from the unfolding of its aesthetic and artistic values. Iser sees in this point the suspension of a second reference (within the text) so that the aesthetic object can emerge from the coherent deformation. Let us say, then, that the literary work is quasi-real and the aesthetic object quasi-textual. As concretization occurs, the equivalences created by the empirical reader also come into play, suspending other possible sets of concretizations in the meantime.

Iser considers aesthetic value the beginning of the aesthetic object's constitutive act. In this way, we can see the connection with Ingarden's ideas: the concave structure in which the notion of implicit reader is generated to which Iser alludes works alongside the intersubjective activity that, in Ingarden's view, we perform when we enter into the concretization process and in several different ways "complete" the world portrayed. In this interesting and essential objectification, as Ingarden calls it, the reader becomes a co-creator.

The literary text contains, as Iser acknowledges, a series of strategies that, according to Ingarden, manifest themselves in intersubjective activity. Because of this, psychologism's mistake lies, from Ingarden's perspective, in "an incorrect view of how word formation comes about and in a failure to recognize the social nature of every language." Ingarden appeals to intersubjectivity as if it were a pre-aesthetic foundation to explain his vision:

The meaning-carrying word originating in this way is thus from the outset an intersubjective entity, intersubjectively accessible in its meaning, and not something with a private meaning which must be guessed at through observation of another's behavior.

From an Ingardenian standpoint, we can argue that, due to the literary work of art's multi-stratified schematic structure, the artistic and aesthetic poles string together and generate the opalescent aesthetic object. The opalescence then arises from the loose nexus of the sign's ambiguity that allows the reader, on the one hand, to synthesize and, on the other, to deform the world projected by the work's language and its units of meaning. The opalescence is the bridge uniting the two gazes that come to cross the same river. Recreating Jauss' ideas, we can say that with every "rise of the waters," this river sweeps the author's and reader's intentional acts towards a sea of meanings during and after the reading.

The Role of Aesthetic Values

Not every literary work is successful, even if it possesses artistic attributes, because the reader cannot be ready to apprehend them. As Ingarden explains, not every aesthetic experience culminates in pleasure, admiration or a positive, value judgment. So, then, what is the role of the aesthetic values in comprehending the work of art? To understand this complicated process, a general epistemological investigation that considers the different types of works regardless of their positive or negative value becomes necessary. Such is the case of those works that Ingarden calls ugly, bad, or not genuine. Then we will understand how the comprehension of artistically valuable works follows different paths when compared to works of negative value. Even as a series of attitudes starts changing during the encounter with the projected world; they follow one another, from emotiveness to the knowledge of the work. But "only the results of the... [aesthetic experience's] cognitive apprehensive comprehension, of the work can give us valid information about the value of the work."

The strata of schematized aspects determines to a certain extent the natural aesthetic attitude assumed by the reader and facilitates the appearance of the aesthetic values, since, apart from presenting clear strategies in the artistic configuration of the world portrayed, it also enables readers to assemble meaning networks at the same time as their perception moves in a specific, or in multiple directions by means of identified or intuited linguistic patterns. Schematized aspects are, by all means, what we experience in a literary work. In the ambiguous game between what is given and taken from the concretization, schematized aspects determine the appearance of aesthetic values. At the same time, the aesthetic and artistic values regulate the aesthetic experience's unfolding and the aesthetic object's constitution, which can help us apprehend the
work. In this case, the aesthetic object is defined as the literary work's concretization in which the fulfillment of the aesthetically valuable qualities can be reached, as determined by the artistic effectiveness of the work, as well as the qualities' harmony and, as a consequence, the constitution of the aesthetic value.

Even though the reader can deliberately adopt an aesthetic attitude when attempting, for example, to study the literary work of art, it is necessary to talk about a previous aesthetic experience in anticipation of the desired aesthetic attitude. Thus, the reader has to be "swept" by the text's strategies towards the construction of the aesthetic object. I use the word "swept" because the aesthetic object's constitution must not only be a product of the reader's imaginative acts. Even if, in its ontic sphere, the aesthetic object depends on the reader's concretization, it has to be somehow linked to the work's textuality. In this situation, we could resort to the image of the comet that Alfonso Reyes uses to talk about literature. The aesthetic object could be seen as that comet anchored to the mountain and, at the same time, hanging in the firmament. The given and the not-given fuse in the aesthetic object's synthetic struggle for its constitution.

