

ART, GENRE, AND VALUE

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Declaration

I, Alice Mary Harberd, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

My thesis is that genre's influence on our judgements of artistic value is explained primarily by the way the features which are typical of different genres interrelate to realise artistic value. Some features are mutually undermining, and some are mutually reinforcing, as ways of realising artistic values.

In the first chapter, I will demonstrate that genre influences our judgements of the artistic value of artworks and their features.

In the second chapter, I will present two possible explanations of genre's influence on artistic value: the Realist Explanation, which appeals to the typical features of genres, and the Nominalist Explanation, which appeals to genre membership as such. I will argue that if the Nominalist Explanation is correct, then we require more contextualist knowledge to correctly evaluate artworks than if the Realist Explanation is correct. I will argue that the Realist Explanation explains the majority of the ways in which genre influences artistic value, except for part of how rebelling against genre norms can contribute to the artistic value of artworks. To explain this, we must appeal to the Nominalist Explanation.

I will then argue that the Nominalist Explanation cannot account for the central way in which genre influences artistic value. To explain this phenomenon, the Nominalist Explanation would have to appeal to a premise which I argue is false - that genre norms are relevant to judgements of artistic value.

In the third chapter, I will present a second argument against the Nominalist Explanation. I will argue that if it explains the central way in which genre influences artistic value, then our intuitive view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value must be false. Since it is more likely that this view about justification is true than that the Nominalist Explanation is true, we should reject the Nominalist Explanation.

Impact Statement

This thesis provides an explanation of the impact of genre on our judgements of the artistic value of artworks. Hence, the work will contribute to our understanding of the role played by genres in our experiences with artworks. It will help us to answer questions about how much contextual knowledge about art we require to correctly evaluate artworks, and about the kind of justification our judgements of artistic value require.

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Introduction

Genres are an important part of our experience of art: they affect how we interpret artworks and how we evaluate them. Academics talk about genres as part of their analysis of artworks, critics talk about genres in discussing the merits and flaws of artworks, and most of us refer to genres to communicate our aesthetic tastes.

My thesis will investigate genre's influence on our *evaluation* of artworks. Genre enters the question of how good an artwork is in various ways, and these ways can seem mutually contradicting. We praise some artworks for following genre rules ("what an excellent example of Florentine renaissance architecture"). Yet we praise other artworks for breaking them, and not just recent conceptual art: Virgil's *Aeneid* is praised for challenging the place of the fearless hero within the genre of epic poetry.

I will defend three claims. The first is that genre influences our evaluation of the artistic value of artworks. The second is that this is mostly attributable to the typical features of genres, rather than to our culturally constructed nexus of genre concepts and the norms associated with them. The third is that which of these two aspects of genre explains its influence on judgements of artistic value has implications for two aspects of aesthetic theory. The first is the amount of contextual knowledge about artworks we require to correctly judge their value. The second is the justification which judgements of artistic value require to be authoritative.

In Chapter 1, I will argue for my first key claim: that genre influences our evaluation of the artistic value of artworks. After introducing a range of ways in which genre can influence our evaluations of artworks, I will assume that Budd's conception of artistic value is broadly correct, and apply this to argue that genre's influence extends to judgements of artistic value. I will also argue that neither Walton's theory (1970), nor Abell's theory (2015), can fully explain why genre influences our judgements of artistic value.

In Chapter 2, I will distinguish two candidate explanations for genre's influence on artistic value, which I call the Nominalist Explanation and the Realist Explanation. The Realist Explanation holds that the typical features associated with different genres explain genre's influence on artistic value. The Nominalist Explanation is that genre's influence on artistic

value is explained by genre membership as such: by how an artwork is classified within our cultural nexus of genres. In support of my third key claim, I will argue that if the Nominalist Explanation is correct, then we require more contextual knowledge for correct judgements of artistic value than if the Realist Explanation is correct.

The rest of Chapter 2 consists in arguments for my second key claim: that genre's influence on artistic value is mostly attributable to the typical features of genres, rather than to our culturally constructed nexus of genre concepts and the norms associated with them. First I will argue that the Realist Explanation convincingly explains all the ways in which genre influences artistic value, with one exception: the contribution made by the meanings which artworks have in virtue of rebelling against genre norms.

I will then argue against the Nominalist Explanation by focusing on one way in which genre influences artistic value: a phenomenon I call Evaluation Variance, where our evaluation of a feature which appears in two artworks of different genres changes depending on the genre of the artwork in which it appears. I will argue that whilst the Nominalist Explanation contributes something to our understanding of some cases of Evaluation Variance, due to the effect of genre membership on the aesthetic properties an artwork has according to Walton's theory in *Categories of Art*, there are many cases which it cannot explain. The reason is that if the Nominalist Explanation is to account for these cases, it must appeal to a premise which I argue is false. This is that there are norms associated with genres which establish what counts as an artistic merit or an artistic flaw for members of the genre.

In Chapter 3, I will continue to defend my second and third key claims. I will demonstrate that if the Nominalist Explanation of Evaluation Variance were true, this would imply that our intuitive view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value is false. I will present this charge in the Justification Argument, which holds that if the Nominalist Explanation is true, then some cases of Evaluation Variance will be counter-examples to this intuitive view about justification. Then, I will argue that this consequence is so implausible that we should reject the Nominalist Explanation.

A note about terminology: I am using "genre" in very expansive sense, including sometimes period styles and musical forms as well as categories commonly recognised as genres. Use of the word genre is not equivalent across art forms or historical periods. Accordingly, I do not

claim that every use of the word “genre” tracks an interesting philosophical category: merely that there is such a category behind much of this usage, and usage of related concepts. Thus I am not strictly following the rules for application of the term “genre” in individual artforms – for example, I will not restrict my attention, within painting, to only the five main genres established in the seventeenth century, namely history painting, portrait painting, landscape painting, genre painting and still life. In a discussion of genres within film, Bordwell notes that “one could... argue that no set of necessary and sufficient conditions can mark off genres from other sorts of groupings in ways that all experts or ordinary film-goers would find acceptable” (Bordwell, 1989, 147). Hence, I don’t think it will serve the inquiry to commit to a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, etc., from the outset – instead, I offer the following baseline: that genres are groupings of artworks with similar features, groupings which feature in our critical understanding of different artworks and how they relate to each other.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this chapter, I will argue that genre influences our evaluation of the artistic value of artworks. In §1, I will outline different ways in which genre influences how we evaluate artworks, using examples. I will discuss cases where artworks are valuable because they break the rules we associate with genres, as well as cases where they follow them.

In §2, I will show that this effect cannot be explained by the theory Walton sets out in *Categories of Art*, and so presents a new philosophical problem. In §3, I will argue that the kind of evaluation which genre influences is our evaluation of artworks' artistic value. I will assume that Budd's account of artistic value, and apply it to the cases discussed in §1 to demonstrate this.

Then, in §4, I will consider Abell's explanation of genre's influence on our evaluations of artworks, which postulates that genres have characteristic purposes. I will argue that it is unable to explain why genre is relevant to our evaluations of artistic value, because it does not explain why fulfilling the purpose associated with its genre would make an artwork artistically valuable.

1. Genre's influence on Evaluation

In this section, I will introduce the phenomenon of genre's influence on our evaluation of artworks. First, I will set out the three kinds of influence described by Abell, explaining how they relate to the idea that there are norms relating to genres. I will focus particularly on the first kind of case, going beyond Abell's scope by providing examples of this in non-narrative artworks. I will then discuss cases where artworks are artistically valuable because they break genre rules, or where their value is constrained because they follow the rules too much.

1.1 Abell's three effects

In her 2015 paper *Genre, Interpretation, Evaluation*, Abell notes that genre influences how we evaluate artworks in a range of ways.

