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Art as Other: Relation in Esthetic Experience

Joseph Sandor Kallo

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Name of Candidate: JOSEF KALLO

Department: Philosophy

Degree:

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Approved by:

[Signatures and dates]

Honors Program Director for Honors Council
Art As Other: Relation in Esthetic Experience
Joseph Sandor Kallo
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To begin a philosophical endeavor with a consideration of its ends might seem odd, but it is really the end of this work that prompted me to begin. The end I have in mind, the facet of experience I have been thinking about, did not come to me through a consideration of art. Or, to be more exact, my recognition of this part of experience was not a product of a consideration of art. I think back about my relations with people in the past and I begin to realize it was there that this project actually began.

People have always been quite interesting to me. I think of time spent in the cafes in Santa Fe watching the tourists and, even more interesting, the natives walk by. It always seemed to me that I could, by just looking at them as they walked by, discover what sort of person they were—what category of people they fit into. I realize now that much of my interaction with others is prefaced by this sort of categorization. I see a man on the sidewalk outside the grocery store and he becomes "a homeless person" in my mind; the woman with the grand hairdo driving the cadillac becomes "the rich woman." And, most of the time these categories work fairly well at doing the job of predicting these people's actions. I expect the homeless man to ask me for money, and the rich woman to wear a fur coat.
I was formerly quite comfortable being ignorant of my thinking about people in this way. Life was quite easy as I knew what to expect from people, if a little boring for the same reason. In the midst of what I now know to be delusion, though, there was a problem. I could not fit myself into any one of these categories. Though I searched diligently to find some "type" which seemed to reflect myself, my search was fruitless. Upon placing myself into a category I would find qualities about me that did not allow me to be just "a rock climber" or "a future philosopher." So, not being one to get overly worked up over trying to fit an ideal, I gave up, and upon giving up I discovered two important things. First, I saw all around me people trying to place themselves into groups as I had done, and I recognized that, as useful as they might be, my categories of people would always fall far short of the people themselves. Just as I could not fit myself into any of my groups, so they too were people who always eluded categorization--no matter how they tried to avoid this. They behaved in a certain manner in order to be seen as being this or that sort of person, but upon getting to know them more closely I began to realize that they, like myself, had aspects of themselves which distinguished them from their type.

What I recognized, it should be pointed out, was not that my categories of people are useless; as I said, we use this sort of thinking for good and easily identifiable reasons. In thinking about people as instances of categories, though, there seems to be a corresponding neglect of a fundamental aspect of their
nature. That is, we ignore the way in which, if we pay close enough attention to them, they elude our categorical descriptions. This other dimension of people is at once elusive and strikingly present in any encounter with another person. Just as a person seems to be fitting the categorical mold we have created for them, they will do the unexpected and leave us wondering how we could have ever thought of them merely as an instance of a category.

It is this relationship that I want to talk about in the context of art. In thinking about my relationships with people I began to realize that the way art compelled me had something closely to do with the way people interested to me. I could describe all my favorite artworks in detail, as I often did in essays for various courses in college. And yet these descriptions had something of a hollowness to them. I would often be excited about a new poem I had read and would try to give a sense of it to a friend. Upon doing this I was invariably disappointed with my description of the poem. Though it might seem to me to say pertinent things about the artwork, I always had the feeling that it fell short of capturing the artwork itself. There seemed to be something ineffable about the poem that my repeated attempts at description could not encompass. And so I was left wondering, as is often the case when coming upon something philosophically interesting. I wondered how my descriptions of the artwork related to the thing I saw there in front of me. I wondered what it was about the artwork that eluded these descriptions; could this elusiveness be a property of the artwork or was it a quality
of my experience of the artwork? Perhaps most importantly, What is it about this elusiveness that makes the artwork so compelling? These questions have led me to this project.

I do not propose to do anything magical here. I will say at the outset that I wonder now as much as before about these questions. I have come to a more clear understanding of what these questions mean and how they might begin to be answered, but this does not mean that artworks or people have ceased to have this character. Quite the opposite, it seems that the more I understand the nature of my relation to the artwork, the more I realize that it is this elusiveness that will always mark my esthetic experience. Since it is in direct experience that this tension between what is and is not discursively accessible becomes most evident, I will begin with the artworks themselves.
Chapter 1
The Artworks:
Descriptions and THATness

The sea was not a mask. No more was she.
The song and the water were not mediyyed sound
Even if what she sang was what she heard

I begin my project with a dilemma. I have close at hand two artworks which have become old friends. The first is Wallace Stevens' poem "The Idea of Order at Key West." The second is the Cello Concerto by Dvorak. I am especially fond of the recording by the Chicago Orchestra with Jacqueline Dupre as soloist—though the difference between the various performances is a subject that will soon prove to raise numerous difficult questions.

The dilemma I face is this: should I begin with the very particular impressions the works have made upon me, or with something more like the critical analysis one is accustomed to finding in philosophical reflection about art? In one sense, beginning with the particular impressions of the poem gives insight into how the more abstract criticism is generated. On the other hand, the critical analysis is what is most often represented as being the "right" way to delineate the meaning of a work, and it would be useful to see exactly how these "right" interpretations relate to the artwork. In addition, it seems that I need something of the artworks down on paper in order to make sense of saying what sort of impression the artworks make on me. The thing to keep in mind, though, is that the critical analysis of the two works is a product of the more particular images the pieces inspire. This will prove important later.
correct, assumption would be that what we have here is a woman singing by the rolling waves of the sea. And not in any idealized sense either. When one sings by the sea (I would imagine) the result is not a pretty blending of sound. Indeed one would almost have to be screaming to be heard over the sounds of the waves, and this seems to be the situation that Stevens is suggesting when he says that her voice echoes the "grinding water and gasping wind." This point made, it would be too simple to say that the singer and the ocean are just very distinct. They are distinct, but yet the singer sings "what she heard." Somehow, even here when the distinction between the singer and song is the strongest, they do not easily separate completely. And yet "it was she and not the sea we heard."

But, undoubtedly, the song that "we" are hearing is much more than a singer's voice. It is more than just the sound of the ocean. If it were either of these things, the sound would just be "sound alone." The distinction between the singer and the ocean disappears in the fourth stanza. If it were only one or the other we hear "however clear, it would have been deep air,/ The heaving speech of air, a summer sound/ Repeated in a summer without end/ And sound alone." In the first section the singer's voice itself is the center of attention, it is what we listen to and hear the sea reflected in. But in the fourth stanza we realize that it is not just the sea we hear, or the echoing of the sea in the song. What we hear is "more even than her voice and ours, among/ the meaningless plungings of water and the wind,/ Theatrical distances, bronze shadows heaped/ On high horizons, mountainous
atmospheres/ Of sky and sea." Suddenly we have lost the distinction between the singer and the sea; they have blended together to produce something that is beyond the grandeur of nature. What is it we are hearing then, if it is not just the sound of the song or sea? We are left at the end of the fourth stanza not really knowing anymore what it is we are hearing--if indeed we are hearing at all. The distinctness that is so comfortable in its simplicity has melted into a state of indeterminacy that elicits the desire for resolution.

We look in the fifth stanza for some answers to the questions that the poem seems to pose, but a resolution, in the sense of definition, is not to be found in the poem. In the fifth stanza the idea that the singer is making the world with her song seems once again to suggest that her song is what we hear; "As we beheld her striding there alone,/ [we] knew that there never was a world for her/ Except the one she sang, and singing, made." Perhaps the ocean, "Whatever self—it had, became the self/ That was her song, for she was the maker." To think this resolves the questions as to the relation between the singer and ocean, though, is to overlook what these lines are saying. She defines the ocean with her song, but in some sense we have to realize that her song defines her as well. As she walks along the sea singing, she is part of the world that she is creating, so in some sense she is being created along with the sea. And as we know that the song embodies the spirit of the sea, it seems that it is the voice of the sea that defines her as she defines the sea. This is the "both" that I suggested in the beginning. In
some sense the tension in the poem arises out of the possibilities that are presented in the first two sections. Perhaps the voice of the singer and the sea are separate, and perhaps they are in some way the same. If these two ideas were chords, then playing them together would yield something like the tension that is suggested in the fifth stanza, where the resulting sound is interplay of the two but something itself distinct.

It is no accident that I mention chords here, for it is at this point that I want to begin to talk about the second artwork. It was more than just chance that lead me to choose this Dvorak piece; the similarities between the poem and Dvorak's concerto is striking. It is in some ways difficult to convey what would make one say something like this as music is a medium that seems particularly resistant to discursive description. In another way, though, I think that something can be conveyed about the structure of the concerto that will prove helpful to my continuing discussion. The cello concerto is composed of three movements that in many ways are similar in content to the three sections of the poem. In the first movement the separation between the cello and orchestra is pronounced. In the second movement the cello and orchestration gradually move together to form, by the end of the movement, an almost undifferentiated unity. In the last movement there are moments reminiscent of each of the first two movements, up until the ending--which seems to make no decision between either a separation or union of the cello and orchestra.
It was suggested to me that the first movement of the concerto was structured something like the stanzas of a poem or paragraphs in a book, and I think this is accurate. The first movement is composed of distinct sections composed of either the orchestra or the cello. In the beginning, for instance, the orchestra plays several minutes of large chords introducing the primary theme, but as the cello is introduced the orchestration is reduced to a very light background. This pattern of "cello-paragraph"/ "orchestration-paragraph" is repeated several times throughout the movement leading to an especially moving example of this as the cello introduces the secondary theme in stark contrast to the preceding voicing of the primary theme by the orchestra; this succeeds in making the contrast between the two elements even more distinct just a few minutes before the end of the movement.