In this synthetic struggle whose origin is "suspended" to allow the work's value to be comprehended, the aesthetic value executes its essential function. But not all the possible aesthetic values emanated from the work are actualized during the act of reading. As a matter of fact, Ingarden says, as readers, we create stereotypical values that make us think such-and-such character in the same fashion, even though, truth be told, during each reading the ambiance, humor, or some revealed feature modifies that vision. Concretized aesthetically valuable qualities within the work of art are interlaced and modified and lead us to conceive certain metaphysical qualities that are related to the "ambiance" in which the objects' representation is generated. These metaphysical qualities, along with other artistic and aesthetic qualities, lead us towards the constitution of the aesthetic object.

However, we often attribute to the work of art non-existent qualities that do not exist within its framework, on the contrary, we bring them from our experience and think of them as inherent attributes of the literary work. This occurs, partially, because the aspects revealing those qualities to us do not arise in continuity, but are spread out throughout all the strata, and it is only during the act of reading that the reader gathers them in meaning nuclei. The value we give to the qualities that appear during concretization must have its foundation in the artistic values intertwined with the schematic structure of the work. This type of value must be differentiated from other types of cultural values, such as religion, social norms, etc., that allow us to speak about specific epochs, or certain "real" confessions by the author that are interlaced within the representation and allow us to see the work as a document, or testimony, while it moves us away from its main purpose anchored in the artistic and aesthetic values.

According to Ingarden, aesthetically valuable qualities lead to unity and unicity within the work of art and vary from work to work depending on the variety inherent in each of its strata. Despite the variety and hierarchy of the aesthetically valuable qualities, not all of them are achieved during the reading act. Some of them remain in the work's background or, as Ingarden says, in the primitive fundament. Others serve as a support to shape those present during the concretization as aesthetically relevant qualities.

But this nucleus cannot be predetermined in every work. In fact, it can be related to the represented objects (characters, situations, time, space, etc.), or to metaphysical qualities emanated from the object's representation. There are aesthetically valuable qualities that are intuited and others that are imposed upon to the reader. The latter occurs, mainly, with those built upon the work's syntactic structure or in the melodies of its verse when deeply linked with artistic strategies. Reading a poem aloud also imposes certain qualities on the reader that come directly from recognizable artistic aspects within the "idea" of the work.

The reader allows aesthetic values to be realized as such, even when the great works of art provoke that co-creating sensitivity, as Ingarden defines it. On the other hand, the philosopher explains, we shall never reach the unique essence of the work, because we
are only capable of apprehending certain aspects of it. Moreover, in what we recognize as concretization, many details can be overlooked or distorted. Hence, the aesthetic balance disappears from the work of art.

It is necessary to note that these qualities constitute not only an essential aspect, but are, in fact, the most important element within the work of art carried to aesthetic concretization. As Ingarden explained in *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, the work's polyphonic harmony is its aesthetic value. When the aesthetic qualities are missing, or do not lead to harmony, ending rather in a qualitative conflict that cannot be resolved in any higher harmony, the work in question is entirely without value, or has a negative value, and the other good qualities it has will not be able to save it as a work of art.

And the work's overall synthetic value will not point towards the constitution of an aesthetic object anchored to the work's schemata.

The Constitution of the Aesthetic Object

In view of the manifold ways in which the aspects are actualized and concretized by the reader, the aesthetic apprehension of one and the same work can turn out very differently, and only a few apprehensions "touch" its essence, says Ingarden in *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. Differences are even noticeable in faithful reconstructions of the work, since by bringing about the appearance of qualities diverse among themselves and pointing in different directions, the aesthetic object's construction will also find different paths within the multiple possible concretizations.

With this, a problem arises that must be taken into consideration starting with the aesthetic experience, namely: How can we judge the work properly if, despite their sensitivity, readers and critics differ among themselves in their evaluations of the work's portrayals? It is important then to reflect upon the conditions for establishing a judgment upon the aesthetic object. According to Ingarden, such conditions are: 1) that the judging person has had an aesthetic experience upon which the work's correlative aesthetic object was built; and 2) that he enters into the process of reflective knowledge of the aesthetic object.

The judgment accords a comparative or proper value to the object allowed to be seen in connection with other objects. The judgment functions when it points to certain qualities of value or to the total quality resulting from the synthetic activity. The judgment's complications appear from the beginning if we take into account the reader's aesthetic attitude, because, as a matter of fact, as I pointed out at the beginning of this essay, as Ingarden says, there is a difference in the apprehension of the aesthetic object if we possess pre-aesthetic knowledge that has us see the work as an object of study, or if we want to consider it as the object of an aesthetic experience induced by the valuable elements within it during the act of reading.

