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INTRODUCTION

RICHARD ELDRIDGE

I said, "we were not stocks and stones"—'tis very well. I should have added, nor are we angels, I wish we were,—but men clothed with bodies, and governed by our imaginations;—and what a junketing piece of work of it there is, betwixt these and our seven senses....

For my hobby-horse, if you recollect a little, is no way a vicious beast; he has scarce one hair or lineament of the ass about him—'Tis the sporting little filly-folly which carries you out for the present hour—a maggot, a butterfly a picture, a fiddle-stick—an uncle Toby's siege—or an *any thing*, which a man makes a shift to get a stride on, to cater it away from the cares and solitudes of life—'tis as useful a beast as is in the whole creation—nor do I really see how the world could do without it.

—Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions
of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*

As these two epigraphs from *Tristram Shandy* eloquently indicate, human beings are complicated animals who are freighted with imaginations that range beyond the senses; they use their imaginations both to escape from life and to find lines of direction and interest within it. Certain exercises of imagination can seem fruitless and strange, yet also compelling and necessary for forming and maintaining substantial commitments.

Both literature (both its production and the critical study of it) and philosophy as disciplines have often been seen (sometimes by each other) as embodying either

strange fruitlessness or compelling necessity—sometimes both. As early as Plato's *Ion*, literary works and their authors were cast as divinely inspired, but wayward, uninformed by craft, and useless for the serious business of life. As early as Aristophanes' *Clouds*, philosophy is seen as comically pretentious and ridiculous. With the steady separation of modern science from natural philosophy since the seventeenth century, this impression of philosophy as comical has only widened.

Both literary writers (along with many of those who study them) and philosophers (and those who study them) have long insisted, with considerable force, that they are attending seriously to life, not escaping from it. Whatever their wild varieties of form, the texts that are produced by philosophical and literary writers differ significantly from mere lists of otherwise unassociated words and from sonic word play alone. Some forms of attention and discipline seem to control both philosophical and literary production, even while imagination (beyond sensation, measurement, and calculation) remains central, while which forms of discipline and why and how they control production remain unclear and deeply contested.

In contrast with the focus on material actualities that is typical of the natural sciences (however mediated that focus is by imagination), philosophy and literature as forms of attention focus more on human commitments and passions. At its most abstract and general, philosophy undertakes to specify ideal commitments, or the commitments that it would be most effectively worthwhile to have, even if their fulfillments remain contingent and interruptible. The effort is, *inter alia*, to specify justice as an ideal form of social life, or morality as an ideal form of personal and immediate interpersonal comportment, or a practice of inquiry as an ideal form of cognitive engagement with the real, or ideal success in formal arrangement. Yet any such effort at least runs a risk of being fantastically ad hoc and empty in relation to empirical details of present material circumstance that remain, in part, hindrances not so easily assimilated to pursuits of the ideal. Tyrannical, sectarian domination may in turn result from attempting to put fantastic ideals into actual practice. Hence, close attention to material circumstances and passions for their own sakes seems necessary to correct abstract ideal theorizing that is always possibly premature. Philosophy seems to need correction by literature's attention to how any commitments might in particular be lived, if it is to avoid comic irrelevance and the rationalization of domination.

Literature, in contrast, focuses on the particular in the universal, undertaking to track what is most likely to come, tragically or comically, of the bearing of particular passions in circumstances that remain always in part intractable. This literary form of attention runs the risk, however, of seeing human beings as caught up only and always in pieces of good or bad luck, failing to discern any genuine universals that human beings might well pursue. Human life may be presented as one damn thing after another, without any clear possibilities either of fruitful emplotment or of evident connections among distinct human lives. Unilluminating particularism is at least a possible fate of close attention to material circumstances and passions, a possible fate that it becomes increasingly difficult to avoid