We know that a shift has occurred in the beginning of the second movement as the broad chords of the first give way to a gentle "human" woodwind opening. As the cello enters, the dominant feeling seems to be a switch from the paragraph-like structure of the first to a mood of sentence blending into sentence. The cello and the orchestra flow into one another without actually becoming inseparable. After a bit of point-counterpoint tradeoff, the orchestration erupts quite unexpectedly into a bit of grandness reminiscent of the first movement. The gradual moving together of the cello and orchestra is momentarily foiled by a resistance within the two that separates them as in the first. This resistance is short lived,
though, and soon after they resume the move toward union. This continues until the first complete silence. The cello breaks this rest, but immediately upon its entrance one is struck by the fact that it is not alone. Accompanied by another cello, the soloist is led into a sort of imbeddedness in the orchestration without a complete union. We still hear the soloist as separate, but there are few moments in which the cello is not strongly drawn into the orchestration.

The third movement continues the sort of point/counter-point structure, but instead of being made up of cello-point and orchestra counter-point, the trade off is between sections of stark separation and closer harmony. In a sense, the third movement derives its tension from the first two movements by setting their dominant moods in opposition with each other. There seems to be some force that is pulling the cello and orchestra together while a similar force holds them separate. This opposition continues until the end of the concerto without ever being resolved one way or another. Indeed, the last few minutes of the piece contain a very beautiful section in which the cello and the orchestra are strongly-joined, and it is this medley that grows and becomes the thundering chords of the finale. The third movement seems to suggest that considering either the cello or the orchestra, by itself, as centrally important is as problematic as focusing only on the interplay of the two. The piece's life is in both of these, and, most importantly, in the tension between them.
This brings me to a note that I feel is necessary after these two analyses. After a detailed look at each of these pieces, I think I should note just how beautiful they are independent of any consideration like the one above. The tendency, for me anyway, when reading poetry is to focus on the idea of the poem rather than the sound of it aloud. Reading the Stevens poem convinces me, though, that much of the joy (for a lack of a better word) in the experience of the poem is had in reading it aloud. The tensions within and between lines makes it seem to roll off the tongue with a life of its own. Listening to the concerto is much the same experience, though perhaps even more so. While a discursive analysis of the poem seems to fall short of capturing its meaning in its immediacy, at least it is made of words. Music always seems at odds with any description in terms of language. When I hear music I am much more inclined to listen to the actual sound of the piece, rather than to try and understand its "meaning."

"Meaning" will begin to become a more indefinite idea as things progress, but even here the questions I began with are beginning to arise. In the poem it seems acceptable to ask for a meaning and to expect something like the above description. With music it is not as clear that such a meaning does much to capture what we see in the work. Given the consideration of the sound of the poem, though, one begins to wonder whether it is well accounted for in terms of an analytic description either. These questions are a propo, but before posing them in their full form it is necessary to return to the artworks to formulate what might
be a more immediate experience of the works. In particular I would like to focus on my early impressions of the cello concerto. A return to the images which evoked the more abstract description above will give focus to the questions beginning to rise.

The first few times I listened to the cello concerto I was struck with the intensity of the images which the piece called to mind. In particular the piece brought to mind images of a afternoon picnic with a friend in a valley surrounded by mountains. A sort of egg salad and wine affair surrounded by towering, maybe snow covered, peaks. Given the abstract analysis above (which, as I will point out is the product of these images) it is not hard to see what in the music inspires these images. The serious minor-chorded theme suggests to me towering peaks tinged with the hint of danger and adversity, while the interweaving of the cello and orchestra in the second movement suggests the intimacy of conversation. The third movement seems to draw these images together into a unified experience with its blending of the moods of the first two movements.

This notion of blending of images is an interesting one for two reasons. First, it suggests that my impressions of the concerto are in some important way formulated in terms of my general experiences. Mountainous settings are very familiar to me, and I know well what it feels like to sit in a warm sunny valley surrounded with snow topped peaks. When I hear a music that has a majestic quality to it I am usually reminded of this sort of experience. Similarly, I have had the pleasure of eating
dinner in a number of wild places and have talked with fellow trekkers across the camp stove.

At the same time, though, the music seems to give "coherence" to my experiences. I cannot remember ever having had the sort of picnic that Dvorak's concerto suggests to me. I have had fun picnics, and I have eaten meals in the mountains. But I have never had the particular picnic in the mountains that the music called to mind so concretely. My experience of the piece of music seems to be something like a formulation of my own experiences by the artwork in a way that I might not have considered otherwise. And my experience of this blending of my own experiences seems to be much more than if I had simply thought: "picnic in the mountains." The cello concerto does not simply suggest a picnic in the mountains to me, it evokes an experience which may even be more intense than an actual picnic would be.

As I suggested, the notion of meaning has become more tenuous given this sort of description of my experience of the artwork. While we are at least somewhat comfortable saying that a critical analysis might capture the meaning of the poem, describing the images of a picnic in the mountains as capturing the meaning of the Dvorak concerto sounds odd--and odd in an odd way.

The problem is, once again, not that the images are so tied into my private experience that someone else could not understand how they might relate to the piece. Listening to the concerto would, I think, give one an understanding of how it might evoke
those images in me. The images can be understood as having to do
with the concerto all right, the problem comes in saying that
they are the meaning of the concerto. But since they are so
obviously a product of my personal experience, it
is not clear how they are related to the "meaning" of the
concerto as something independent of my experience. It seems to
make such a connection I would be assuming Dvorak had such images
in mind while creating the piece and/or the piece would evoke the
same images in another observer. Or worse still, that the meaning
of the artwork is in some sense whatever I want it to be. All of
these possibilities seem unpromising, and the next chapter will
deal with esthetic theories which entail claims like these.

The word meaning should be sufficiently confused at this
point to allow me to discard it in favor of the notion of import—a term I am not altogether pleased with, but which holds out
certain advantages over "meaning". I wish to use the word import
to refer to the more indistinct notion of meaning that has begun
to develop. By indistinct I mean not to point to any metaphysical
property but only to the fact that that "meaning" seems to refer
to something more specific than the developing notion of import
does. Specifically, I want to use "import" to refer to whatever
it is about the artwork that compels images and ideas in us
similar to the ones I have just laid out. Before turning to
theories that attempt to understand the nature of the import of
an artwork, two of its important qualities need to be elucidated.

First, the import of the artwork is describable in a
number of ways. In using the word "describe" I mean something
more like what might be conveyed by the word "descry"; our descriptions seem to point to, rather than circumscribe, the artwork. My point in constructing both an abstract analysis was to make it clear that we can say interesting and accurate things about the import of an artwork. By accurate here I mean we can construct accounts of the import of an artwork that take into careful account the artwork as it is presented to us. My account of the concerto as embodying a play between the human and the unknown is generated by the very obvious relation between the cello and orchestra, a relation that is simply a part of the structure of the music itself.

Further, the interpretations we formulate in order to describe our experience of the artwork will always be categorical. That is, by their nature, they always have the quality of being able to refer to more than the particular artwork in question. I have suggested that it is our experiences in the world that give us access to the artwork. When we first approach the artwork the factor that seems to draw us in to it is our recognition a familiar kind of experience being dealt with in its medium. The key word here is "kind." Our experiences, like the import of the artwork, can be described in terms of abstracted categories, and these categories seem to be what we first recognize in the artwork.

To use a very simple example, consider the experience of fear caused by the unknown. This description, of course, is very abstract and describes a general class of individual experiences (any number of individual experiences could be described in this
related to the sea near which she sings. As I considered this analogy, other relations between the two artworks began to fall into place.

I think specifically about a place in the concerto near the end of the first movement. In this section the orchestra repeats the now-familiar theme in the typical broad chords. This leads into a very moving echoing of the theme by the cello alone. I get the impression of the cello line almost being squeezed or pushed out of the richness of the chords that precede it; the contrast between the two is profound and emphasized. In the poem the effect is similar, but reversed. As I have said, we are sure at the beginning of the poem that the singer is a woman standing by the sea. The forth stanza diffuses the distinction between singer and sea to the point that they join together in "theatrical distances." Where is the singing now? It is not simply a human singer or the song of the sea one is left with. In a very real sense it is both, and the tension between the two ideas seems essential to be the life of the poem. Looking back to the concerto I began to see that a very similar thing could be said about it. Is the theme really embodied in the orchestra and echoed by the cello, or is it the other way around? Just as in the case of the poem, my answer seems to be "both." In a sense, the two dimensions of the works seem dependent upon one another for their efficacy. Without the ocean and sky, the singer's voice is empty, and without the cello the orchestra resounds a chord that is too open and simple to have feeling.
From what I have said before about the abstract theme of the concerto, and the way I have related it to the poem, it seems that I can make the claim that the theme of the two pieces is very similar. At their core they both have a tension between the majestic and grand on the one hand and the distinctly human on the other. Though, as might be imagined given the subject of the poem, the images that are evoked by the pieces in me are apparently different, the similarity between them is apparent. A picnic in the mountains with a friend (including the towering peaks) is different and yet strongly similar to the experience of walking with someone along a beach at night listing to the raging surf. As a matter of fact, thinking about the experiences in this abstract way (and even in a more particular fashion) leads me to group them together when thinking about my experiences as a whole. This might lead one to believe that in some way we might be able to classify the two works as belonging to the same category of artwork—a category based on the abstract content of the import. The two works might then become something like two particular instances of the category of art that deals with the tension between the majestic and the human.