We may take a work that elicits continual laughter to be good in virtue of doing so if it is a comedy, but to be bad in virtue of doing so if it is a tragedy or a horror. Likewise, an

inconsistency in a work's content is likely to be deemed a flaw if the work is a melodrama, but not if it is a work of fantasy. We also evaluate works as members of a genre: a film may be better or worse as a horror, and our evaluation of it as such need not mirror our overall aesthetic evaluation of the work. Finally, we sometimes evaluate genres themselves, as when one says that tragedy is better than melodrama, or that horror is emotionally overstimulating. (2015, p.27)



My thesis will focus primarily on the first kind of influence which Abell describes above. I call this phenomenon Evaluation Variance:

Evaluation Variance: Our evaluation of some features of artworks varies according to the genre of an artwork: we think the same feature is a fault in an artwork of one genre, but a merit in an artwork of another genre.

Literary examples beyond those Abell provides abound: emotionally extreme, yet non-comic characters – like Cathy and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* – contribute to the value of gothic fiction by helping to create emotional intensity and atmosphere. But they would detract from a psychological realist novel like *The Portrait of a Lady* by limiting the psychological credibility and verisimilitude of the plot and tone of the novel, throwing the atmosphere off-balance. The effect is so strong that the same would go if they appeared in a novel which is only partly psychological realist, like *Pride and Prejudice*, a blend of realism, comedy, and romance.

Abell restricts her focus in *Genre, Interpretation, Evaluation* to works of narrative art (p.27). However, there are plenty of examples of Evaluation Variance in non-narrative artworks. Consider this 2017 YouTube video of opera singers performing Wham!'s *Last Christmas*.¹ Their well-supported, mature voices would sound fantastic in an opera, but feel inappropriate in the context of pop. Similarly, a nasal tone is good in traditional Irish folk song, and bad in the Anglican choral tradition. Or compare Quentin Blake's cartoonish bird with John Audubon's realist engraving of the Arkansaw Flycatcher. The scribbly, rough outlines of the feathers in Quentin Blake's drawing are a good feature, conveying liveliness and excitement, but would be a flaw in Audubon's precise representation.

¹ Whilst *Last Christmas* is technically a narrative artwork, the aspect of this performance which provides us with an example of Evaluation Variance is non-narrative – namely the vocal tone of the singers.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA_nPDfb-i0

	
<p>Fig 1: bird by Quentin Blake, https://i.pinimg.com/474x/15/48/d2/1548d2cd70b3aa4bc5866aa6a8249bbd.jpg</p>	<p>Fig 2: <i>The Arkansaw Flycatcher</i> by John Audubon. Courtesy of the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove, Montgomery County Audubon Collection, and Zebra Publishing</p>

Behind the three effects Abell notes that genre can have on evaluation is a more basic idea: that genres have internal norms which their member artworks should follow. These are not just constitutive criteria which artworks must meet in order to belong to the genre, but norms describing what members of the genre *ought* to be like: they set out, eg. what makes a *good* comedy, not just what makes a comedy.

These norms correspond to our expectations for artworks in certain genres. For example, I expect a gothic novel to have a suspenseful and emotionally intense mood, to have an element of the supernatural, a remote and atmospheric setting, highly wrought language and perhaps a monster or other evil character. I expect a psychological realist novel to feature psychologically realistic and precisely drawn characters, detailed descriptions of the everyday, social critique and verisimilitude. This isn't to say that I expect *all* these norms to be adhered to without expectation in every artwork within the genre: just a good handful of them.² Within each genre, some norms are more important, and others less important.

The idea that genres have norms relates to the effects Abell describes as follows. The first effect is a result of the norms of different genres differing: the norms of horror and tragedy say that works in these genres should not be funny. The norms of comedy hold that comic works should be funny. So eliciting continual laughter is, according to genre norms, a flaw in a tragedy or a horror, and a merit in a comedy.³ Or, to return to the gothic and psychological

² It is outside the scope of this enquiry to establish exactly how minimalist or maximalist the conditions for genre membership are.

³ Some may take objection to this statement as it is currently formulated. After all, laughing *continually* through a narrative artwork would be exhausting and likely indicate a flaw. It is more charitable to interpret this as a rule which applies generally throughout every part of an artwork, that being funny is good for a comedy and not for a tragedy or a horror. This doesn't mean that every part of the artwork must comply with this rule, resulting in continual laughter! Moreover, it is a rule with exceptions - notable examples include the Rocky Horror Picture Show and the porter's scene in Act 2 of Macbeth. These exceptions are not random – the reason the general rule does not apply in the first example is that breaking it permits otherwise inaccessible valuable cognitive content through experimentation with genre. The reason the general rule does not apply in the latter case is that light

realism, a character with emotions so extreme and behaviour so dramatic that we cannot empathise with them would be a flaw in a psychological realist novel, but not in a gothic novel.

The second effect concerns our evaluation of works according to the norms associated with their genres. The norms associated with genres are not the same as the general terms according to which we evaluate the artistic value of artworks – this is why our evaluation of a work according to genre-norms can differ from our overall evaluation of it. The general norms associated with horror films include that the films unsettle or frighten the audience with features like low lighting and eerie music, monsters, violence, gore, elements of the supernatural, etc. A film could execute these norms well – and hence be an excellent horror – without being as artistically valuable overall as an artwork which doesn't. Similarly, an artwork can fail to abide by the norms of its genre whilst being an excellent artwork overall.

The third effect concerns our evaluation of the norms associated with different genres generally speaking, rather than as they are manifested in any particular work. When we say that tragedy is better than melodrama, or that horror is overstimulating, we are talking about the features which one normally finds in works of these kinds, and passing judgement on the affordances of these norms for realising artistic value.

Having discussed the three kinds of influence of genre on evaluation to which Abell draws our attention, I will now turn to two phenomena which she does not discuss. These are cases where artworks are valuable because they break the rules of their genres, or where their value is limited because they over-follow the rules of their genres.

1.2 Rule-Breaking

Genre's influence on our evaluation of artworks is more complicated than the picture Abell gives. The cases she describes take as their paradigm artworks which follow the rules associated with their genre. The first case highlights the contrasting norms of different

relief is required to prevent our sensitivity to tragedy from being overwhelmed. These reasons do not prevent the general rule from obtaining, where there are not reasons to override it. I think this general-yet-defeasible status is the greatest robustness the rules associated with genres can attain, because breaking genre rules can also contribute to the value of artworks. I will discuss this phenomenon below in section 1.2.

genres; the second case contrasts genre norms with genre-unspecific evaluation of artistic value; and the third case concerns artistic evaluation of the norms associated with different genres. However, breaking genre rules can make an artwork good, not bad – and this doesn't just apply to more recent modernist trends in visual art. One reason Virgil's *Aeneid* is good is that it challenges the death-defying hero persona central to the genre of epic poetry as constructed in Classical Greek literature. There are even genres defined by breaking the rules of other genres, or mixing genres which seem incompatible, like tragicomedy and parody. An example of this is the novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which mixes horror with Austen's realist romance, yielding hilarious results.