in the wake of the modern disenchantment of nature. Samuel Beckett, for example, favors a form of literature that consists in “the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express” (1965: 13). If that is what literature in the end amounts to, then it will be impossible to define, even provisionally and gesturally, and it will become instead a thing of refusals of meaning and resistances to it. As Jacques Derrida puts it, “It’s the most interesting thing in the world, maybe even more interesting than the world, and this is why, if it has no definition, what is heralded and refused under the name of literature cannot be identified with any other discourse. It will never be scientific, philosophical, conversational” (1992: 47). Yet if it affords only stuttering, without generalizable meaning of any kind, then the point of the literary work is desperately unclear, however subjectively important it is felt to be by certain isolated intellectuals. Hence, literature seems to need correction by philosophy’s efforts to trace universals and to discern and specify ideal forms of commitment, if it is to avoid particularistic emptiness and collapse into light entertainment at best, insignificant word play at worst.

In fact, both philosophy and literature at their bests have engaged with each other to develop forms of attention to human life and to human commitments and passions while avoiding both empty idealism and empty particularism. Philosophy has its particular initiating perplexities and its forms of the emplotment of the progress of an implied protagonist, including at least dialogues, confessions, summas, meditations, essays, treatises, tractates, critiques, phenomenologies, manifestoes, postscripts, genealogies, and investigations, among others. Literature has its forms of appeal to general philosophical terms, as it undertakes to treat the particularities with which it engages, however *sotto voce*, as significant instances of some more general idea, concept, or theory of the human; emplotment of the plausible is impossible without some more general concept of the probable or necessary. As Asja Szafraniec usefully remarks, “[L]iterature does not exorcise the universal from itself but negotiates an intersection of the singular and universal within itself as a singular work” (2007: 57). Hence, each form of attention—philosophy and literature—both negotiates with and resists the other, engages with and excludes it.

If we focus abstractly on philosophy’s concern with ideal, general commitments and literature’s attention to particulars as objects of passion, then we might develop something like the following table of oppositions:

<i>Philosophy</i>	<i>Literature</i>
Universality	Particularity
Reason	(Particularized) Imagination
Ideal Symbolic Order	Primary Process
Detachment	Engagement
Insight	Emotion

Such an abstract set of oppositions has some point in revealing patterns of mutual contestation. But we would do well to remember also that there are, always, engagement and negotiation as well as resistance and repudiation. When we attend to *how* simultaneous engagement and contestation have been played out, we find Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle not quite wholly displacing and killing off Homeric epic, Pindaric Ode, and Sapphic lyric; the modern novel not quite wholly displacing and killing off theological or rationalist philosophy; artistic modernism not quite displacing and killing off more thematized and emplotted philosophy and literature; analytical philosophy not quite displacing and killing off literature; mongrelizing postmodernism not quite displacing and killing off all of philosophy, traditional narrative literature, and more formally unified modernism; and so on.

Both genres and certain central devices of attention (emplotment, characterization, style) then emerge more as ways of registering and coming to terms with continuing tensions between a standing human need for and possibility of reflective orientation under reasonable commitments and a standing absence of completeness of orientation. These tensions are played out within various overlapping spheres of life: social-historical (economic, sociological, political), ethical-familial, developmental-psychoanalytic, moral, formal-aesthetic, and cognitive-scientific. These spheres of life in turn take different historical shapes: the culture of martial honor of twelfth-century B.C.E. Greece is not the same as the culture of cosmopolitan wit in the salons of Berlin circa 1800; the culture of Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Edinburgh is not the same as the culture of capitalism and the image in contemporary Tokyo or Milan; the culture of the nineteenth-century boulevards and arcades in Paris or Vienna is not the same as the cultures of hybridity crossed with fundamentalism in contemporary Cairo, Los Angeles, or Tehran. Oslo is not Abu Dhabi; São Paulo is not Beijing; Mumbai is not Philadelphia; and none of these is Peoria or Surbiton or Yoknapatawpha County or Albogastathir or Banaras. Yet tensions in life between aspiration supported by reflection and the empirically happenstantial remain variously evident, and they are taken up in various and illuminating ways by both literature and philosophy.