The descriptions of the import are, then, categorial. Looking at the two artworks I have chosen has shown that our descriptions of the import can be applied to similar artworks. At this point, some would say, an end has been reached; if the notion that artworks are instances of thematic categories was an acceptable one then there really would not be much more to say. This, though, is not the case. Just as I suggested that it is a
fundamental mistake to assume people are nothing more than instances of categories, so too I think that it is a mistake to see artworks as merely instantiated categories; it is in the process of describing the import that we find its other quality: elusiveness.

There is something about my experience of the artwork which these categorical descriptions, by their nature, miss. As I sit here and write about the two artworks, this sort of formulation of their relation to one another seems almost acceptable. Once I leave the actual pieces behind and take up talking about them, saying that they are instances of a type of import becomes much easier than when I am actually experiencing the artworks themselves. But this is where I rely on the artworks themselves to make the point that this sort of understanding, while useful, and true to part of their esthetic import, misses the actuality of the artworks.

What is left out of the categorical descriptions is the way in which the two artworks individuate themselves. In some very real sense these two pieces of art push away from each other and from me in such a way as to make a categorical description of them fall far short of encompassing them. I have said something about how they apparently have in common a central tension, but despite this the two works seem to me very separate. Though I can say very similar things about both pieces, having both of them in front of me leaves me with the feeling of the sort of distinction that one finds between different people. I recognize that two people might be similar in many respects, and have the sort of
experiences that all humans have, but at the same time it seems that placing them in the category of "people who have had that sort of experience", while making my reaction to them simpler, denies the recognition of the way they are in themselves. In the case of the artworks, focusing only on the way they embody a common theme seems to make a caricature of them that denies the real complexity of each work. What we are dealing with when we do this is an approximation of the work; the actuality of it is left behind when summing up its import in words or experiences.

Categorical descriptions, as I have said, seem to have some sort of hold upon the import of the work, but to assume that they are the import is to miss a fundamental aspect of the artwork. When I say that my interpretation of the artwork refers to "that" artwork, "that" does not refer to an instance of the type of interpretation I have in mind. If this were the case pointing at the two artworks with a single interpretation in mind, as I have done, would leave us with the feeling the two were not really very much different—or only different in the sense that they are two instances of a sameness. Observing the two pieces will assure us that this cannot be the case, though. The two pieces, though I can say similar things about them, stand outside my categorizations in my experience of them. When I formulate an abstract analysis of an artwork, I am not describing an instance of a category, I am describing THAT. And the THATness that marks my experience of the artwork is not fully captured by my descriptions.
Describing this THATness poses nearly as much trouble as making positive claims about it. In its use I mean to refer to the feeling we get when our expectations about an artwork are left unfulfilled by the artwork. Being present in any literature class will prepare one for the necessity of THATness. It would seem odd for a literary scholar to assert that he had found the correct interpretation of a particular work. It seems a perpetual part of our study of art that the things we say will always fall short of giving a true, or absolute meaning of some artwork. The feeling of our interpretation not being able to define the import completely is something of a visceral one. Walking along a hall at night and expecting an open door in front of us might be something like our forming an interpretation, and bumping our head against the closed door might be the feeling of THATness.

I am now in the position to recount the two general qualities about the artistic import. On one hand I have said a bit about how the import of the artwork is genuinely describable. My example of the abstract analysis of the two works and the more specific images I associate with the concerto show that we can indeed say something about the import, and that the import has something to do with our general experience. On the other hand, there is something about the import that eludes these descriptions. Because of the necessarily categorical nature of interpretations, they are unable to account for the import of the artwork in any absolute sense. Our experience of this is THATness--the experience of the artwork being other than our attempts to define it in terms of categorical descriptions.
In the next chapter, I shall take a consideration of three of the most influential voices in recent esthetic reflection. While I have learned much from the ideas of Suzanne Langer, R.G. Collingwood, and John Dewey, I will argue that, for the most part, these thinkers have ignored the experience of THATness. Questions about the nature of the import will be mostly questions about where the import actually is—in the artist, the artwork or the observer. In thinking about what they have left out of their systems, a clearer understanding of THATness might be reached. As it stands now, the unanswered questions are numerous. Questions as to the ontic standing of describe-ability and THATness suggest the deeper question about the nature of the import. At this point the import might seem to be something like a quality of the artwork or of the observer's experience; the following chapter will begin to show why this cannot be the case.
Chapter 2
The Thinkers:
Langer, Collingwood, Dewey

If it was only the dark voice of the sea
That rose, or even colored by many waves;
If it was only the outer voice of sky
And cloud, of the sunken coral water-walled
However clear, it would have been deep air
The heavy speech of air, a summer sound
Repeated in summer without end,
And sound alone

My response to most inquiries into the nature of the import
of an artwork is that they lack a place for THATness. Given what I
have said so far, though, this is hardly a fair response. I have
begun to point to an aspect of my experience not accounted for in
any esthetic theory I have found, but the lack of an account of
THATness is not grounds for dismissing a theory—at least not
without saying quite a bit more about THATness. To understand the
problems with existing esthetic theories we must work from the
inside out, so to speak. This seems to entail, for the most part,
assuming the import I have begun to talk about is something like a
quality of either the artwork or the artist/observer's experience.
In thinking about the import in this fashion both limitations and
alternative formulations of the import begin to become apparent.

I. Suzanne Langer

"A work of art is an expressive form created for our
perception through sense or imagination, and what it expresses is
human feeling."¹ In this statement we can distinguish two of the central concerns in Langer's esthetics. First, she is committed to the idea that the artwork is in some sense a symbol. Second, the "art symbol", as she refers to it despite much misunderstanding, represents a piece of human experience or feeling. According to Langer, the import is just this feeling that is embodied in the symbol. This description of the import needs to be examined more closely to find exactly what Langer thinks the import of the work is.

As Langer points out, the idea of a "symbol" is quite complex and refers to a number of things. In the barest sense a symbol is something we use in order to represent some other thing--be it idea or physical object. A globe is a symbolic representation of the earth and words (perhaps) are representations of physical objects and more complex ideas. Just what we mean when we say that something "represents" something else is the important concept here. Like the array of types of symbols themselves, the way symbols represent their objects is similarly varied. Language is a good (though hotly debated) example. Think of the word "poem." This word in the English language symbolizes a sort of literature which fits a certain type of definition. Langer refers to this type of symbolism as "discursive form" and points out how important it is for the function of our daily lives. This portion of our language is amazingly complex and varied, and the way in which we

use and understand the use of symbols in this way often seems almost magical. But this is not the only type of symbol we use, and it is not the type of symbol Langer wants to connect with the artwork.

Discursive form is useful for a variety of things, but Langer claims that its usefulness is limited when it comes to expressing human feeling. "Feeling" here is taken in a very broad sense to include "everything that can be felt, physical sensation, pain and comfort... feeling-tones of a conscious human life" etc. These types of experiences are not easily capturable in their full complexity in terms of a discursive account. Thus anger seems to be a discursive symbol, but the sentence "I was angry" is one that hardly conveys the nuances of a particularly enraging situation. For Langer, the expressive form of the artwork (as symbol) is able to capture the complexity of this feeling.

Perhaps a good way to think of the difference between these types of symbols is to think of the relation of a metaphor to language. In a strict sense, as Langer points out, a metaphor is not language. It is the use of language to express an idea that cannot be adequately expressed discursively. A metaphor expresses an often subtle set of associations and meanings that in a very real sense lose their effect if made explicit. The metaphor seems to be able to represent some aspect of thought that defies ordinary linguistic expression. The import of a metaphor is significantly more indefinite than that of the discursive form, and yet this does

2 Ibid, 240
not seem to impair our ability to understand and apply metaphors in our discourse. This same indefiniteness and yet definiteness (if you see my point) becomes even more apparent in the art symbol itself.

Langer thinks that an artwork, or "expressive form" as she calls it, like the metaphor that expresses a more indefinite aspect of experience, expresses human feeling. In her framework, the artwork is a type of symbol that captures an aspect of human experience that could not be expressed adequately through other forms of representation. In her words: "[a symbol] formulates the appearance of feeling, of subjective experience... which discourse... is peculiarly unable to articulate."3 This claim, first made in Feeling and Form, seems to imply, at first glance, that the artwork symbolizes some definite thing beyond itself. This is not at all Langer's point, however. In her view the work itself represents feeling in a way that can not be understood outside of the work itself. Though the import is not a physical quality of the artwork, Langer thinks we experience it as if it were. Thinking about my experience with art, this claim seems at least partially accurate.