None the less, genre rule-breaking owes its influence on artistic value to fact that genre rules influence artistic value in the first place. This means that to explain why breaking genre rules can contribute to the value of artworks, we first need to understand why following genre rules matters at all. Generally, quirky, rebellious or alternative behaviour depends for being recognised as such on what is ordinary. There is a difference between behaving rebelliously and behaving so strangely that one's behaviour cannot be interpreted – rebellious behaviour is contrary to what is normal, rather than merely different from it:

As the sociologist Harvey Sacks put it, people have to be ordinary — not completely ordinary, of course, but ordinary to a very large extent. Even if they want to be extraordinary, or out of the ordinary, there are more or less ordinary ways of doing so, beyond which they would strike others in their community as humanoid creatures of some unrecognizable kind. An idiosyncratic sense of humor still has to qualify as a sense of humor, and a disposition to laugh at manhole covers doesn't qualify. A unique sartorial style still has to qualify as a style, not an inability to dress oneself. One can coin new slang expressions, invent new dances, but only within limits. (Velleman, 2015, *Foundations for Moral Relativism*, p.85)

Artworks are ultimately communicative (or the vehicles of communication), and genre norms are a part of the standards of ordinariness which govern their interpretation.⁴ So just as there is a difference between a subversive sense of humour and a disposition to laugh at manhole covers, there is a difference between an artwork which rebels against the rules of its genre and an artwork which simply fails to comply with them, so that either it doesn't seem to fall into any genre at all, or it seems like a half-hearted or confusing attempt.

Consider the difference between Britten's opera *Albert Herring* and the television show *Giri/Haji*. *Albert Herring* rebels against the character archetypes associated with English

⁴ See Abell, 2015

pastoral stories – innocent maidens and strapping young farm lads. As the May celebrations approach in Loxford, those in charge can't think of a single girl in the village who is still virtuous to be the May Queen, and so instead they appoint wimpy young Albert Herring as May King, inadvertently setting in motion a chain of events which will see Albert also shake off the shackles of innocence in a night of drunken revelry. The characters in *Albert Herring* don't merely fail to comply with the pastoral archetypes – they are their opposites and their caricatures. This makes them clearly legible as a humorous commentary on parochial English societies, but one with a sharper edge, as Albert ultimately finds happiness in the journey of self-discovery which frees him from obedience to parochial *mores*, as embodied by his overbearing mother. Thus the contribution made to the artistic value of *Albert Herring* by its rebellion against pastoral archetypes is a cognitive contribution which depends on the existence and significance of the artistic (and moral) archetypes against which it rebels.

Giri/Haji is a mixture of gang drama and LGBTQ+ coming-of-age story. However, the combination doesn't bear artistic fruit, missing opportunities to present either a queering of the gang drama, or a commentary on the tensions and obligations of queer chosen family. Usually in a gang drama, gang activity is the sole dramatic focus of the narrative, and usually in a LGBTQ+ drama, the LGBTQ+ community is the sole dramatic focus of the narrative – in *Giri/Haji*, the two storylines sit awkwardly side-by-side, elbowing each other out of the limelight. There is no rebellion against the norm of the all-consuming nature of gang life or LGBTQ+ resistance – just a failure to understand and abide by it. The uneven alternation between the two story-lines undermines the pacing of both plots and our attachment to the characters.

These cases show that the difference between artistically valuable rule-breaking and mere deviation from the rules of genre is like the difference between being opposite to something and being merely different from it. For a case to count as rule-breaking, it must come across in the artwork as opposition to a rule rather than mere difference from it. This is because rule-breaking depends for being understood as such on the rules. Just as rule-breaking depends for its meaning on the rules, its evaluative significance also depends on the evaluative significance of the rules broken: breaking the rules wouldn't be a meaningful act of rebellion if the rules weren't significant in the first place. Therefore, to explain why genre rule-breaking can contribute towards artistic value, we must first explain why the rules being broken have any significance in the first place.

1.3 Over-Following the Rules

Another wrinkle in the straightforward picture that the norms associated with genres set which properties contribute and which detract from an artwork's artistic value is the fact that over-following genre rules can constrain the artistic value of an artwork, by undermining the contribution of the relevant characteristics to artistic value. An example of this can be found in the Spanish TV drama *Money Heist*. A common feature of dramas told retrospectively in the first-person is that characters punctuate their relating of events with gnomic utterances – things like “the problem with life is that you can't undo what you've already done”. This can give the narrative poignancy, as we see what the character telling us the story has learned from the events unfolding before us. However, in the opening episode of *Money Heist*, the main character interrupts her retelling of a heist on the Spanish National Bank seemingly every five minutes with another nugget of wisdom, undermining the serious atmosphere to the point of humour.

This might just be because originality tends to be artistically valuable. Artworks which follow genre rules so much that they seem formulaic lose their interest. However, the fact that over-following genre rules can make artworks boring doesn't undermine the force of the rules in the first place. Like most practical rules, they have exceptions, including that they are sensitive to context and aren't to be taken to extremes. The same goes for moral rules – hence Aristotle's view that morality is a matter of cultivating an appropriate sensitivity to the relevant facts in a situation, and that virtues are a mean state between excess and deficiency. Even if it is good to give money to charity, for Aristotle there are limits to generosity. For example, giving away so much that we cannot sustain ourselves is giving too much. We don't ordinarily think that the fact that it is possible to over-follow moral rules undermines the case for thinking that they have force in the first place.

Having demonstrated that genre influences our evaluation of artworks and described the various ways this can happen, I will now turn to my second claim in this chapter. This is that genre's influence on evaluation cannot be accounted for by the theory which Walton presents in his landmark paper *Categories of Art* (1970).

2. Walton's *Categories of Art* cannot explain genre's influence on our evaluation of artworks

One might question whether genre's influence on evaluation presents a new philosophical problem. A genre is a kind of category of artworks, and Walton argues that the categories to which artworks belong can influence their evaluation (1970). However, I argue that genre influences evaluation differently from the way that Walton argues categories of art influence evaluation - so it presents a new philosophical problem.

This is not to say that genre's influence on evaluation is a counter-example to Walton's theory. It is just that the phenomenon I am investigating is different from that which Walton discusses. So, it isn't that Walton's theory gives us the *wrong explanation* of what is going on, when applied to the problems raised by genre's influence on evaluation. It is simply that this phenomenon is outside the scope of what Walton is trying to explain.

I will distinguish two different stages in our evaluation of artworks. Firstly, there is a stage of interpretation in which we determine which aesthetic properties an artwork has. Secondly, there is a stage of evaluation in which we determine how, in context, these properties contribute to, or detract from, the value of the artwork overall. Walton's theory only concerns the first stage: it is about how the categories to which an artwork belongs affect which aesthetic properties artworks have, not how they affect the *value* which an artwork has, in virtue of having these properties. However, I will show that in at least some cases, genre's influence on our evaluation of artworks must be acting at the second stage. Thus, genre's influence on evaluation poses an explanatory challenge outside the scope of Walton's theory in *Categories of Art*.

In *Categories of Art*, Walton argues that the categories to which an artwork belongs, including genre, determine which aesthetic properties it has. Walton argues that there are three kinds of non-aesthetic property an artwork can have with respect to a category to which it belongs: standard features, variable features and contra-standard features. Standard features are those "in virtue of which works in that category belong to that category"; variable features are those that have "nothing to do with works' belonging to that category", and contra-standard features are those "whose presence tends to disqualify works as members of the category" (1970, p.339). For example, "the flatness of a painting...[is] standard...its

particular shapes and colors are variable, relative to the category of painting. A protruding three-dimensional object...would be contra-standard relative to this category” (p.340).