Philosophy and literature as forms of attention are then modes of seeking orientation and clarification of commitment and emotion, and both begin within a specific, situated point of view. Focusing on how each form of attention seeks orientation and clarification within a point of view and from a situation of perplexity, R. G. Collingwood argues that they are not, ultimately, distinct:

Ever since Pythagoras (or so we are told) invented the word philosophy, in order to express the notion of the philosopher not as one who possesses wisdom but as one who aspires to it, students of philosophy have recognized that the essence of their business lies not in holding this view or that, but in aiming at some view not yet achieved: in the labour and adventure of thinking, not the results of it. What a genuine philosopher (as distinct from a teacher of philosophy for purposes of examination) tries to express when he writes is the experience he enjoys in the course of this adventure, where theories and systems are only incidents in the journey. For the poet, there is, perhaps, none of this dynamism

of thinking. He finds himself equipped, as it were, with certain ideas, and expresses the way in which it feels to possess them. Poetry, then, in so far as it is the poetry of a thinking man and addressed to a thinking audience, may be described as expressing the intellectual emotion attendant upon thinking in a certain way: philosophy, the intellectual emotion attendant upon trying to think better. . . . [But] in so far as each is good, each converges, as regards style and literary form, with the other; in the limiting case where each was as good as it ought to be, the distinction would disappear. (1938: 297, 298)

Collingwood may somewhat overstate his claim: philosophy and literature are at least comparatively distinct from one another, in that philosophy foregrounds result, impersonality, and attention to general discursive and practical commitment, while literature foregrounds process, personal engagement, particularity, and perplexity. Yet philosophy, too, begins in perplexity; and literature, too, seeks at least implicit generalizable significance. Both exist in the space of clarification. As Kantian critique, Dewey on the reflex arc, and Wittgenstein's later criticisms of the *Tractatus* myth of simple objects should have taught us, there is no getting beneath conceptual commitments and ways of taking objects to identify sempiternal, ultimate metaphysical objects, while still retaining a point of view. Point-of-view having lacks any fixed, ultimate ground, and it inherently involves discursive takings that are themselves contestable and freighted with perplexities and emotional opacities. (This should cast doubt on any strict and absolute opposition between a literal language that records the real and a figurative-expressive language that stylizes stance and attitude: representation cannot be absolutely separated from stance, attitude, and expression of interest and mood.) Human subjectivity as such occupies a position of transcendental homelessness that commits it to the seeking of orientation and clarification.¹ This transcendental homelessness may be sensed more sharply in technological modernity and in otherwise fragmented cultures than elsewhere, but there is good reason to think that it attaches in some measure to the bearing of a point of view as such. In mutual engagement and mutual contestation, philosophy and literature as forms of attention arise from within this situation of the human subject.

The most critically astute and historically perceptive general philosophical account of the roles of literature and poetic imagination in human life remains Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art*. Hegel begins by noting that both literature and philosophy address oppositions, between abstract law, legislative reason, duty, and civic order, on the one hand, and inclinations, sensuous impulses, and somatic responses to an abundance of new phenomena, on the other. These oppositions are natural to human life as such; coherent commitments that would resolve these oppositions never lie fully ready to hand. In Hegel's full history of forms of art, it is these oppositions that function more effectively as a universal that informs human life than does any logic-governed concept of freedom. But while they are universal, these oppositions also take specific shapes in specific historical circumstances; in particular, modernity exacerbates them, as the social division of labor and the need to make a life via specialized skill within a market economy increase.

These are oppositions which have not been invented at all by the subtlety of reflection or the pedantry of philosophy; in numerous forms they have always preoccupied and troubled the human consciousness, even if it is modern culture that has first worked them out most sharply and driven them up to the peak of harshest contradiction. (Hegel 1975, 1: 54)

Though they effectively lack any superintending logic (more so than Hegel's official doctrine would allow), these oppositions can nonetheless be addressed and worked through partially. One can seek in abstract reflection informed by historical awareness to determine more adequate commitments and practices that will moderate these oppositions for many to some degree; general philosophical theories of commitments, practices, and institutions can yield some fruits. Or, and also at the same time, the work of imagination can recontextualize, emplot, and redirect commitments that remain significantly tied to particulars, yielding modest routes of orientation via the exemplary. It can take up, elaborate, and clarify initially inchoate but real emotional perplexities and somatic investments as they continue to inhabit any form of institutionalized social life.