I think specifically about a painting I saw in the Birmingham Museum of Art while I was waiting for the train that would take me to New York and the research which awaited me. The painting, by Inness, is called "Moonlight in Virginia". The painting depicts a several trees bare of leaves silhouetted by a

3 Ibid, 244.
setting moon. In the foreground a women is cooking over a campfire. The dominant feature of the painting is the tension that exists between the cool, blue moonlight that covers the landscape and warm firelight reflected on the hands and face of the woman. The tension between the light sources goes beyond simply being different colors and brightness. Instead it evokes a sort of tension between the starkness of the night and the warm protection of a fire. This tension is the import. Is not a physical quality of the work, but it is experienced as if it were.

This is a good way to begin to talk about the import; in some very real sense it is experienced as if it were a quality of the artwork. The analyses I offered in the last section suggested that talking about the import of the artwork is something like talking about the qualities or structure of the work in question. The metaphysical question about the location of the import still stands, though. Langer's description of the way we experience the import appears accurate, but it is not clear how this experience is related to her ontic claim as to the location of the import of the artwork. We experience the import as a physical quality of the artwork, and Langer wants to say this is because the physical form of the artwork causes this experience. The import for Langer, then, seems to be something like a non-physical property of the artwork.

It seems to me that this sort of view neglects some important aspects of our experience of the artwork. If the artistic import is in some way completely embodied in the artwork itself we are left wondering why certain artworks seem to have more "life"
for us than others. If, as Langer suggests, what is good art depends solely on how well the artist expresses her feeling, then it seems that all good artworks should appeal to us. This, though, is not the case. There are a great many works of art that would be considered good according to Langer's criterion, and yet the number of works I find personally compelling remain relatively small. To restate the point, if the artistic import—that is the feeling or life of the work—is embodied in the work itself then it appears an observation of a good artwork would necessarily entail the experience of this import.

Similarly, it seems different observers would experience the import of the artwork in a similar if not identical fashion. They might call the emotive content of the work different things, as Langer suggests in Feeling and Form, but this is because of the trouble involved with discursively expressing a feeling. In short, Langer's view is inadequate to understand the role of the observer in the esthetic experience. The observer is treated by Langer as a sort of blank canvas upon which the import of the artwork paints a indefinite and yet knowable self-portrait. This view does not take into account the way the experiences of the observer seem to shape the import of the artwork.

I think Langer's notion that our experience of the import is like the experience of a physical quality is useful, but a theory placing the import wholly in the artwork seems to be problematic. There is certainly something that artists and observers alike refer to as the life of the work which defies being described as only a
quality of the work itself.

The question becomes "What exactly is this import then if it is not just a quality of the artwork?" Langer describes our experience of the import and suggests that it is dependent upon the artwork. But she also seems to edge up on the idea that perhaps the experience of the import is not solely constituted of an overly simple perception of the artwork. The notion that the import is not an actual quality of the work and yet is experienced as if it were suggests to me that the role of the observer is more complex than a simple receptor of the artistic import. A look at Collingwood will, I think, yield both a position more inclusive of the observer and more problems to be considered.

II. R.G. Collingwood

Collingwood focuses almost exclusively on the artist, and this is no wonder as his theory is founded upon the idea of artistic inspiration. According to him, the artistic process begins when the artist has an emotional experience that compels some sort of expression. Just what type of experience might compel expression, and what actually happens in the process of expression is quite involved for Collingwood, but its essence is all that is necessary here. In some sense, the expression of the emotional state is something that the artist is not fully in control of. Its expression, then, is a product of and intertwined with the artist's attempt to understand her own emotions. Part of this process
involves using the imagination in order to both understand the emotional state and express it. The success of being able to express the emotion is linked fundamentally to understanding it; when one understands the emotional state, one is able to express it. It is important to realize that this process is entirely in the mind of the artist at this point.

Art, as Collingwood points out, must then be a product of both expression and imagination. But what sort of thing, he asks himself, is both expressive and imaginative? His answer: language. According to Collingwood, art is not just similar to language, it is language. And we can see just how this notion fits into the above summary. Just as we might formulate some linguistic representation of an idea and choose not to speak it, so the process of artistic creation seems to be, for the most part, something that occurs within the head of the artist—actual production of an artwork is not necessary.

The reasons that one might actually express the imagination-manipulated emotional state are several, and the particular one that motivates the particular expression determines the type of art produced. Expression just for the sake of expression seems to be the highest form of art, while expression in order to produce feelings in others and for more utilitarian purposes rank lower on the scale. Regardless of the motivation for the expression though, the linguistic characterization of art is completed. That is, whenever observers observe, what they are receiving is something like a symbolic representation of the artist's emotional state.
Collingwood's role for the observers of the artwork is remarkably similar to the role of the artist--only reversed. The observer is to see the artwork and be compelled to experience the same sort of emotion that the artist has, thereby completing the communication.

The central problems in Collingwood's esthetics are, I think, embodied in the exposition above, and they become apparent when one begins to wonder just where the artwork itself fits into this schema. In what I find to be a disturbing paragraph, Collingwood begins to address this question. "Expression creates a deposit of habits in the agent, and of by-products in his world, these habits and by-products become things utilizable by himself and others for ulterior ends" (275). The uncomfortable feeling that he may be referring to an artwork as a by-product of the artistic process is confirmed. Art (language) is itself only the activity of expression, and therefore is not utilizable for anything. To realize it in a form that can be used, it must become "denatured"; language becomes denatured in speech and art becomes denatured in its physical expression. The artworks, then, are the "deposits, left by linguistic activity: the habit of uttering certain words or phrases; the habit of making certain kinds of gesture, together with the kinds of audible noise, colored canvass, and so forth. . . ." There is something amiss here.

I wonder what Collingwood might say about my analysis and various musings on the cello concerto. First I formed what might be called an interpretation of the piece, describing the evolving relation between the cello and orchestra. Later, I focused on the
images which the piece evoked in me the first few times I listened to it. In terms of what Collingwood thinks an art observer should be experiencing, this sort of reaction is the "correct" one. He would say that my observation of the artwork had brought me in contact with the import that the artist had intended. My experience of the artwork, Collingwood would say, was like looking through a window into the artist's mind. There is a problem here, though. The two types of account of the import I have given seem to be completely bound to MY experience. So far as I know, Dvorak did not write the cello concerto while thinking about a picnic in the mountains, and my particular formulation of the relation between cello and orchestra seems strongly influenced by other things that I have been thinking about lately.

The essence of Collingwood's thought is that the import of the artwork is conceived by the artist and transmitted through the artwork into the observer. I have just suggested, though, that apparently my experience of the artwork is bound up in my general experiences. This raises the problem of different interpretations of an artwork. Collingwood would have to admit that in listening to the cello concerto, a group of people would describe the work as having evoked very different images in all of them--different in the way they are all formulated in terms of the experiences of the observers; I think of the mountains when I hear the concerto, you might think of the ocean. Similarly, our interpretations will be formulated in terms of patterns that we recognize. I see the concerto as being the separation/union/separation import because I
am thinking about this paper which describes the relation of the artwork and observer in a similar way. You would probably see it differently. Collingwood, has two options for a response to this. The first of these I will reject out of hand as a not very interesting notion of art, the second seems to me to include an idea which will become fundamentally important in the next chapter.

Collingwood could make the claim that there is indeed one right experience of the artwork, and any other interpretation is simply wrong. This would imply, though, that the interpretation of art that has gone on for centuries is mostly misguided. What we really need to do is find the true interpretation of a piece—true in the sense that it reflects the import constructed by the artist—and then leave the piece to similarly conquer others. Before reading a poem I might look in a book of accepted interpretations in order to know what sort of experience the piece should give me. The work of diligent literature scholars would be obviated by a simple interview with the artist as this appears to be the most direct way of apprehending the import of the work.

Though simple enough, this idea is problematic. Artworks created by silent artists would be almost useless—not knowing what sort of experience they intended, we would not know the right experience to have. Talking to artists would also reveal that, for the most part, they are not very aware of exactly what they are representing—if this means being able to formulate their inspiration in words. The artworks we could be sure we were experiencing correctly would be limited to those few unusually
articulate artists who are self-conscious about what it is they are doing and who think they can represent discursively what they are doing in their art. Accessible art has then dwindled to an unacceptable few pieces.

Another way of approaching Collingwood's ideas would be to say that each of these interpretations has some element of "rightness" to it. This claim might take a number of forms. Perhaps all the interpretations of the artwork taken together adequately describe the import—like putting together the pieces of a puzzle. Or, each of the interpretations has something like a grain of truth to it, and the goal of scholarly interpretation of art is to both generate new descriptions and at the same time find the bits and pieces of correctness in each description to be assembled into a complete description; something like theory and meta-theory. Or, and I think most interestingly, perhaps these different descriptions are all really accurate descriptions of the import, but they are given in terms of the context of the observer's general experience. The import might be represented in each of the descriptions of the artwork in the language of the observer's general experience. Langer seems to be saying something like this when she talks about how the import of a piece is often described in different ways because what reminds one of "wistfulness" might remind another of "longing."

I have suggested that my experience of the artwork is a sort of blending of other experiences I have had, but recognize now the emergence of an important problem. Under Collingwood's system the
import of the artwork seemed to be some definite indivisible entity. That is, he thinks that the import travels from the mind of the artist, through the material of the artwork and into the mind of the observer without altering its "nature". I have begun to move away from this, though, and the second set of possibilities I presented Collingwood with were increasingly more tolerant of a less definite import. By this I mean the import is increasingly becoming more dependant upon the observer's experience. The problem comes if this movement is taken too far. If the import of the artwork becomes utterly dependant upon the observers experience, then the artwork has again vanished--this time into the mind of the observer; we then begin to wonder whether the observer is just inclined to have certain sorts of experiences and happens to have them while they are observing the artwork. The one true import that Collingwood posited has then disintegrated into a myriad of groundless interpretations that seem entirely dependant upon the observer and consequently ignore the artwork.

This raises the question of just what counts as a good interpretation of an artwork. Given the observer-dependant esthetic which I have just described it seems that we have the opposite extreme from Collingwood's position. Instead of a very definite artistic import, we are left with an import that is apparently dependant upon what the observer thinks it is. But is this really the case? The question to ask in order to answer this question is not whether we can come to the "right" interpretation, but instead to think about the possibility of a "wrong" interpretation. Can
there be a wrong interpretation of an artwork? And if so, what might it mean to be "wrong"? Even though I am inclined to accept the observer-dependant notion of import above, there needs to be something added to this notion to make a complete description. A recognition of what it means to be a wrong interpretation is in order.

A mistaken interpretation of an artwork is one that fails to recognize the intrinsic character of the artwork itself. This sounds a bit simple, but I think that looking at a specific example of art will support this claim. If someone were to suggest that the cello concerto reminded them of a friendly conversation they had in a quiet coffee house--and only this--I would say that they were ignoring the vast chords that are so important a part of the piece. They would be ignoring a fundamental aspect of the artwork, and would thereby be giving a mistaken interpretation. It seems that, in whatever form it takes in a particular interpretation, the cello concerto's life depends upon the tension between the cello and the orchestra, and an accurate interpretation is one that takes this into account.

This begins to sound quite similar to Collingwood's notion of the definite import. Might we not say, then, that the import is this abstract notion of tension? This is to confuse the relation between the particular good interpretations and what it is they have in common. When we say that the abstracted notion of the import is more accurate than the particular instances from which it is abstracted, we are assuming that by elevating it to a higher
level we are escaping from the inexactitude of the particulars. In some sense we feel that the abstracted import is "accurate" because it seems to be what is common among all the interpretations. But this commonality seems to me not something that is somehow more "right" than the particulars, but instead something that owes its existence to the particulars and so is subordinate to their content. The abstracted import is not exempt from inexactitude—it is a product of it. The abstracted import is itself given to being stated in numerous "right" ways, and these numerous way are the particular interpretations themselves.

As I supposed when taking up Collingwood's work, the import is experienced as a formulation of the observer's general experience, but this experience is not one of radical subjectivity—the artwork constrains what might be a "right" interpretation. This seems to have been what Langer was pointing at when she described the import as being experienced as a quality of the work, even though it is not. Things are beginning to take shape now. After looking at Langer and Collingwood neither the notion that the import is a quality of the physical thing we call the artwork, nor that it is a quality of the observer's experience seems acceptable. The word "import" is itself becoming less useful as it seems essentially a word concerned with quality.

III. John Dewey

I turn to Dewey's view last as it is the one I find most
sympathetic. In reading it again, I have been reminded why I have been drawn to *Art as Experience* so strongly. It remains, in my opinion, one of the most subtle and accurate descriptions of what must paid attention to in the esthetic experience. I say this in this manner because this most recent reading of the first few chapters of *Art as Experience* has left me with the increasing feeling that Dewey recognized something in the experience of art which had been neglected throughout the history of esthetics. The idealist notions of art--a la Collingwood--seem to bother Dewey as much as they do me, and the main thrust of his work seems to be an attempt to make a more balanced esthetic theory--balanced in the sense of recognizing the artist, artwork and observer as all being important.

On the other hand, it seems to me that Dewey, despite his resistance to its pull, is drawn into thinking about art in much the same way as those he was reacting against. He wants to support the idea that art is a relation, but it is not clear that the relation Dewey marks out is not itself something like an idea in the mind of the observer. Though he differs from Collingwood importantly, his position, in my view, ends up making the import of the artwork an idea--much as Collingwood did. This is all quite broad, and Dewey's ideas, because they have in many ways influenced my thinking, need to be considered more carefully.

Dewey's ideas about the nature of the esthetic experience are an extension of his notions about experience in general, and it is with these more general ideas that I will begin. In contrast to
an idealist framework like Collingwood's, Dewey is concerned about
the interaction of the organism and the environment with which it
interacts. This interaction is experience, and it is this notion of
interaction that I see as the most important idea in Dewey's work.
For the most part, the other thinkers I have considered have held a
very simple and inaccurate notion of perception—I talked about
Langer's idea of perception being something like the world painting
its picture on the canvasses of our mind. Dewey, on the other hand,
is interested in the way perception seems to be something more like
communication between the experiencing organism and the surrounding
environment. Unlike the passive receptor of stimuli that both
Langer and Collingwood suggest, Dewey's living organism is in a
constant state of receiving information about the environment and
processing this information in such a way as to influence the
continuing experience.

Experience for Dewey, then, seems to have two interwoven
components. The experiencing organism is involved both in a passive
receiving of input from the environment—what Dewey refers to as
"undergoing." Unlike the idealists, though, Dewey also wants to
include an active element to experience. The "doing" of experience
seems to be something like our consciously establishing relations
between the disparate parts of our experience. As observers we are
constantly arranging our experience into coherent patterns that
give order to our interaction with the world. We seek to make the
differing components of our experience "fit together" to form
coherent "wholes."
Dewey rejects the idealist notion of experience, then, because he sees it as taking hold of either of the two aspects of experience to the exclusion of the other. On one hand we might establish an over-attention to the "undergoing" aspect of experience. An overly passive observer of this sort would just focus on receiving impressions of the artwork, not upon forming these impressions into any cohesive whole. Thus experience never has a chance to develop any sort of coherence, remaining something like a stream of sensory impressions. On the other hand we have an overemphasis on "doing." In this case the observer does not pay enough attention to the impressions he receives from the world, but instead is continuously putting together ideas. The problem, then, is not allowing a certain amount of "undergoing" in order to see how these constructions relate to the experiences which generated them.

Having these two elements in balance in our experience is, according to Dewey, not the regular state of affairs. As often as not we, like the idealists, focus on one or the other of the two, and because of this our experience often lacks a sense of completion. Achieving this balance Dewey calls having an experience. In contrast with our normal flow of experience which tends toward either of the two extremes, an experience stands out in our mind as a period of time in which we were able to both observe the unfolding of events and organize these events into a cohesive whole—an experience which is coherently made up of the various elements of experience.
It is no wonder that Dewey connects this notion of AN experience with the esthetic. He understands the interaction of a good artist, artwork, and observer as a situation that is likely to bring about AN experience on the part of both artist and observer. Taking a very pragmatic position, Dewey understands the drive to produce art as the conscious intent to form ordinary unbalanced experience into a cohesive whole: into AN experience. As he says, "art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously... the union of sense... and action." The experience of an artwork has the elements of doing and undergoing described above. As observers we are engaged in both passive receptivity of the content of the artwork, and active structuring of what we are observing. Lest this sound too simple, these processes are intertwined. Our receptivity is influenced by what we are structuring the experience in our mind, and our structuring is influenced by what is there in our immediate experience. This whole process of doing-undergoing continues until we reach the conclusion of the experience, a break that Dewey feels is quite distinct. In a sense, it is this definite break at the end of AN experience that gives it the character of standing out from our ordinary experience. Both the nature of the break, and the way Dewey thinks it individualizes the esthetic experience need to be examined.

It is clear that Dewey means to distinguish AN experience from experience in general, and in making this claim to distinguish

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himself from the idealist position. In this overview of Dewey's thoughts we can distinguish two important ideas that Dewey supposes will separate AN experience from experience in general. First, Dewey focuses on the "doing-undergoing", when balanced, as being a distinguishing aspect of AN experience. Second, he thinks that the character of the esthetic experience, in contrast to ordinary experience and because of the "doing-undergoing" has a distinct quality of consummation or completeness that separates it from "anesthetic" experience. The "doing-undergoing" which supports a feeling of completeness is what Dewey thinks gives the experience of the artwork, and AN experiences in general, the individual or distinct character that our esthetic experiences seem to have.

We might first ask Dewey how his doing-undergoing is different from the way other esthetic theories treat the artwork and observer. I suggested earlier that Langer thought of the observer of an artwork as something like a white canvas which the artwork impressed its image. This sort of blank canvas observer is overly simple, and I think that Dewey's "doing-undergoing" is an attempt to say something more accurate about this. Dewey's notion of "doing-undergoing" supports something like communication between the artwork and the observer. The observer of the artwork is both passively perceiving the forms on the canvas or chords in the concerto, and actively sorting and connecting these forms in her head to create comprehensive ideas inspired by the primary observation. Dewey does not want this process to be understood as a simple exchange, or a single occurrence. Rather, this communication
between the artwork and observer is a continually evolving process. The observer is continuously taking in the work and formulating ideas about it.

Dewey uses an example of a stone rolling down a hill to illustrate the difference between experience and an experience. A stone rolling down a hill without awareness of its descent or its eventual resting place might represent experience. A conscious stone that is enjoying the bumps and dips of downhill travel, and has some sort of control over where it will come to rest, is an experience. We might ask ourselves, though, how much control the rock rolling down the hill does have over where it comes to rest. In other words, what sort of doing is this here? If we say that our unfolding experience is in some way guided by an end we have predetermined, it seems we are back to Collingwood and the problem of the vanishing artwork. Our experience is then the product of the idea we begin with. If the end of our experience is unknown, though, it seems that "doing" has disappeared. We are back to being rocks rolling, attentively perhaps, but with no active involvement in the progress of the experience—we are back to Langer's notion of the observer being like a canvas.

This problem becomes evident in Dewey's work in the second way he thinks he has distinguished himself from the idealists: his notion of consummation. Upon reaching the end of the period of doing—undergoing, Dewey thinks we can look back over the conversation between artwork and observer and see all the minute steps of doing and undergoing as having been moving toward the
finality we have reached. In a sense, the individual doings and undergoings become parts of the complete experience, and it is this sense of completion that separates the experience from what he calls anesthetic experience.

It seems to me, though, that this reliance upon the consummated end of experience to separate it from anesthetic experience is what has caused the problem in the rolling stone case. If the experience is building to an end which will subsume the individual steps in the experience into a greater whole, we are faced with the question the stone example raised: is this end something we observers are working toward, or is it something within the artwork that is drawing us to this finality? Dewey's claim that it is both—that the esthetic experience is both doing and undergoing-- is one I fully agree with. However, I do not think this doing-undergoing will produce the consummated end he suggests. Given the nature of the import as I have begun to describe it, the experience of the import will always be one of incompleteness—in the sense that we do not ever seem to be able to say the last word about the artwork. In taking up the "other" in the next chapter, I will say more about why this must be so.

In essence, all three thinkers have a notion of the end of esthetic experience much like Dewey's. Langer assumes when we recognize the import in the artwork an end is reached; the end is the transmission of the form for Collingwood. The end of Dewey's esthetic experience is achieved after a period of relation between the artwork and observer. In all these cases, the full character of
the esthetic experience is not evident until it is over—until the import is received by the observer. Indeed the word import seems to imply something like a quality that, once located or transmitted, is very definite.

It is this notion of the end I will disagree with, and an alternative account of our experience of the artwork has been formulating in my discussion of these three thinkers. My consideration of Langer left me with the idea that the import of the artwork is not just a quality of the artwork, though it is experienced as if it were. This led me to look to Collingwood for a more involved observer, and I found the general experiences of the observer to be fundamentally important to the esthetic experience. Dewey provided the basis for understanding the relation between observer and artwork.

In a sense, our questions mirror those of the Stevens poem. On the one hand "It may be that in all her phrases stirred/ The grinding water and the gasping wind;/ But it was she and not the sea we heard." On the other "And when she sang, the sea, / Whatever self it had became the self/ that was her song for she was the maker." The answer to the questions about the nature of the import, like the one in the poem, lies in the tension between these two possibilities.
Chapter 3
THATness and the Other
Relation in Esthetic Experience

But it was more than that
More even than her voice, and ours among
The meaningless plungings of water and the wind
Theatrical distances, bronze shadows heaped
On high horizons, mountainous atmospheres
Of sky and sea

I. Import and Ends

The last chapter concluded with the observation that the idea of "import" implied a definiteness in our experience of the artwork, and that upon coming to this definiteness, an end is reached—the import is known and the experience is over. In some sense this is how we often think of what it means to experience art, we observe an artwork and come to some sort of decision as to what it is "about." Think of reading a book. One motivation for reading is to try to discover what a book is "about." Once we know this, we might be inclined to say an end has been reached with the import having been discovered and understood. This is apparently what Langer was describing when she said the import was experienced as if it were a quality of the work; when we reach some understanding of the meaning of a book, we might want to say that the meaning is in some sense there in the book.

But what of this notion of an end? In the first chapter, I talked a bit about THATness, and I would like to return to it now. The first time I used the word "THATness", quite a while ago, I described it in the context of the experience of stumbling
upon a rock unexpectedly, and I want to keep this sense of immediacy. In the context of esthetics I have been using THATness to refer to the sort of rough jarring we receive when we recognize the artwork is not captured by our descriptions of it. This jarring is as pronounced as our surprise in stumbling upon the unexpected rock; the artwork surprises us by being other than what we have expected it to be.

It seems as if, at least on the face of it, the THATness in esthetic experience is opposed to the sort of end "import" suggests. As long as we are experiencing THATness, we are aware that we have not reached a description of the artwork that fully captures it. Can a theory which holds the consummated end of the esthetic experience as fundamental take account of THATness as well? Dewey's notion of the relation between the artwork and observer attempts to do something like this. If we understand the doing as the formation of descriptions of the artwork, then THATness might be the point at which something in the artwork forces the observer to realize the descriptions which have been formed are inaccurate. THATness could be the turning point from doing to undergoing. THATness would be the point in the conversation when the artwork begins to speak and compels the observer to silence and attention. The end would be reached, then, when the observer reaches a description which is not contradicted by the artwork. Looking back on the conversation, then, the observer could see that it had been leading to this point all along. The artwork had been correcting his misguided descriptions until an accurate one was reached.
We would do well to ask ourselves what "accurate" might mean here, though. In my discussion of Collingwood, I pointed out how we are inclined to recognize the abstract generalizations about an artwork as being the most accurate. Thus the concrete images that the concerto evoked seemed less accurate than the abstract description I gave of the piece (separation/union/separation). But should we say that this abstract understanding of the artwork is accurate, and by being so obviates THATness? I do not think so. Once we have reached the rarified air of this sort of description, the artwork, far from being captured, seems profoundly missed. As I pointed out earlier, this sort description is, by its nature, categorical and can refer to any number of similar artworks. If the end Dewey thinks we reach is this sort of description, the artwork might respond by pointing to the way the abstract description misses its complexity. The abstract description, by its nature, has missed the way in which this artwork is different from any other. In the formulation of this abstract description which appears to be the final summation of the esthetic experience, THATness is most pronounced.

The artwork seems to be fundamentally indeterminate—it resists our attempts to determine it. We are inclined to say that the particular images it evokes do not fully capture it as they are images formed of our own personal experience. When we try to abstract the essence of these images in the attempt to produce a more accurate description, though, the result is an even larger gap between the artwork and our ideas about it. The end suggested by the word "import" is misguided, then, as it suggests that upon
understanding the artwork this gap will be bridged; we will come
to a description which will determine the experience of the
artwork fully. This sort of end will not be found.

The account of the artwork needed is one that makes a place
for both the relational character of my interaction with the
artwork, and the way in which the indeterminacy of the artwork
prevents any completely determinate end from being reached, an
account that provides a place for both our interpretations and
THATness. In taking a closer look at THATness we will begin to
find a place for an account that will take both of these into
consideration.

II. THATness

a. The Unexpected and THATness

I wonder how Dewey would account for what we might call the
feeling of the "unexpected" that seems to characterize my
experience of music. When I listen to certain pieces of music I
often find myself swept along. I feel the natural progression of
the piece and I find myself anticipating, with a fairly high
accuracy, where the piece will go. If I hear the gentle
interchange between the cello and the orchestra and observe that
the music is building in intensity I expect that this will
continue to some sort of release of this intensity. It seems that
being able to appreciate good music is being able to recognize
and follow these increases in intensity and their corresponding
resolution. Then, just as I am expecting an intimate passage to
continue its present path of intimacy, the music makes a radical jump into broad inhuman chords—the beginning of the second movement of the cello concerto. This turn of the music is radically other than what I have expected, and the experience of it disrupts what I have expected the piece to do and, in a sense, leads me back to paying attention to the music rather than my expectations about it.

Unexpectedness seems to be the key to understanding Dewey's "doing-undergoing." While listening to music the doing might be understood as forming expectations about the music in the sense that I have described above. When we expect the music to do a certain thing, we are putting together our ideas about the piece and creating expectations about what the rest of the piece should do. We have heard the cello run through this particular scale and end with a flourish three times so far, and we expect the flourish when the scale begins a fourth time. The ideas we have formed, our expectations, make up the doing. Undergoing, on the other hand, is highlighted when we come up against the unexpected. Often, our doing results in ideas about the piece that are contradicted by the piece; we expect the flourish the forth run up the scale but this time the cello is silenced—we experience the unexpected. With the experience of the unexpected we realize that our expectations are not the piece itself, the piece is something other than our thoughts about it. We return to undergoing after our expectations are left unfulfilled. Once again, this process seems to be made much more distinct in talking about it than it is in experience. My experience of the
unexpected is not remarkable in any large sense, instead it is the result of my ongoing expectations about the path of the music on the very particular level that careful listening entails.