Walton argues that these sets of features play different roles in our perception of artworks - variable non-aesthetic properties have primary representational and expressive relevance, whilst standard non-aesthetic properties are less relevant. Thus, which aesthetic properties an artwork has depends on the categories to which it belongs: depending on whether it is standard, contra-standard or variable relative to some category, the same non-aesthetic property can ground different aesthetic properties, or no aesthetic property at all. He illustrates this with the example of *guernicas*:

Imagine a society which does not have an established medium of painting, but does produce a kind of work of art called guernicas. Guernicas are like versions of Picasso's "Guernica" done in various bas-relief dimensions. All of them are surfaces with the colors and shapes of Picasso's "Guernica," but the surfaces are molded to protrude from the wall like relief maps of different kinds of terrain. Some guernicas have rolling surfaces, others are sharp and jagged, still others contain several relatively flat planes at various angles to each other, and so forth. Picasso's "Guernica" would be counted as a guernica in this society – a perfectly flat one – rather than as a painting. Its flatness is variable and the figures on its surface are standard relative to the category of guernicas. Thus the flatness, which is standard for us, would be variable for members of the other society (if they should come across "Guernica") and the figures on the surface, which are variable for us, would be standard for them. This would make for a profound difference between our aesthetic reaction to "Guernica" and theirs. It seems violent, dynamic, vital, disturbing to us. But I imagine it would strike them as cold, stark, lifeless, or serene and restful, or perhaps bland, dull, boring – but in any case not violent, dynamic, and vital. We do not pay attention to or take note of "Guernica"'s flatness; this is a feature we take for granted in paintings, as it were. But for the other society this is "Guernica"'s most striking and noteworthy characteristic – what is expressive about it. Conversely, "Guernica"'s color patches, which we find noteworthy and expressive, are insignificant to them. (Walton, 1970, p.347)

In some cases, genre's influence on evaluation can be explained by a change in aesthetic properties, resulting from the change in genre classification. The change in genre constitutes a change in the categories to which the artwork belongs. Consider the case of the Audubon sketch and Quentin Blake's bird drawing – a scribbly line in the latter contributes to the vitality and exuberance of the drawing, but would not do so in the former. The feature we are considering – the scribbly line – bears different aesthetic properties depending on whether it appears in a realist sketch, where it is contra-standard, or a cartoonish children's illustration. Moreover, the change in aesthetic properties explains why it is an artistically valuable feature in one case, and not in the other. This is all just as Walton's theory states.

Still, there are many cases which can't be explained this way. In some cases of Evaluation Variance, where our evaluation of some feature varies according to the genre of the artwork in which it appears, the feature we consider is itself an aesthetic property, and it remains fixed between the two cases. For example, an aspect of an artwork being elegant would be good if the artwork were a ballet, and bad if it were a hyperpop song. Though there are exceptions, generally, dissonance can be good in a modernist musical work, and is bad in a classical symphony, where it would sound like a wrong note. Garishness can be good in drag-inspired fashion, but would be bad in a 1930's couture gown. Grossness can contribute to the value of a stoner comedy like *The Hangover* by adding to the humour, but would detract from the value of a Terence Malick film like *The Tree of Life* by disrupting the dreamy, reflective aesthetic.

In these cases, what is going on is outside the scope of Walton's theory. His theory concerns only how the categories to which an artwork belongs affect which aesthetic properties it has, not how these categories affect how an artwork's aesthetic properties, in context, contribute to, or detract from the aesthetic value of the artwork in question. Thus, genre's influence on evaluation poses a new philosophical problem which cannot be resolved by Walton's *Categories of Art*.

It might seem surprising that there are cases of Evaluation Variance which are not explained by a change in aesthetic properties, because one might think that once we have settled which aesthetic properties an artwork has, that's the end of our evaluation of its artistic value. The thought would be that since aesthetic properties are axiological properties, once we have established which aesthetic properties an artwork manifests, and to what degree, our evaluative work is done. This is suggested by Budd in his discussion of justification: he says that "the aesthetically relevant properties of [an artwork]", ie. the properties on which the artwork's aesthetic properties, such as grace, elegance, ugliness, discordance, etc. supervene, "ground the attribution of artistic value and ... constitute the particular forms of value the work exemplifies" (1996, p.4). This seems to indicate that all there is to artistically evaluating an artwork is establishing which aesthetic properties an artwork has.

Slow Reader

I - am - in - the - slow
read - ers - group - my - broth
er - is - in - the - foot
ball - team - my - sis - ter
is - a - ser - ver - my
lit - tle - broth - er - was
a - wise - man - in - the
in - fants - christ - mas - play
I - am - in - the - slow
read - ers - group - that - is
all - I - am - in - I
hate - it.

However, I argue that this does not suffice for the assessment of an artwork's artistic value, because the contribution made by aesthetic properties to an artwork's artistic value varies.⁵ Properties like elegance and charm do not always contribute towards the value of an artwork, and properties like dissonance and ugliness do not always make it bad. Consider Allan Ahlberg's poem *Slow Reader*. The poem is extremely clunky, but

this contributes to, rather than detracting from its value. The clunkiness is central to its evocation of the slow reader's boredom and resentment. Thus, after we have established which aesthetic properties an artwork has, to complete our evaluation of the work's artistic value we still need to work out whether they are a good or bad thing, artistically speaking, in the context in which we find them.

There is a second consideration indicating that genre's influence on evaluation is outside the explanatory scope of Walton's theory in *Categories of Art*. Walton argues that variable features are those with primary representational and expressive relevance. However, in the phenomenon I examine, features of an artwork which are standard relative to its genre have primary relevance.

Consider two examples I have used to illustrate the phenomenon – *The Portrait of a Lady*, and Abell's example of laughter in comedy and horror. I have argued that realistically depicting human lives and relationships contributes to the value of the literary realist novel *The Portrait of a Lady*. This is a standard feature of psychological realism. Abell observes that being funny makes a comedy good - this is a standard feature of comedy. The fact that being funny makes a horror bad turns on what is standard for horror: being funny interferes with the standard feature of frightening an audience.

⁵ I make no commitments about whether establishing which aesthetic properties an artwork has suffices for evaluation of its *aesthetic* value – this will depend on your theory of aesthetic value.

Variable features – such as the setting of psychological realist novels, whether comedy appears on television or radio, or whether horror uses first person narration – are not significant in genre's influence on evaluation, except in so far as they interact with the standard features. So the relative importance of standard and variable features for the effects I discuss is opposite to their relative importance for the categories Walton discusses.

Admittedly, Walton does not think standard features of a category are “aesthetically inert” (p.348). He allots them a limited role:

Because of the very fact that [they] do not seem striking or noteworthy, that they are somehow expected or taken for granted, they can contribute...a sense of order, inevitability, stability, correctness...The exposition-development-recapitulation form...of the first movements of classical sonatas...is standard with respect to the category of works in sonata-allegro form...So proceeding along the lines of sonata-allegro form seems right to us; to our ears that is how sonatas are supposed to behave. (p.348).

One might think that we can explain the fact that features standard for their genres contribute to artworks' value in these terms – since we expect them, they contribute a sense of correctness and stability. However, in the phenomenon which I examine, the way standard features contribute to artworks' value is not confined to contributing a sense of order or stability. For example, expressive chiaroscuro lighting is a standard features of film noir which contributes to the artistic value of the films – consider its role in the dramatic first appearance of Harry Lime in *The Third Man*. It does this by making the films unsettling and dramatic – the opposite of orderly and stable. I do not deny that chiaroscuro lighting might also seem ‘right’ in a film noir, like sonata-form in the first movement of a quartet – I merely claim that it isn't always in virtue of seeming ‘right’ that it contributes to the artistic value of these films. So, this is not the only way the standard features of genres contribute to artworks' value, and thus, the influence of genre in such cases cannot be completely explained in Waltonian terms.

This completes my argument for my second claim in this chapter - that Walton's analysis of the evaluative influence of the categories to which artworks belong cannot explain the philosophical problem genre presents. Next, I will defend my third: that the kind of evaluation genre influences is our evaluation of artworks' artistic value.

3. Genre influences our evaluations of artistic value

I have so far been discussing genre's influence on evaluation in terms of artistic value. In this section, I will defend this usage, first by explaining what I mean by artistic value, and then by arguing that the evaluations genre influences are evaluations of artistic value. I will assume Budd's conception of artistic value, applying it in turn to the kinds of influence of genre on evaluation which I discussed in §1 in turn, demonstrating in each case that the evaluation in question is, on Budd's account, evaluation of artistic value.

3.1 Budd's conception of artistic value

I am relying on Budd's account of artistic value in *Values of Art* to demonstrate that genre's influence on evaluation concerns artistic value. This account is controversial for two reasons. Firstly, Budd holds that there is such a thing as artistic value which is not identical with aesthetic value.⁶ Secondly, Budd claims, as Shelley puts it, that "we can explain the value of artworks by appeal to the value of the experiences they afford" (Shelley, 2010, p.1). So it is, in a sense, an empiricist theory.⁷ However, I use it here because of its pluralism concerning the determinants of artistic value: in an enquiry into the influence of genre on the artistic value of artworks, I aim to err on the side of generosity concerning what counts as an artistic value.⁸ In this section, I will set out three key parts of this view: Budd's specification of

⁶ See Lopes, 2011 for an argument against the view that there is non-aesthetic artistic value. By considering and rejecting a range of candidate theories, Lopes argues that if we assume a non-tendentiously narrow account of aesthetic value, there is no account of artistic value which can do the theoretical tasks for which we require it. For replies to this argument, see Huddleston, 2012; and Hanson, 2013. Huddleston argues that Lopes is too quick in rejecting an achievement-based theory of artistic value. Hanson argues that it isn't clear "what aspect of current philosophical practice Lopes is urging us to reject" (p.1), presenting three options and arguing that all three are under-supported by Lopes' argument.

⁷ See Shelley, 2010, for an argument against value empiricism. Shelley argues that "while there are many values that [the experiences afforded by artworks] might have, none is adequate to explaining the value of the works that afford the experiences" (p.1). This is because either the empiricist is committed to thinking that "anything other than the artwork that affords the same experience has the same value" (p.3), or the empiricist cannot properly explain the value of artworks (p.8). Instead, he defends an alternative theory of the value of artworks "according to which the value of the object is a non-reductive, non-instrumental one that we experience objects as having" (p.10). Others who, along with Shelley, challenge empiricist theories include Zangwill, 1999; Sharpe, 2000; Davies, 2004; and Kieran, 2005.

⁸ Though many important cases for understanding genre and its interaction with artistic value concern artworks which we would probably call "high art", many others are artworks which are commercial, popular, or which aim at entertainment. For example, the most tightly constrained genres are often found in commercial art – consider film genres like horror, or genres like detective fiction. Genre interacts interestingly with the values such artworks realise, but on some more constraining accounts of artistic value, these values might not come out as straightforwardly "artistic" at all.

artistic value as the intrinsic value of the experience an artwork offers; his pluralism about the determinants of artistic value; and his metaphysics of artistic value.

On Budd's view, artistic value is the value of an artwork *qua* artwork.

What an artist tries to do is to create a product with a distinctive kind of value. She attempts to make something that is valuable *as art*, or more specifically, *as art of such-and-such a kind*... artistic value is just the value referred to in such judgements as these: James Joyce's *Ulysses* is a better novel than D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, Grünewald's *Christ on the Cross with the Virgin, St John and Mary Magdalen* is a finer painting than Salvador Dali's *Christ of St John of the Cross*, and Beethoven's last piano sonata (Op. 111) is finer than his first (Op. 2, No. 1) – if not finer as a sonata, certainly finer music. (Budd, 1995, pp. 1-2)

Budd elucidates the concept of artistic value in terms of the experience an artwork offers when it is understood:

...the value of a work of art as a work of art is intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers... So a work of art is valuable as art if it is such that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable... (pp. 4-5)

He specifies that the experience a work offers is:

... an experience of interacting with it in whatever way it demands if it is to be understood – reading it, looking at it, listening to it, performing it or in some other way appreciating it. For you to experience a work with (full) understanding your experience must be imbued with an awareness of (all) the aesthetically relevant properties of the work – the properties that ground the attribution of artistic value and that constitute the particular forms of value the work exemplifies. (p.4)

By intrinsic value, he means

...not...a value that depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the item – a value that depends solely on its internal properties (its qualities and inner relations)... My conception of intrinsic value opposes it, not to extrinsic value, but to instrumental value... By the instrumental value of a work of art I mean the value, from whatever point of view, of the actual effects of the experience of the work on people or the effects that would be produced if people were to experience the work...beneficial or harmful, short- or long-term effects or influence, either on a given person or on people in general – where the effects are the consequences of the experience and not elements or aspects of the experience itself... (p. 5)

This brings me to my second point: that on Budd's view, artistic value can be realised in many different ways. "...the value of a work of art of a particular art form *as* of that form is different for each art form." Even the various kinds of work within each artform have values specific to them. "So within the art of music, there is the value of a song as a song, the value of a symphony as a symphony, and so on for the other musical genres; and within each of the other arts, there is a distinct kind of value for each artistic genre that falls within that art."

(p.2) Artistic value includes many other, more specific, kinds of value an artwork can have – like aesthetic value, or cognitive value:

...artistic value does not exist in a watertight compartment impermeable by other values, on the contrary, other values can be determinants of artistic value, as when a novel's value is a function of its intelligence, wit, imagination, knowledge and understanding of human life. (p.10)

However, artistic value does not include every other kind of value – it excludes financial value, for example, because this is an instrumental value of a work of art. Budd pre-empts an objection that this view is too restrictive with the following:

...many of what are thought of as benefits of the experience of art are intrinsic to the experience, not merely products of it. The experience a work of art offers can involve the invigoration of one's consciousness, or a refined awareness of human psychology or political or social structures, or moral insight, or an imaginative identification with a sympathetic form of life or point of view that is not one's own; it can be beneficial in these and countless other ways. (p.7)

I will refer to the values which Budd calls determinants of artistic value as artistic values. Budd does not “aim to indicate any of the different kinds of intrinsic value artists try to endow their works with” (p.43) - however, I take these to include beauty, originality, emotional expression, demonstrating truths about human life, helping us understand ourselves and humanity better, posing an intellectual challenge, demonstrating considerable skill, communicating individual points of view, communicating complex meanings, etc. This list, which takes partial inspiration from Gaut's cluster account of art (2000), is indicative rather than exhaustive, and some of the values overlap.⁹ It aims to err on the side of generosity rather than restriction concerning what counts as an artistic value, and indeed what counts as an artwork.¹⁰

On Budd's view, the fact that there are many artistic values partly explains the fact that artistic value is incommensurable: “there are different kinds of qualities that can endow a work with value and there's no common unit in terms of which their contributions to a work's artistic value can be measured. This holds not only within particular art forms, but also within artistic genres; it also holds across different arts.” (p.43)

⁹ The cluster account is not an account of artistic values, it is a definition of art. However, I think that the criteria Gaut indicates happen to pick out common artistic values as well as common attributes of artworks.

¹⁰ For the purposes of this enquiry, I am neutral on the question of how we define art, and of which things do or don't count as art. The conception of artistic value which I present here is open to the possibility that artistic values could be possessed by things which are not artworks, like artefacts – that is, if it is true that artefacts are not artworks.

Finally, the metaphysics of artistic value on Budd's view are as follows. He says that artistic value is an anthropocentric property, but "although it is not a genuinely absolute value, it is not relative in any disturbing way." It is a sentiment-dependent property: "one the idea of which has to be explicated in terms of an affective response to the object in which the value is found." (p.38) However, this

...does not imply that it is a 'merely' subjective property; for the instantiation of the property is independent of any individual's reaction... Artistic value is not a mere projection of a person's reaction to an object – as in the case of the niceness of smells and tastes. On the contrary, the concept of justifiability intrinsic to the concept of artistic value introduces the ideas of appropriateness and inappropriateness into our understanding of a person's response to a work of art, and renders the value intersubjective by admitting the possibility of a well-founded approval or criticism of a person's assessment of the artistic value of a work. (p.39)

Budd notes that on this conception, artistic value

...has... a normative dimension, and this normative dimension houses reasons, not mere causes. The experience a work of art offers is intrinsically valuable if the work is such that it merits being found intrinsically rewarding to experience with understanding: the response must be justifiable by reference to the nature of the work. Unless your response to a work is defensible by reference to features of the work that must be appreciated if the work is to be understood – features of the work that are open to others, that endow it with value and that constitute good reasons for responding as you do – your response lacks any right to be thought of as indicative of the work's artistic value. (p.40)¹¹

Budd's conception of the relation between a work of art's non-aesthetic features, its aesthetic features and its artistic value allows us to draw a fairly clean line between interpreting an artwork, which settles the work's aesthetic qualities, and evaluating it, which settles its artistic value. We can see this in the following passage on criticism:

...criticism's claim is that the work should be experienced in accordance with the offered interpretation, which discloses the work's true aesthetic qualities. Now a work's artistic value is dependent on its aesthetic qualities, which in turn are dependent on its non-aesthetic features... Since convincing criticism changes or refines your interpretation of a work and what you are aware of in it, and since these are integral to the way you experience the work, a change of interpretation effects a change in your experience. (p.41)

Having set out the relevant details of Budd's account of artistic value, I will now argue on this basis that the cases explored before of genre's influence on evaluation are cases of evaluating the artistic value of artworks and their parts.

¹¹ The idea that judgments of artistic or aesthetic value possess (or purport to possess) intersubjective validity dates from Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgement (1790). Criticism of subjectivism about artistic value can be traced back to earlier sources, e.g. Hume's essay, Of the Standard of Taste (1757). The distinction between reasons and causes can be found in Wittgenstein's Blue Book (p. 15) and Anscombe's Intention (*passim*.)

3.2 Genre influences artistic value

In §1 I demonstrated that genre influences our evaluations of artworks in a range of ways. I will now argue that the evaluations genre influences are evaluations of the artistic value of the artworks. This means that genre's influence on evaluation occurs at a more fundamental level than if it influenced a value less central to our artistic experiences – if, say, it merely influenced our evaluation of the financial value of artworks. It would be easier to explain away such a phenomenon – after all, many determinants of the financial value of artworks seem arbitrary when considered in the light of whether they are reasons to value the artwork intrinsically. For example, the fame of an artist and how fashionable their style is currently both heavily influence the financial value of an artwork, but neither make a difference to the intrinsic value of the experience an artwork affords us. However, if genre's influence acts on the value identified with what is intrinsically valuable about the experience an artwork affords, we face a more substantial explanatory challenge: that of explaining why genre changes the nature or value of our experience.

The phenomena demonstrated in §1 are all instances where genre influences the value of an artwork *qua* artwork: where it influences the value of the experience afforded by an aspect of an artwork.

The first and most central way in which genre influences evaluation, which I call Evaluation Variance, is that our evaluation of some features of artworks varies according to the genre of an artwork: we think the same feature is a fault in an artwork of one genre, but a virtue in an artwork of another genre. This evaluation is an evaluation of how the feature contributes to or detracts from the intrinsic value the experience of an artwork affords. Consider the example of emotionally extreme characters in a gothic novel or a psychological realist novel. The kinds of experiences we intrinsically value in novels include being absorbed by an atmosphere, the emotional experiences of relating to characters and the experience of our understanding of human life being extended and enriched. The contribution made by Cathy and Heathcliffe to *Wuthering Heights* is to the intrinsic value of the experience the novel affords: they help to create emotional intensity and atmosphere in the novel. The reason similar characters would be a fault in a psychological realist novel also concerns the intrinsic value of the experience the novel would offer: they would undermine the vividness of the novel

and our ability to relate emotionally to the characters by limiting the psychological credibility and verisimilitude of the plot, throwing the tone of the novel off-balance.

I take this argument to demonstrate that our evaluations in cases of rule-breaking and too much rule-following are also evaluations concerning artistic value. This is because these two kinds of case are just sub-kinds of Evaluation Variance. In cases where some feature of an artwork is good because it breaks genre rules, its value depends on it appearing in that genre. If the same feature were to appear in an artwork of another genre, it wouldn't be particularly valuable, unless of course the rules of that genre make it so. Similarly, in cases where some feature of an artwork is bad because it over-follows genre rules, its disvalue depends on it appearing in that genre. If the same feature were to appear in an artwork of another genre, it wouldn't be a flaw, unless of course the rules of that genre make it so. So both are cases where a feature is good, or bad, in one genre, and not in another: cases of Evaluation Variance. Since cases of Evaluation Variance have been shown to be cases where the evaluations in question concern artistic value, in cases of rule-breaking and over-following too, we are evaluating the artistic value of the features in question.

The second way in which genre influences evaluation is that “we...evaluate works as members of a genre: a film may be better or worse as a horror, and our evaluation of it as such need not mirror our overall aesthetic evaluation of the work” (Abell, 2015, p.27). This might not look like a case where what we are evaluating is artistic value – after all, there is a difference between evaluating an artwork *qua* artwork and *qua* horror. However, on Budd's view, though the evaluations differ, both are evaluations of artistic value. He specifies that artistic value comes in many kinds: “...the value of a work of art of a particular art form *as* of that form is different for each art form... So within the art of music, there is the value of a song as a song, the value of a symphony as a symphony, and so on for the other musical genres; and within each of the other arts, there is a distinct kind of value for each artistic genre that falls within that art.” (p.2)

Budd's claim, that evaluations of how good a tragedy, horror etc. an artwork is are evaluations of artistic value, is supported by reflection on the sense of “good” when we make evaluative claims of this kind. It isn't the sense of good concerned with any other categories of value philosophers tend to identify – moral value, say, or epistemic (although these may be

determinants of an artwork's artistic value, on some ways of specifying Budd's view). Nor is it the sense of good indexed to some purpose, like how a good tin-opener is good for opening tins, except for the purpose of being appreciated as an artwork. An artwork which is a good member of its genre is an artistically good artwork within that genre – so evaluating how good an artwork is within its genre is an evaluation concerning artistic value. The only difference is the comparison class – when we are evaluating how good a member of its genre some artwork is we are comparing it against only other works in that genre. This is not so if we are evaluating its artistic value *simpliciter*.

The third way in which genre influences evaluation is that “we sometimes evaluate genres themselves, as when one says that tragedy is better than melodrama, or that horror is emotionally overstimulating”. (Abell, 2015, p.27) In this case, we are passing judgement on the artistic value of the experience which artworks of this kind generally afford, based on our knowledge of individual works within the genre and of the features which works within the genre commonly have. Since what we are evaluating is the intrinsic value of the experience afforded by such works, these also are evaluations of artistic value.

This completes my argument that the evaluations of artworks influenced by genre are evaluations concerning their artistic value. I will now turn to Abell's attempt to explain genre's influence on evaluation in terms of purposes which characterise genres. I will argue that it fails because it does not explain why fulfilling genre purposes would make an artwork artistically valuable.

4. Abell's account

In the same paper where she identifies a range of ways in which genre influences evaluation, Abell argues that genre's evaluative significance is explained by the fact that genres have different purposes. (2015)

...the purpose of comedy is to amuse an audience, the purpose of horror is to frighten an audience, while that of mystery is to create suspense as to whodunit...the purpose of science fiction is arguably to describe logically coherent alternative worlds. (p.31)

She thus proposes the following definitions of genre and genre membership in terms of the purpose which works of a certain genre aim to achieve:

GENRE: A genre is a category of works determined by the purpose for which they are produced and appreciated, where the means by which they pursue that purpose rely at least partly on producers' and audiences' common knowledge that the works are produced and to be appreciated for that purpose.