The process of synthesizing objectification is complicated, admits Ingarden, and depends both upon the competency of the reader and upon the structure of the units of meaning. "If this stratum is complicated, opaque and ambiguous in many sentences or sentence complexes, then the objectification can present considerable, sometimes insurmountable, difficulties even for the most well prepared reader." In this manner, objectification presents the reader with levels of exigency, both as concerns his or her capacity to enter into the world of the work and as concerns the very fact of constructing the aesthetic object itself as correlate of the unity and unicity of the work.

It is the resulting aesthetic object that gives us the synthetic and essential idea of the work portrayed and affords us a more or less clear judgment of the work's value. The object that in turn has been constituted during the reading process and the aesthetic experience implied in the *a priori* analysis of the work's general structure goes on changing in each of its phases until it takes us to the final stage of the aesthetic experience: the reflective sphere of appropriation, evaluation and aesthetic judgment, because, as Ingarden points out, it is impossible, as aesthete readers, not to judge the work. If these judgments take place in a rapprochement after the reading, they are, however, grounded in memories fixated
by the aesthetic experience that takes place during the reading. But the difference, however, lies in the fact that we reach the point of analysis and reflection on the inherent value features of the artistic work.

Having said this, the judgments arrived at from a faithful reconstruction of the work and an aesthetic experience anchored in the act of reading and following it are not the same as the work itself, nor do they exhaust it. As Ingarden explained in *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, every system of judgments that we can achieve in scientific practice is always finite and thus cannot exhaust the plenitude of the whole multiplicity of characteristics and often unique particularities of the literary work of art.

What do we achieve then with the comprehension of the work of art that involves a faithful reconstruction and a series of judgments attached to the work’s artistically valuable features? According to Ingarden, what we achieve is a completely renovated view of the world portrayed; however, this point of view will always be conditioned by the work’s structure. This new perspective does not originate in an ordinary reading because in it we do not keep our distance to contemplate the cross-sections revealing characteristics and structural elements, such as artistic footprints. It is because of these elements that, with an intellectual attitude of aesthetic readers, we perceive and achieve the reflective and critical aesthetic experience in face of the aesthetic object, because, as Ingarden wrote in *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, if we then go back and read the work again and if we return to the intuitive experience and apprehension, we can see it develop before us in the sequence of its parts in the concrete time immanent in it. We cognize it, not only in its originary form, but we also have it before us in the whole wealth of its determinations and structures which can be revealed only through the detour by way of a scholarly, reflexive, cognition of the work.

**Towards a Definition of the Aesthetic Experience**

How can we define the aesthetic experience that helps us comprehend the work of art, during and after the act of reading?

Can we speak about an academic aesthetic experience, a scientific one? Or, rather does the aesthetic experience have to separate itself from this process of comprehension with which Ingarden connects it? I shall conclude with a reflection upon these questions for the theory of the Polish philosopher.

There is no question that within Ingardenian theory, the aesthetic experience is the experience of the work itself; it implies achieving unity with the world portrayed, putting our reality aside to let ourselves be “swept,” as I mentioned above, by the great tempests generated in the textual sphere. We let ourselves be carried away in part thanks to the aesthetic attitude, since, on the one hand, we impose ourselves upon the work, going beyond the world portrayed, as Wolfgang Iser would say, and, at the same time, the work goes beyond us and captures us with its strategies of representation. What allows the reader to reach the aesthetic experience is an active reading of it, to become a co-creator of the work of art, says Ingarden.

When speaking of determination, Iser takes the key point for discussing the aesthetic experience’s possible definition from Ingardenian philosophy, since that is where ambiguity swings open to make room for our speculations. There then occurs the collision of perspectives between what we consider to be the case and what textuality causes us to see. In fact, even what is most abstract is a cause of the aesthetic experience and aesthetic evaluation, Ingarden acknowledges. But, he explains in *Cognition of a Literary Work of Art*, if we experience a work of art aesthetically, without expecting to attain aesthetic comprehension, then, it will not matter if the experience takes the reader to a concretization that “agrees” with the work’s “intentions.” Nevertheless, the situation is different when the experience shapes the preparation for the comprehension of the work’s concretization. Then, the aesthetic experience will not only have to be effective, it will have to “do justice” to the work and be adequate for this purpose.