As Hegel notices, it is poetry that first answers to a standing need for orientation toward the more fit and satisfying exercise of human powers within oppositions. ("Poetry" [*Poesie*] is Hegel's term for all significant imaginative dramatic literature, including epic, lyric, tragedy, comedy, romance, the novel, and other related genres and subgenres.) "Man exists conformably to the law of his existence only when he knows what he is and what his surroundings are: he must know what the powers are which drive and direct him, and it is such a knowledge that poetry provides in its original and substantive form" (Hegel 1975, 2: 973). First in epic and then in further imaginative, dramatic forms, poetry (literature) presents not material things as they are and may be discerned via impersonal measurement, in themselves, but rather things as they matter to us, for good or ill, in feeling and within emplotments of engagements. "The poetic imagination, as the activity of a poet, does not, as plastic art does, set before our eyes the thing itself in its external reality (even if that reality be produced by art), but gives us on the contrary an *inner* vision and feeling of it" (Hegel 1975, 2: 1111).

The work of poetic or literary presentation is then in general to address and work through a structure of feeling that has arisen in relation to the lived experience of oppositions, as these oppositions circumstantially take on new shapes and mobilize somatic investments. Feeling is tested for aptness in relation to its occasioning perplexities, subjected to complex modulation and development via emplotment of what is or may be going on, and focused. It is transformed from a suffered burden deriving from happenstance into an active response of felt engagement, for which both author and reader can then take responsibility, thus making the continuing of the life of a subject, always caught up in feeling, more bearable.

[Poetry's] task, namely, is to liberate the spirit not *from* but *in* feeling. The blind dominion of passion lies in an unconscious and dull unity between itself and the entirety of a heart that cannot rise out of itself into ideas and

self-expression. Poetry does deliver the heart from this slavery to passion by making it see itself, but it does not stop at merely extricating this felt passion from its immediate unity with the heart but makes of it an object purified from all accidental moods, an object in which the inner life, liberated and with its self-consciousness satisfied, reverts freely at the same time into itself and is at home with itself. (Hegel 1975, 2: 1112)

Liberation *in* feeling is not a matter simply of settling on classifications, normative stances, general principles, or policies for future comportment (however important the testing of all these may also be). Instead, it involves animation—more fully achieved ensoulment—within feeling. As Kant puts it, the work of poetic imagination in attending to things is not that of classification alone; rather, it carries out “the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable, the feeling of which animates the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with what would otherwise be the mere letter of language.”² Without this animation or ensoulment, involving feeling’s response to what is unnameable in experience, but feeling then developed, modulated, and brought to poetic expression, human life threatens to be dull, disengaged, dispirited, and evacuated of responsive subjectivity. Or, in Hegel’s development of this same point,

[t]he universal and the rational are not expressed in poetry in abstract universality and *philosophically* proved interconnection, or with their aspects merely related together as in *scientific* [*wissenschaftlich*] thinking, but instead as animated, manifest, ensouled, determining the whole, and yet at the same time expressed in such a way that the all-comprising unity, the real animating soul, is made to work only in secret from within outwards. (1975, 2: 973)

Relating the incidents, scenes, persons, thoughts, moods, and feelings that are presented in a literary work of art so as to invite, sustain, and develop emotional engagement, animation, and ensoulment is not, then, the presentation of the merely materially real either enumeratively or theoretically. “In general we may describe poetry’s way of putting things as *figurative* because it brings before our eyes...an appearance such that in it we immediately recognize the essence [or what is significant for us within feeling in relation to possibilities of fuller and freer life] through, and inseparably from, the external aspect and its individuality” (Hegel 1975, 2: 1002). Thought, feeling, language, and subject matter remain tethered to one another via figuration, in a sustained act of attention in the furtherance of life.

Given that human subjects necessarily exist in material and cultural situations that are shared at least to some extent, the poetic work of attention and of the working through of feeling must not be uniquely individual. It is a criterion of success for literary and poetic attention that some resonance with the development of the situation in language be achieved with some others. In a thought that Hegel shares with Wordsworth and Collingwood, among others, casual and incidental rendering, as merely happenstantial, must be distinguished from successful attention that deploys the powers of a subject in an exemplary and resonant way:

In order that this [poetic] expression may not remain a merely casual expression of an individual's own immediate feelings and ideas, it becomes the language of the *poetic* inner life, and therefore however intimately the insights and feelings which the poet describes as his own belong to him as a single individual, they must nevertheless possess a universal validity, i.e. they must be genuine feelings and meditations for which the poet invents or finds the adequate and lively expression. (1975, 2: 1111–12)

How the required exemplarity and resonance are to be achieved remains, however, deeply unclear, according to Hegel. Whatever the achievements of modern social institutions may be, there remain enough oppositions in life to provoke manifold varieties of emotional perplexities and inchoate somatic investments that require working through. Hence, “the most heterogeneous works count as poetry” (1975, 2: 971); there are no rules of taste, no necessary forms of organization or diction, no necessary subject matters. Instead, poetic imagination in finding and integrating appropriate organization, style, and subject, so as to achieve effective working through, is all.

Hegel's own historical account of the rises and falls of distinct forms of social life, and so, he argues, of the literary forms appropriate to them, is both excessively, implausibly rigid and yet insightful in its attention to the importance of social-material circumstances for the practice of literary art. The excessive and implausible rigidity consist in his supposing that forms of social life are more or less coherent wholes, not mongrels; that the boundaries between them are more or less clear; and that their historical succession is governed by a superintending logic. And yet his insights are penetrating, especially in his account of epic. “Epic proper,” Hegel argues, is “actualized in the most artistically adequate way [only] by the Greeks” (1975, 2: 1093)—indeed, only by Homer. This is because a celebratory song of accepted heroic virtues (including accepted virtues in conflict with one another), if it is to do the artistic work of working through an emotionally freighted point of view that is shared, presupposes a certain social world in which these virtues are accepted and common attitudes toward them are held. This is possible only under specific material circumstances:

The state of human life most suitable as the background of an epic is that in which [a universal ethical ground] exists for individuals *already* as a present reality but which remains most closely connected with them by the tie of a common primitive life. . . . The relations of ethical life, the bond of the family, as well as the bond of the people—as an entire nation—in war and peace must all have been discovered, framed, and developed; but on the other hand, not yet developed into the form of universal institutions, obligations, and laws valid in themselves without any ratification by the living subjective personality of individuals, and indeed possessed of the power of subsisting even against the will of individuals. . . . [Man] must still feel himself alive in . . . the means for satisfying his needs: e.g. house and garden, tents, seats, beds, swords and lances, ships for crossing the sea, chariots to take him to battle, kettles and roasting-tins, slaughter of animals, food and drink . . . with his whole mind and self, and therefore give a really human, animated, and

individual stamp to what is inherently external by bringing it into close connection with the human individual. Our modern machines and factories with their products, as well as our general way of satisfying the needs of our external life, would from this point of view be just as unsuitable as our modern political organization is for the social background required for the primitive epic. (Hegel 1975, 2: 1051–53)

Certain conceptions of human character must further be both commonly accepted and worked into the successful epic text. Inwardness and moralism must have little place. Counsel and freely willed participation—and only these, not statute—hold the Greeks together as a warring body. Hence, Agamemnon’s “position as overlord does not become the dry connection of command and obedience, of a master and his servants” (Hegel 1975, 2: 1053), and “Achilles, as an epic character, should not be given moral lectures as if he were a schoolboy” (1068). Hence, if there are modern epics—*Star Wars* or *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Golden Compass*—these must tend strongly toward compensatory escapism rather than objective social description, and they will be set in a time long ago and far away.

We should not, however, suppose that Homer merely describes actual events. The heroic virtues must be developed artistically, presented, for example, through extended, predominantly visual similes³ and set within plots in which choices about foci of attention must be made:

But we must not put the matter at all as if a people in its heroic age as such, the cradle of its epic, already had the skill to be able to describe itself poetically.... The need to make play with *ideas* in such a presentation, i.e. the development of art, necessarily arises later than the life and the spirit which is naively at home in its immediate poetic existence. Homer and the poems bearing his name are centuries later than the Trojan war which counts as an actual fact.... [Yet] in spite of the separation in time, a close connection must nevertheless still be left between the poet and his material. The poet must still be wholly absorbed in these old circumstances, ways of looking at things, and faith, and all he needs to do is to bring a poetic consciousness and artistic portrayal to his subject which is in fact the real basis of his actual life. (Hegel 1975, 2: 1046–47)

Proper to epic, then, as a form of effective high literary art is “the objective presentation of a self-grounded world, ... a world to which the poet’s own way of looking at things is akin and with which he can identify himself” (1047); absent such a world and wholehearted identification with it, the production of epic as the highest form of literary art is impossible.

Yet beyond this singular case, correlations between social and literary forms are much looser and for some literary forms largely absent. In particular, lyric, unlike epic, “has the advantage of being producible at almost any moment in a nation’s history, [and] its contents may be of extreme variety and touch national life in every direction” (Hegel 1975, 2: 1113–14). The task of the lyric poet, as of, later, the modern novelist and writer of shorter forms of artistic prose, all of whom live amidst greater varieties of individualization, is only

that he shall entirely assimilate and make his own the objective subject-matter. For the truly lyrical poet lives in himself, treats circumstances in accordance with his own poetic individual outlook, and now, however variously his inner life may be fused with the world confronting him and with its situations, complexities and fates, what he nevertheless manifests in his portrayal of this material is only the inherent and independent life of his feelings and meditations. (1118)

A more individualized working through of emotionally freighted point-of-view having, with more uncertain reception, is now the norm. Forms multiply, effectively achieved resonances become more distinctly sectarian, and more markedly individual style and diction become more foregrounded.

Everywhere, and whether one locates its beginnings in fourteenth-century Italy, in seventeenth-century science, or distantly in Hellenic and Roman cosmopolitanism, the modern is marked by awareness of difference, contingency, variability, and the consequent impossibility of the full consolidation of meaningful culture without significant opacities, disenfranchisements, and perplexities. Whatever we make of postmodernity—whether it is something genuinely new and different or rather a late moment of modernity—these awarenesses become yet more prominent. The importance of literature in working through emotions initiated by perplexities becomes all the more significant, in contrast with, say, theology, as both perplexities and felt awarenesses of them increase. As a result, as J. M. Bernstein puts it, “modern works of art are riven with a reflective, critical self-consciousness of themselves as works of art in relation to (postulated, posited, proposed, invented) indeterminate ideals from which they remain forever separate” (2006: 150). They undertake the work of working through, in the hope of achieving the clarification and consolidation of felt interest, while knowing that achievements of fullest clarification, consolidation, and resonance remain elusive. Experimentalism and the marking of literary style as differing from communicative norms become more prominent, as modes of distinctly literary achievement are sought and resought. As new perplexities and consequent emotional burdens are brought into attention, the devices of the Freudian primary process (condensation, displacement, considerations of representability, and secondary revision) jostle against direct communicative intent, too ready emplotment, cliché, and the didactic. Figuration holds open the space of attention to the difficult and emotionally perplexing. Finitude in undertaking to perfect practical and discursive commitments is fully accepted, and the work of literary attending goes on.

And yet address to the perplexing situation of subjects remains possible, even in the absence of the achievement of absolute orientation. In a characterization that may be taken as well to describe the condition of modern literature as such, György Lukács describes “the irony of the novel” as

the self-correction of the world’s fragility: inadequate relations can transform themselves into a fanciful yet well-ordered round of misunderstandings and cross-purposes, within which everything is seen as many-sided, within which things appear as isolated and yet connected, as full of value and yet totally

devoid of it, as abstract fragments and as concrete, autonomous life, as flowering and as decaying, as the infliction of suffering and as suffering itself. (1971: 75)

Engaging with philosophical general terms, yet denying finality in their application, correcting the world's fragility without denying it, and acknowledging and working through perplexities without dismissing them, literature and philosophy as imaginative disciplines are forms of attention both to the generalities and to the difficult particulars of human life.

Given the partly complementary, partly opposed forms of attention to human life that are cultivated in literary and philosophical writing, as they engage with and contest one another, it is not clear that philosophy and literature is a distinct subfield of philosophy, comparable, say, to ethics, epistemology, or the philosophy of science (the subjects of other *Oxford Handbooks*), nor is it clear that it should be. There are numbers of courses with the title "Philosophy and Literature" that are taught in many places, but these courses often do not share any specific readings or organizational scheme with one another. They are generally determined by the interests of a particular instructor, and they generally lie somewhat aslant the main curricula in both philosophy and literary studies.

In thinking about the relations of complementarity and opposition between philosophy and literature, I have taken the "and" in the title seriously. Specifically, I have resisted the idea to organize the collection around the philosophy of literature, treating topics such as the definition of literature, fictional objects and fictional worlds, interpretation, emotions about literature, and so forth, as self-standing topics in their own right to be submitted to the normal standards for the treatment of distinctly philosophical problems. Several other collections already exist that usefully collect the most important treatments of these problems. More important, however, this style of normal philosophical problem solving tends to detract from full attention both to the powers and interest of literature and to the uneasy affinities and disaffinities between philosophy and literature as practices. It seeks to understand the work of literature too readily against the background of protocols of knowing that were developed principally within the epistemology of the natural sciences, thus all but inevitably casting literature as secondary, decorative, or deficient.

This collection is also not devoted to philosophy *in* literature; literary works are not to be taken as mere instances of philosophical stances that are more articulately and adequately worked out elsewhere, as one might, for example, take Sartre's *Nausea* as an illustration of *Being and Nothingness*. This approach, too, scants both the powers of literature and the engagements and contestations that bind philosophy and literature to one another as forms of attention and disciplines of culture.

Instead, this collection is organized around considerations of genre, of certain large-scale historical changes in dominant forms of sensibility and expression, of central devices for developing and sustaining literary attention, and finally, of the uses of literature.

Contributors were invited to explore the interests for human life of specific genres of literature, to consider broad modes of attention that have marked off certain large cultural periods from one another and yet may also be available at many times, to trace the workings of certain central devices for achieving attention, and to consider literature as a practice in relation to the practices of inquiry, morality, and politics. As they appeared, the essays developed increasing resonances with one another, as an essay on a given period or device charted its course via comparisons with a neighboring period or device that was the subject of another essay. Various overlapping themes—what words and characters are; how imagination works; the kinds of significances social circumstances have for imaginative literary production; the needs and interests of situated subjects; the distinctiveness of artistic presentation; the fact of style; the significances of Aristotle, Hegel, Nietzsche, Lukács, and Wittgenstein, among others, for thinking about literary practice—became increasingly clear and prominent. It has been both a pleasure and an education for me to work with the contributors who have taken up the invitation to explore philosophy *and* literature with perceptiveness, subtlety, and argumentative cogency that go well beyond what anyone could have hoped for. Given the powers of their essays, I am confident in trusting that other readers will experience similar tuitions and delights.

NOTES

1. György Lukács introduces the notion of transcendental homelessness in order to characterize the situation of the subject in modernity in *The Theory of the Novel* (1920, reprinted 1971: 61). I follow him in thinking of this transcendental homelessness as especially marked in modernity, but reject his claim that it was altogether absent among the eighth-century B.C.E. Greeks.
2. Kant 2000: 194 (p. 316 Akademie edition); translation slightly modified, adding “what would otherwise be” for “*als bloßem*.”
3. On the artistry of visual witness in Homer, see Auerbach (1953), especially chap. 1, “Odysseus’ Scar,” and Ledbetter 2002: chap. 1, “Supernatural Knowledge in Homeric Poetics.”

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