GENRE MEMBERSHIP: A work belongs to a given genre iff it was produced with the intention that it perform the purpose characteristic of that genre by certain means; and these means are such that, if they were to enable the work to perform the purpose at issue, they would do so partly in virtue of its producer's and audience's common knowledge that it is produced and to be appreciated for that purpose. (p.32)

Abell argues that by stipulating that the purposes defining genres are those the means of pursuing which “rely at least partly on producers' and audiences' common knowledge that the works are produced and to be appreciated for that purpose”, she allows the account to select the purposes intuitively relevant to genre rather than those which aren't. For example, artworks could be created “to impress an influential critic; help to pay the rent; and to distract...from...marital woes. But none of these purposes relies for its achievement on the audience...grasping the purpose”. (p.32)

The account is supposed to explain the evaluative effects of genre by rendering genre classifications normative, so that classifying an artwork as a member of a certain genre carries implications about what it should be like. “To say what genre a work belongs to is to indicate a purpose that it should serve, and thus to suggest that it should employ whatever means available would best enable it to serve that purpose.” (p.36) I argue that whilst this account gives a persuasive explanation of how norms internal to genres might function, it cannot explain why genre classification carries implications for what would make artworks artistically valuable, because it does not explain why fulfilling the purpose associated with its genre would make an artwork artistically valuable.¹²

If genres are characterised by purposes, and if fulfilling these purposes make artworks artistically valuable, then they are like yardsticks against which we can measure member artworks – an artwork's value *qua* horror depends on how well it succeeds at horror's characteristic purpose of frightening the audience. Thus, if fulfilling genre purposes make artworks artistically valuable, Abell's account helps to explain the second of the three ways in which she argues genre can influence evaluation: that “we evaluate works as members of a

¹² I will eventually argue, in Chapter 2 §3.2, that the norms associated with genres are not relevant to judgements of artistic value, and hence do not function in the way in which Abell suggests. However, at this stage of the enquiry, it is open that genre norms *might* be relevant to evaluating artworks as members of their genre – and if this were true, then Abell's suggestion that genres have characteristic purposes would help us to understand the phenomenon.

genre” (p.27). It also helps explain why a characteristic which contributes to the value of an artwork of one genre can detract from the value of another – the first of the ways she notes in which genre can influence evaluation: what helps an artwork achieve one purpose may well hinder its achievement of another.

Additionally, the account gives some explanation of cases where transgressing genre norms contributes to an artwork’s value. Abell does not go into this, and admittedly her account is intuitively a better fit for cases where conforming contributes to an artwork’s value and transgressing detracts from it. Still, depending on how we define the purpose of a given genre, we can understand transgressive cases as either realising the genre’s characteristic purpose with non-characteristic means, or as altering the purpose which defines a genre and so changing it or spawning a new one. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is an example of the second kind. It no longer shares the purpose of literary realist fiction - instead, it is the foundation of a parody genre with a purpose related to amusing an audience.

The *Aeneid* is an example of the first kind. Say the purpose of epic poetry is to explain to people how their world and identity was shaped by the extraordinary deeds of their ancestors against superhuman forces. Traditionally, as in Homer’s *Iliad*, this purpose was met by telling stories of a superhumanly courageous warrior hero. The *Aeneid* fulfils the purpose of epic by going against this pattern – by differentiating Aeneas from the blood-thirsty, merciless Achilles, it gives a genealogy of values such as piety and humility, which Romans regarded as belonging to their national identity.

So, Abell’s theory that genres are defined by purposes helps to explain one half of the problem genre presents: how we can evaluate individual works as a horror film, a pop song, or epic poem. However, I will now show that this explanation can’t account for why fulfilling the purpose which defines its genre would make an artwork artistically valuable. I will argue that this means Abell’s account cannot fully explain why genre is relevant to artistic value

4.2 Abell cannot explain why fulfilling genre purposes contributes to artistic value

Abell argues that genre has evaluative significance because genres are defined by purposes. However, she does not explain why those purposes matter to artistic value. This means that her account cannot explain why it matters to an artwork’s artistic value how it measures up against its genre.

I have argued above that how an artwork relates to its genre influences our overall evaluation of its artistic value. Although Abell is right to note that we also evaluate artworks simply as members of their genres, this is not the limit of genre's influence on evaluation – genre also influences the artistic value of artworks. In this respect, genre is unlike other categories to which artworks belong, and in terms of which they can be evaluated. For example, the *The Triumph of Christ*, a 16th century Netherlandish tapestry in the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., belongs to the category of artworks which function to exclude drafts. We can evaluate how good a draft-excluder *The Triumph of Christ* is. However, this evaluation has nothing to do with its value as an artwork.

Postulating that genres are defined by characteristic purposes isn't enough to explain this difference, because these other categories are defined by characteristic purposes too. For example, the category of artworks which function as draft-excluders is defined by the purpose of blocking drafts – yet how well *The Triumph of Christ* fulfils this purpose is irrelevant to its artistic value. On the other hand, it is relevant how well it fulfils the purpose defining religious tapestry, the genre to which it belongs. We need more explanation to understand why genres, and the purposes that define them, are different from other purpose-defined categories of artworks. Why do they influence the artistic value of their member artworks when other purpose-defined categories of artworks do not? Why are the purposes defining genres, unlike the purposes defining the other categories, relevant to the artistic value of member artworks?

Consider the example of horror. Saying that horror has the purpose of frightening us explains how we can evaluate how well an artwork exemplifies the genre. But until we understand why achieving the purpose of horror contributes to an artwork's artistic value, we haven't explained why the first evaluation is relevant to the artistic value of an artwork. Why would frightening us make a book or film artistically valuable? Our day-to-day fearful experiences are not things we value. Why we enjoy tragedy, and why it is valuable, is an ongoing debate in Aesthetics. Many answers have been suggested, but none that simply takes it as obvious that what makes tragic art valuable is that it fulfils the function defining its genre of arousing pity and fear.

Admittedly, horror seems like a tricky case – for other genres, the gap between what we value in art and the defining purpose seems smaller. Some of the purposes which Abell suggests define genres concern the provision of experiences which are obviously beneficial to us, like

amusing an audience (comedy), or obviously entertaining, like creating suspense as to whodunit (mystery). Others seem more neutral, like the purpose of describing logically coherent alternative worlds (science fiction). Yet for all of them, there is an explanatory gap concerning why fulfilling these purposes is conducive to artistic value. If Abell's purposes are to explain genre's influence on evaluation, she must explain why achieving them makes an artwork valuable.

I am not arguing that there isn't anything in Abell's account to distinguish the purposes which define genres from those defining the other kinds of category I have mentioned. Her definition of genre includes two tests which exclude both my examples. However, these tests are not promising bases for explaining why purposes which pass them are conducive to artistic value, and purposes which don't are not conducive to artistic value. It is unclear why a producer's intentions about an artwork's purpose would affect whether serving the purpose contributes to the artwork's value.¹³ Nor is it obvious why it should matter whether an artwork can serve a purpose without producers' and audiences' common knowledge that it is produced and to be appreciated for this purpose. Though Abell's tests rule out purposes which are irrelevant to artistic value, they don't explain what is special about purposes which are ruled in, such that achieving them makes an artwork in that genre artistically valuable.

Nor can Abell argue that these purposes are relevant to artistic value because they ground genre, and genre is relevant to our evaluation of artworks. This would be question-begging - she has postulated that genres are defined in terms of purpose in order to explain genre's relevance to evaluating artworks. So she cannot appeal to this fact as part of her explanation why the purposes that ground genres are relevant to evaluating artworks.