Yet, we could still argue that both ordinary and scholarly reading make us think about a possible general theory of the aesthetic experience. There are principles that function on this platform
and are related to the represented world that is presented to us throughout the immanence of the act of reading. Ingarden dedicates his book to confronting this issue. In fact, we could to some extent say that, owing to its detailed, profound treatment of the matter, *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* is a treatise on concretionization. From this perspective, in that work, the Polish philosopher defines the aesthetic experience as a genuine act of justice performed for the work of art. He explains in that book that the aesthetic experience “will do justice” to the work if it leads to a concretionization which: 1) is based on and permeated in all its elements by a faithful, correct reconstruction of the work in respect of its determined and actualized elements to the extent this is possible; 2) keeps within the bounds of the possibilities predetermined by the work itself for those elements (factors) in the concretionization which go beyond a simple reconstruction of the work-elements which make explicit what is unambiguously implicit in the work, fills out the places of indeterminacy, actualizes the potential elements, and produce in intuition the aesthetically relevant qualities and their harmony; and 3) is as “similar”, and as “close” to the work as possible.

But Ingarden’s theory is more ambitious. His work could yield a profound investigation into what the aesthetic experience implies in the academic setting, and the ideas of literary criticism would greatly benefit from it, because, on the one hand, evaluating and judging the literary work of art is more complicated than evaluating its concretionization from the act of ordinary reading, as the Pole affirms, and on the other, we have to remind literary scholars that the object of their study is the work of art and their goal therefore lies in the comprehension of the literary phenomenon. Those who still try to use an empirical approach to teach literature, leaving aside the reflection and evaluation of the works, should take this very much into consideration.

In this regard, Ingarden goes in a different direction than reception theorists and formalists of the Prague School of thought, because he is more concerned by the path taken by the literary studies of his times, but this does not detract from his thought. Quite the contrary, it marks important differences between the approach to the literary work, in the nature of the aesthetic experience, both in terms of attitude and pre-aesthetic knowledge and in terms of the constitution of the aesthetic object. And even though we can affirm that every aesthetic experience contains, by its very nature, the seed of reflection and we cannot separate it from the process of comprehension of the work of art, it is still possible to say that, in the case of the aesthetic reader, this process of comprehension is highly reinforced, because the aesthetic attitude forces us to traverse the path of reconstruction with the distancing of implicit analysis.

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NOTES

1 Translation by Alexis Ortiz.
2 It is worth noting that references to Ingarden’s work in Spanish are scarce due to the fact that his ideas only began to gain notoriety after 1960. Gerald Nynhuys affirms that the first references to Ingarden’s work in Spanish are those made in 1966 in the Spanish translation of René Wellek’s *Theory of Literature*. See Gerald Nynhuys, “Prefacio,” in Roman Ingarden, *La obra de arte literaria*, tr. Gerald Nynhuys (México: Taurus-Universidad Iberoamericana, 1998), p. 16.
6 It is important to notice that Warning published his *Estética de la recepción* in 1979, when Ingarden’s *The Literary Work of Art* was still not well known. Ingarden’s work was first published in Spanish by Nynhuys in 1998, although Nynhuys had started teaching it in his seminars during the 1980s.
THE FINLAND OF POETRY, FOUR SNAPSHOTS

MATTI ITKONEN

MOTTO: Our home area, the place in this land which our being is tied to, with unbreakable roots, the sphere of being for our childhood and youth, the eternal dwelling place of our heart, the most beautiful and precious on earth, beautiful even in its ruggedness, and all the more beautiful for its ruggedness, and the object of our longing if we have left it, it is the natural circle of our life outside of which we always somehow feel cut adrift from life.

To Begin With

Poetry does not simply mean melodiousness and rhythm. If lyric poetry means that a person expresses their worldly pain through song accompanied on a lyre, then poetry denotes something entirely different. Poetry is every person’s individual way of looking at a world that is communally shared. The aspect of uniqueness is also essential: moments do not return as such, and nobody experiences any situation twice in exactly the same way. In poetry a person carves out their own mark in the center of a common reality with an outline already formed long ago. This is precisely why the landscape of one’s home feels so precious. It is the archetype of all other landscapes, which are merely reflections of it. The home radiates its warm glow all the days of a human life. It puts the humanity into humanity.

Poem, A Glimpse From Afar: Yrjö Kokko

The same thing can be described in reality through several different narratives. To the tellers of these tales, each in their own age, the tales are equally true. The essential point here is the view of culture as a tallying of what has gone before. Perhaps it can be seen as the idea of some kind of collective settlement, a national reckoning. Yrjö Kokko pondered this same question in post-war Finland. His thoughts were published in a fine travel book, The Islands of Good Will, which appeared in 1953 during the period of reconstruction. Kokko takes a look at his native land from far away, the Canary Isles, and writes in the following touching way: