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**Authorship, Authenticity and the Perceptual/Non-Perceptual
Divide
(Abstract)**

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This paper explores certain aspects of the interconnectedness of perceptual and non-perceptual features with respect to how a work's authorship affects the concept of authenticity. In order to do so, I progressively restrict the focus of the discussion from theorisations about the ontology of the artwork to the field of literature, then to the genre of lyrical poetry, and finally to a case study which concerns the critical reception of Oscar Wilde's collection *Poems*.

I begin by reviewing the distinction between the concepts of »perceptual« and »non-perceptual« properties of the artwork with reference to the theories of Dutton and Wimsatt, arguing that the concept of »style« (which, in turn, consists of both properly stylistic and axiological dimensions) functions as a connection of the two fields, so that normally (in spite of extreme cases such as Van Meegeren's forgeries) one does expect to see perceivable signs of that which authenticates the artwork (its authorship) within the perceptual properties of the work itself, so that a neat division between the two is not feasible. Then I consider Dutton's distinction between »nominal« and »expressive« authenticity and argue that the latter entails a concept of »appropriateness« that will be looked for in the work itself.

When considering literature in general, I draw a distinction between the concepts of »text« and »work«, arguing that where the former is an object definable by its formal features (in the case of literature »perceptual« does not equate »sensory«) the latter entails a notion of »agency« on the author's part; this agency may or may not coincide with the author's intention, and may also comprise theories which attempt to explain the production of artworks in terms of unconscious revelation, symbolic self-placement etc. In contrast to theorisations such as Currie's, I argue that the opposition between work and text should not be framed in terms of reciprocal extension, but rather as pertaining to the divide between considering the object of interpretation as an »object« (the text) or as an »action« (the work).

When considering the genre of lyrical poetry, I show how notions related to the concept of authenticity have a specifically rhetorical dimension, that is, one which can be seen in the textual manifestation of the artwork itself. I take into consideration the notion of »utterance«, and review Beardsley's and Ohmann's uses of speech-act theory, in particular their argument that one must always postulate the presence of a fictional utterer even when none is explicitly present in the work and that this necessarily severs the author from any views, notions, feelings contained in the artwork; I argue that, the defensibility of these theorisations aside, the specificity of lyrical poetry in this respect is precisely that its utterances have no (explicit) fictional utterer and that, since to consider the work as action entails the postulation of a subject who utters the work's utterances, lyrical poetry is, similarly to essays and unlike dramatic poetry, likely to be read as an authorial utterance.

Wilde's *Poems* and its reviews constitute a case in the expectations connected to lyrical poetry, and in how such expectations may frame a work's reception. I show that for many critics at the time, *Poems* was unsatisfactory both from the point of view of nominal authenticity and from

that of expressive authenticity. As for the former, the critics pointed out the derivativeness of Wilde's poems, stopping short of accusing them of plagiarism; I argue that »derivativeness« pertains to nominal authenticity just as much as plagiarism, but differs from it in that it considers the artwork in terms not purely textual. As for the latter, I show that Wilde's *Poems*, by propounding irreconcilably contradictory views of the political situations it deals with, was felt by reviewers to be »insincere« – therefore expressively »inauthentic«; this shows how to consider a work as an action on the part of the author tends to entail the (normative) expectation that the work have something to say and that it be coherent in saying it. The case of the collection and its reviews ultimately shows how ostensibly »non-perceptual« elements of an artwork connected to authorship (on which the concept of authenticity is based) do have a perceptual dimension in the way in which an »appropriate« relationship between the author and the work is expected to be perceivable within the artwork's formal/aesthetic properties.

In sum, the paper shows that the concept of authenticity includes properties both perceptual (pertaining to the work as object) and non-perceptual (pertaining to the work as action), that the author is likely to be taken as the utterer whenever the utterances contained in the work are not explicitly dramatised and that there is a specific set of expectations as to the rhetorical features of an artwork which constitute an »appropriate« relationship between it and its author.

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