Talking about unexpectedness is one way of getting to the more abstract notion I have in mind: the notion of THATness. If the experience of the unexpected in music is a result of my expectations of the piece on a minute scale, then the experience of THATness is much the same experience on a more general level, though it encompasses unexpectedness. The experience of THATness is the feeling I have when my formal ideas about the artwork, which have been inspired by the artwork, fail to grasp the totality of the artwork. The notions I have about the formal nature of the piece fall far short of totally describing the work. The full character of the work resists being formulated as a particular set of relations, arrangement of forms, juxtaposition of ideas etc.

The cello concerto, and my descriptions of it provide the setting in which my experience of THATness can be recognized. Though I have dealt with the abstract analysis first in these pages, it was, of course, the images evoked by the piece that were primary in my experience. My first impression of the concerto was the image of the mountain setting. At that stage I might have said that the work was about a picnic in the mountains. As I listened to the piece again, though, this image lost its structuring effect. The more I listened, the less I was able to hear the piece just in terms of a picnic in the mountains as my continued experience of it led me to recognize elements in
the piece which did not fit this description. Just as my expectations about the flow of a piece are disrupted by unexpected turns in the music, so my notions about the form of the piece were rendered incomplete or lacking by the recognition of other elements of the piece not taken in by my immediate impressions. I found the concerto was not encompassed by my image of the mountains. The concerto was more than just a picnic in the mountains.

At this point I thought my description was just lacking; I had simply stated my idea about the formal nature of the concerto in too specific language, the description was overly influenced by my personal experience. To render a more accurate description of the form I turned to an abstract description which described the concerto as the relation between the human and the unknown. That is, I thought that by taking my particular impressions and seeing what it was they had in common with others I had gathered, I could formulate a more abstract and accurate notion about the form of the artwork. The result of this was not what I had expected. Far from getting me closer to the actual piece I was listing to, my abstracted form failed to describe the actual nature of the piece in as satisfying way as my more particular example did. Describing the concerto as the interaction between the human and the unknown, far from being a more adequate description of the piece, seemed to open up even more space between my ideas about the piece and the piece itself. In my attempt to create a form which captured the particular interaction between cello and orchestra in this concerto, I
create an abstract idea which might refer to the Stevens poem as much as it does the cello concerto. Even more emphatically this time, the cello concerto has slipped out of the grasp of my formal ideas; it has remained other than my thoughts about it.

At the risk of losing the metaphysical thread of the discussion about the nature of the other, I think a concrete reference here will help these more abstract points. As I have suggested, the experience of THATness is related to the unexpectedness I have described above. Just as my expectations of the continued path of the music are upset by the unexpected turn it takes, so my formal ideas about the artwork are upset because the artwork always seems to lie outside my assessment of it. The result of the feeling of unexpectedness and otherness seems to be the same: we are forced to stop doing and start undergoing again. The experience of THATness is the realization that the artwork is not our ideas, it is something outside our head. The experience of THATness is a bumping up against something very real in the world "out there". It is not merely our idea, it is THAT.

Implicit in this description are the answers to the most fundamental questions about the nature of the experience of the THATness. At this point I see three very important questions. First, we might ask if THATness is a quality of the artwork in question. In other words, when we experience THATness are we experiencing a quality that is embodied in some way in the artwork itself? Second, if the answer to the first question is no, then might the experience of THATness be a product of our thinking? That is, is THATness a quality of our thought? Or in a
more particular formulation, might THATness not be our lack of precision in our appraisal of the artwork? Finally, if the answer to both of these questions is no, then what exactly is THATness if not a quality of the artwork or observer's experience?

b. THATness as Quality

In one important sense we might want to say that THATness is a quality of the artwork. The indeterminacy of the artwork seems to be the source of my experience of THATness; as the artwork is fundamentally indeterminate it generates my feeling of THATness by lying outside my expectations (expectations in the form of the images it evokes and the descriptions created from these images). Further, I want to say that we can form wrong interpretations of the artwork; the indeterminacy does not seem to facilitate being able to attach just any description to the artwork as I suggested in my discussion of Collingwood. It makes sense, then, to say that this indeterminacy which seems to be the root of THATness is a quality of the work, and our experience of it is the experience of the other.

We risk two pitfalls here. In one sense, placing THATness as a quality of the artwork, in the sense I have used THATness so far, risks understanding the artwork as being a fundamentally unapproachable individual. If the artwork is only THAT, we quickly find ourselves running out of interesting things to say about it. The descriptions we give will always be underwritten by the more fundamental recognition that the artwork has the quality
of being other than these descriptions; in a sense we see the artwork changing into an indescribable black speck in the distance like the singularity of a black hole which sucks up any sort of illumination thrown on it. Finding ourselves in this position we are inclined to make the second mistake; since it seems that all artworks have this character, we might group them together under the common heading of "THATS." As Hegel did with "this," we have taken the THATness which seemed to be the mark of confrontation with the individual and turned it into the most abstract of categories--everything can be understood as a "this".¹ This is unacceptable though. It seems that we can both give an accurate and interesting account of the artwork and recognize the artwork as being something more than an instantiation of a category.

What is needed is an account of THATness that takes into consideration both its relation to indeterminacy and the way in which we might say a description of an artwork is "right." Another possible way of doing this might be to say that THATness is a quality of my experience of the artwork; THATness might in some way be dependent upon my particular understanding of the artwork. If my description of the artwork is in some sense deficient, perhaps THATness might be the my recognition that I have made a mistake--that my description is not a good one.

To understand why this cannot be the case, think again about

the idea of unexpectedness. Would we say that the feeling of shock we receive when the music goes in a direction we do not expect is a quality of our ideas about the piece? This does not seem right. Our expectations of the music and the way they are wrong gives rise to the feeling of the unexpected in that the unexpectedness is just the recognition of their lack of fulfillment. But the unexpected is not itself an idea; quite to the contrary it is the recognition that our expectations are unfulfilled. It is a recognition that marks the (temporary) end of expectations and a return of focus to the artwork itself—as something that has eluded expectations. Quite distinct from the recognition of a quality of my thought, THATness is the awareness of something lying outside my expectations. It is in the experience of the THATness that I recognize the concrete, not the abstract; it is in this recognition that I realize what it is my abstractions refer to and the necessarily incomplete way in which they refer.

So, I am left in a quandary. The THATness which is a fundamental part of my esthetic experience is neither a quality of the artwork nor my ideas about it. So where might THATness be, and what is it? It is in the relation between the artwork and observer that we will begin to find an answer to these questions, though not the sort of answer one usually relies on relation to give. Looking at how THATness arises from the interaction of the artwork and observer will begin to get us to the notion of the "other." With this "other" I think some of the questions about THATness will begin to be resolved.
From what I have said above about the metaphysical status of THATness we might be tempted to think that its origin is a rather simple exchange between observer and artwork. If THATness is only the failure of my formal ideas to completely describe the artwork, then the situation looks something like this: I see the artwork and have an idea, the idea does not completely describe the artwork so I experience THATness. This is too simple, though. In order to describe the complexity of the experience of the artwork this notion of what it means to interact with an artwork must be left behind in favor of a richer notion of interaction.

c. THATness and Relation

I have stated that THATness must be the result of a relation between the artwork and the observer, but the notion of interaction which I have so far is not much of a relation—at least on the face of it. This is the notion that THATness is the recognition that our ideas about the artwork do not completely determine or describe it. THATness is the point at which it becomes apparent to us that there is something outside our ideas which they refer to. The feeling of THATness is the jerk of the unexpected, the bumping into something there in the world outside our head. So how might one say that this harsh stop in our thinking is the product of a relation? To answer this we must go back to thinking about the nature of the artwork and the way in which our formal ideas relate to it.

In my discussion of Collingwood I pointed out how the
artwork seems to be something that accepts a variety of interpretations of its formal structure. We can understand the artwork in a number of ways, and with good art this seems to be the necessary state of affairs. I see a particular relation of ideas in the Steven's poem, and you might see a quite different one. In addition, I pointed out how the form of the artwork, while being indefinite in the sense that it is not confined to one interpretation, seems to be resistant to "bad" interpretations. We can say a good deal about what the poem might mean, and we can say that certain interpretations are not what it means. The essential point here is that the artwork is very much the generator of our ideas about it. As I have suggested, our ideas about the artwork are made up of parts of our more general experience, but the artwork itself is what calls these experiences to mind. In the case of the poem I am reminded of what it is like to wonder about boundaries, and this experience of wondering is given coherence by the interaction of the singer and the sea.

But how is it that the artwork brings about the union of my disparate experiences? In my observation I see the interaction of forms within the artwork and these forms are such that they remind me of experiences I have had and things I have thought. "She sang beyond the genius of the sea" brings to mind a beautiful voice and the sound of water, and "it was her voice that made the sky acutest at its vanishing" reminds me of the part we take in drawing boundaries in the world. The coexistence of these lines in the poem might lead me to formulate an
interpretation of the poem as being about a woman drawing the boundaries in the world.

The first few stanzas support this interpretation, and I become more comfortable with this idea. I expect that the remainder of the poem will describe her voice as the creative force behind the boundaries. Then I hear, "But it was more than that, more even than her voice. . ." A harsh chord sounds that breaks the inertia of my expectations. Suddenly, the music has eluded the interpretation I have given it. I am no longer seeing the music in relation to this interpretation, I am bumping into it. Instead of drifting along with my description of the poem in mind I am left in direct confrontation with the way it has shown itself to be other than my thoughts about it.

