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**Interpretation and Aesthetic Appreciation  
(Abstract)**

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In order to talk and think sensibly about the various ways of engaging with texts, we need to distinguish them by reference to relevant differences and commonalities between them. This paper focusses on the conceptual relations between three ways of engaging with texts that figure prominently in literary scholarship: textual interpretation, literary interpretation, and aesthetic appreciation. Rather than giving a full analysis of these three terms, this paper has two specific concerns. First, it is argued that literary interpretation is best understood as a species of textual interpretation. Second, and relatedly, some theorists argue that the discriminating feature of literary interpretation is its aim of aesthetic appreciation. Aesthetic appreciation may refer to either (i) a judgement about or (ii) an experience of or (iii) an attempt to identify and evaluate the aesthetic properties of something. The idea that appreciative judgements or experiences are the main aims of literary interpretation should not lead to a conceptual confusion of literary interpretation with aesthetic evaluation (or appreciative acts), even if there is a sense in which the idea is correct. Aesthetic appreciation is, at most, a secondary aim of literary interpretation and may function as a motivation to engage in literary interpretation. This aligns well with the idea that aesthetic appreciation has a significance independent from interpretation. Their conceptual distinction notwithstanding, it is argued that there are interesting evidential relations between (literary) interpretation and aesthetic appreciation. These relations of support, evidence, or justification may go either way.

**References**

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