I continue to read with just the play of words in mind, and the recognition that the poem is not just about a woman making boundaries. It is more than that. Perhaps it is something like the relation between the singer and the sea that makes the boundaries. A new interpretation begins to form based on the failure of the first and the feeling that both singer and sea have something to do with the boundary creation. But then "It was her voice that made the sky acutest at its vanishing. . . and when she sang, the sea, whatever self it had, became the self that was her song." Once again I am left with the recognition that my interpretation of the poem is lacking. The poem has othered itself out of the grasp of my expectations.

Now we can see this conversation between artwork and observer must be an ongoing relation, rather than a one time
interaction. As I pointed out in my thoughts about Collingwood, the ideas that the artwork inspires in us, the expectations we form, the meanings we ascribe to it, will always lead to THATness as these things will never encompass the entirety of the artwork. We will never come to a set of expectations, or particular interpretation which will eliminate the THATness of our relation with the artwork. The artwork, by its nature, will continue to stand outside our ideas about it. The attempt to define it in terms of our thoughts will always lead to THATness. The artwork is the genesis of our ideas, but it stands outside of them in way that compels us to extend our intellectual grasp in an attempt to make a better description—a more accurate grasp.

It is this that compels in the artwork; we feel that our ideas and feelings are inspired by the artwork, we feel that we know what the artwork is "about", we know what to expect from it. As soon as we think this though, the artwork eludes our grasp and we are left with the realization that our ideas, while brought together by the artwork, do not capture it. In this recognition we confront the concrete in a direct way. We are no longer thinking about the world, we are directly aware of it. It is not the interpretations we bring to the artwork which compel us, then, it is the way we are drawn to the artwork within the harshness of THATness. This is the otherness in which we find the roots of THATness.
Interlude: The Night

I have always been fascinated with the dark. Since my last few years in high school I have made periodic pilgrimages to a quarry pond (the "Blue Hole", we call it) in the country near Huntsville, and an unspoken rule among my fellow nutty companions (the opinion of non-night-travelers) is that we only visit the place at night. There is something compelling about the night; in the darkness the ordinary cow-field takes on a misty, dreamlike character. As in the Stevens poem, our minds are able to draw boundaries upon the night and for awhile the place is not just a rural spot in Alabama, it is wherever our minds happen to be wandering that evening.

When I think of how we might say THATness is really the compelling part of the experience of the artwork, I often think of nights spent at the pond. We are most often inclined to think that what is really interesting about art, places, people, etc is the way in which we can say we know things about them. I think of the tourist at the Grand Canyon with a guide book in hand, seeing the awe-inspiring hole in front of him mediated through the voice of the guidebook. He does not just look at the grandeur, he looks for landmarks and signs of elevation, and passages taken by (much more) brave pioneers. The Blue Hole at night has no such guidebook. The faint impressions of trees and hills accept the interpretations we impress on them. Perhaps on a particular night we are speaking of the sea, the mist on the water gives the corner-of-the-eye impression of being on a rocky coast.

But the night resists complete definition. The nearby hills,
covered with moonlit fog, could as well be distant mountains. The pine tree on the edge of the field might be a sapling redwood. It is not what we think these things are that is so compelling, it is the way in which, when the mist shifts, we are back to confronting just "something"—something out there in the darkness. And the "somethings" we see are not well defined things we can now identify correctly, but indefinite shapes which tempt us to define them and always defy certainty as to what they "really" are. The forms in the moonlit darkness compel us in their indeterminacy. When our attempts to define them as one thing or another fail, we are left confronting them as just shapes. We are drawn in by the failure, in a sense. When our definitions—our guidebooks—fail we remove the mediating ideas from between us and the world about us. We are left with a direct relation with the fundamentally indeterminate other.

III. THATness and the Other

The relation with the other is the foundation of the esthetic experience; it is here we find the roots of THATness. The subject of the other is an immense one and here I only to broach it in order to understand more about THATness. I am indebted to work of C.S. Peirce in his early work on this subject, and Brian Martine for distinguishing the sort of relation we have with the other.²

² For Pierce's contributions to this discussion see the sections on Secondness in Buchler's Peirce: A Collection. Martine's work on the relationship with the other begins in Indeterminacy in Identity and Determinacy relation used here occurs primarily in the former.
We might understand the two aspects of our relation to the artwork by once again referring to Dewey's notion of doing-undergoing. If the doing part of our relationship with the artwork is the putting together of ideas as I have suggested, then we might understand our doing as being a mediated relation to the artwork. We are, in a sense, like the tourist viewing the Grand Canyon through the context of the guidebook. Our expectations about the artwork mediate our awareness of it. The attempt in all three of the thinkers I have discussed is to make this mediating theory in some way encompass the actuality to which it refers. The end I rejected earlier is the drive to make the mediating idea map directly onto the artwork. We have seen, though, the attempt to say exactly the right words in the hopes the artwork will be captured is necessarily unsuccessful.

It is in the recognition of our unsuccessful attempt to define the artwork in terms of our mediating interpretation that we experience THATness. Recognize, as might be apparent, is a word that does not take in the full import of THATness and the resulting direct relation to the artwork. I continually want to come back to more visceral words like "bump into" or "confront." The confrontation with the artwork that has eluded our mediating interpretation is the turning point in the doing-undergoing schema, but it is not separate from the undergoing. The jarring stop of THATness is not the mark of anesthetic experience as Dewey supposed, nor a sign that the esthetic experience has been completed and that we are moving away from the artwork. Quite to the contrary it is the recognition of the more fundamental
relation to the artwork, the relation that draws us to the artwork.

The word "other" as we use it ordinarily, implies a certain sort of relation. Though usually unstated, "other" is necessarily conjoined to "than." "Other" implies something that is not this, and in stating that we are drawing a particular sort of relation between the "this" and the "other." Various terms have been used to refer to this sort of relation: secondness (Peirce) and dyadic (Martine) are two. The central notion here, though, is that the relation to the other is an unmediated one. The experience of THATness marks the recognition that the interpretation which has mediated my relation with the artwork is incomplete, and in this harsh recognition I have called THATness is the direct confrontation with the artwork—a confrontation between the observer and the other unmediated by an interpretation. THATness is the recognition of both the inadequacy of the interpretation and the underlying relationship with the other.

The "than" implied in the use of "other" gives some insight into how the other, instead of pushing us away as I suggested it might if it were a property of the artwork, draws us into the artwork. When we form interpretations and mediate the relation with the artwork we are in a sense one step back from it. I am the tourist with the guidebook. As the artwork others itself from our expectations, though, we are brought into direct confrontation with the artwork. The artwork becomes "other than" our interpretations of it, and by doing this it draws us into the dyadic sort of relation in which we are paying attention to the
artwork itself.

This direct relation with the artwork is not the end of interpretations of the artwork, then, it is the generator of them. When we are left in direct confrontation with the other as my friends and I are when looking at the shapes in the misty night of the Blue Hole, we are compelled to say something about this thing which has drawn us to it. We feel compelled for a variety of reasons to attempt to define this thing which confronts us, and upon saying something about it we are back to mediating the relation again. This mediation will again be disrupted by THATness, of course, and we will become aware of the dyadic nature of our relation with the other.

The relationship is now satisfyingly complex. The relation between the observer and the artwork is not a simple notion of the transmission of form, or the inspiration of ideas. The artwork, as a collection of related forms, inspires in us the blending of experiences and ideas about what the interaction of the forms in the artwork could mean. Our interpretation or feeling might be a "right" one, that is it might take the forms present into account, but with the establishment of our ideas about the artwork comes the realization that the artwork is not determined in our interpretations. By the nature of the form of the artwork, it will never be determined; it will always lie outside our ideas about it—even though these ideas are inspired by it. And this elusiveness of the artwork, far from making the artwork inaccessible to our thoughts, brings us into direct confrontation with the artwork itself. Hence the indeterminacy of
the artwork does not end our interaction with it, it creates it. The harsh stops in our esthetic experience do not interrupt our interaction with the artwork, they are the genesis of it.

We can see now that the end reached in the formation of a description of the artwork is really the beginning of the relation. In the creation of a mediating theory between artwork and observer we are beginning the cycle which will lead to a recognition of the inadequacy of this theory. In our experience of THATness we are drawn into a direct confrontation with the artwork which will, in turn, lead us to make another attempt to capture it in the terms of a theory. And, thus, a relation. There is a relation between artwork and its observer all right, but it is a relation which, by its nature, will not come to a definitive end with a last word spoken. For in the speaking of this last word lies the beginning of the relation.

These words I have written here should be taken in much the same way we might take an interpretation of an artwork. I have pointed to several aspects of my experience of an artwork, but these pointings are themselves not an end. The notions of THATness and the "other" risk becoming themselves as categorical as "import" if we are not careful in our considerations. These ideas are themselves beginnings, and beginnings in a sense that they take the experience of the artwork out of the fundamentally determinate setting described by theories supporting the notion of import. If I have succeeded in doing this, then this project has been a success.

In closing I am reminded of the last few lines of the