Therefore, Abell's view that genres are defined in terms of purposes cannot, as it stands, explain why genres influence our evaluations of the artistic value of artworks. This is because it is not clear why complying with these purposes, and not others, is conducive to artistic value. The task of explaining why genre influences artistic value remains unfinished.

¹³ I will argue further in Chapter 2 §3.3 that creator's intentions cannot explain why some factor or purpose is relevant to evaluating an artwork's artistic value

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that genre influences our evaluations of the artistic value of artworks. I have set out the phenomenon in detail, using examples to demonstrate a range of ways in which genre influences our evaluation of artworks.

I have considered whether this phenomenon can be explained by Walton's theory in *Categories of Art* that the aesthetic properties which artworks have depend on the categories to which they belong. I argue that it cannot, because Walton's theory only concerns how categories influence which aesthetic properties an artwork is correctly interpreted as possessing – not how categories influence the *value* of those aesthetic properties.

I have argued that the kind of evaluation which genre influences is our evaluation of artworks' artistic value. I have set out Budd's conception of artistic value, and used it to demonstrate, for the variety of ways in which genre influences our evaluations, that this concerns our evaluations of the artistic value of artworks.

Finally, I have considered Abell's argument that genre's influence on evaluation is explained by the fact that genres are defined in terms of characteristic purposes. I argued that this account, though it gives a persuasive explanation of how the norms associated with genres might operate, cannot explain why genre influences the artistic value of artworks. This is because it does not explain why fulfilling the purposes associated with its genre would make an artwork artistically valuable.

Therefore, it is an open question why genre influences our evaluations of the artistic value of artworks. The rest of my thesis will be devoted to answering this question.

Chapter 2

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I argued that genre influences our judgements of the artistic value of artworks, and that neither Walton's theory in *Categories of Art* (1970) nor Abell's theory in *Genre, Interpretation, Evaluation* (2015) can adequately explain this. In this chapter, I will distinguish two possible explanations, the Realist Explanation and the Nominalist Explanation, and argue that in most cases, the Realist Explanation is the correct way to account for genre's influence on evaluation.

In §1, I will introduce the Realist Explanation and the Nominalist Explanation. They differ in the aspect of genre to which they appeal to explain genre's influence on our evaluations of artistic value. The Realist Explanation appeals to the typical features of genres, whilst the Nominalist Explanation appeals to genre membership as such: to the mere fact that an artwork is classified in a genre. I will argue that the Nominalist Explanation implies that we need more contextualist knowledge to correctly evaluate artworks than the Realist Explanation does.

In §2, I will argue that the Realist Explanation is the correct account of the majority of ways in which genre influences artistic value, considering each of the ways I identified in Chapter 1 §1 in turn. The exception is the artistic value contributed to artworks by rebelling against genre norms: I will argue that whilst the Realist Explanation accounts for part of this, to explain the contribution made by the meanings artworks have in virtue of rebelling against their genres, we must appeal to the Nominalist Explanation.

Then, in §3, I will argue that the Nominalist Explanation cannot explain all cases of Evaluation Variance. This is the central way in which genre influences judgements of artistic value on which I will focus for the rest of my thesis, in which our evaluation of a feature which two artworks share changes based on the genre of the artwork in which it appears. In §3.1, I will demonstrate that, to explain some cases of Evaluation Variance, the Nominalist Explanation must appeal to the idea that there are norms associated with genres which influence what counts as an artistic merit or an artistic defect within the genre. In §3.2 I will argue that this idea is mistaken: genre norms are not relevant to the artistic value of artworks.

Rather than establishing which features count as artistic merits and which count as artistic defects within the genre, genre norms establish which features qualify an artwork for membership in the genre. They put conditions on artworks which artists can meet in ways which are more or less artistically valuable. Where the Nominalist Explanation appeals to a false premise, it cannot be true. Thus, there are cases of Evaluation Variance which the Nominalist Explanation cannot explain.

Finally, in §3.3, I will consider four brief replies to my argument against the Nominalist Explanation. The first two pose examples of how genre influences our evaluation of artworks which, supposedly, demand the Nominalist Explanation: the fact that we think some genres are better than others, and the fact that Chekhov's *The Seagull* was received better when performed as a tragedy than as a comedy. I will argue that the Realist Explanation can accommodate both. The second two present grounds for thinking that genre norms are, *contra* my argument in §3.2, relevant to judgements of artistic value. The third argument appeals to the fact that genres create expectations, and the fourth argument appeals to the fact that artists intend their works to follow particular genre norms. I will argue that neither establish that genre norms are relevant to judgements of artistic value.

1. Two possible causes of genre's influence on artistic value

There are two different stories we could tell about why genre influences our judgements of artistic value in Evaluation Variance cases, where our evaluation of a feature common to two artworks varies according to the genre of the artwork in which it appears. They are based on two different ways of understanding genre. One way of thinking of the various genres of artworks is as a classificatory system jointly created by critics, artists and the artworld. Another way of thinking of genres is as constellations of typical features: for example, the gothic genre is to be understood as the collection of properties, both aesthetic and non-aesthetic, which gothic novels normally bear, such as a dramatic setting, an element of the supernatural, and highly wrought language. We might think that the change in our evaluation is due to the mere change in our classification of the two artworks. I call this the Nominalist Explanation.¹⁴ Or, we might think that the change in evaluation is due to the change in genre-

¹⁴ By titling these explanations Nominalist and Realist respectively, I am not meaning to imply that either view implies, or is associated with, similarly named positions in medieval debates about the nature of properties.

typical features between the two artworks – the features in virtue of which the artworks belong to their genres. I call this the Realist Explanation.

For example, consider the fact that the same combination of notes would sound wrong in a classical symphony, but right in a serial orchestral work. The Nominalist Explanation would say that the reason for the change in evaluation is the fact that one work is classified as belonging to the classical genre, and the other to serialism. The Realist Explanation would say that the reason for the change in evaluation is that the first artwork contains features like symmetrical phrase structure, diatonic tonality and regular phrases, which typify the classical period; whereas the second artwork has features indicating the use of the twelve-tone composition techniques which typify serialism.

The question of whether it is genre membership as such or the features associated with particular genres that are responsible for the influence of genre on artistic value is essentially about whether there is any significance to the genre classification as such, over and above the significance of the features that are normally found in works belonging to a genre, to our evaluations of artworks. Can the way we classify an artwork make a difference to its artistic value, over and above the difference made by the features in virtue of which we classify it in that way, or does the influence of genre on our judgements of artistic value reduce to the influence of generic features on artistic value?

In Chapter 3, I will argue that if the Nominalist Explanation of genre's influence in Evaluation Variance is correct, this has an unwelcome upshot: it entails that an extremely plausible view of the justification required by artistic value judgements is false. Thus, the challenge of explaining the influence of genre on artistic value has high stakes. It may require us to completely reformulate our understanding of what we are doing when we evaluate artworks. Here, I will pave the way for this argument by making two smaller claims. The first is that if the Nominalist Explanation is correct, then our judgements of artistic value are dependent on the existence of the social conventions embodied in our scheme of genres to a greater extent than if the Realist Explanation is right. The second is that the question of which explanation is correct is a question about whether we should be contextualists about evaluation, because we require a certain kind of contextual knowledge to correctly evaluate artworks if the Nominalist Explanation is correct, which we do not need if the Realist Explanation is correct.

1.1 The two explanations in detail

Now for a closer look at how exactly each of these explanations would account for Evaluation Variance.

The Nominalist Explanation, which holds that the mere change in genre classification explains why the same feature can be bad in an artwork of one genre, but good in an artwork of a different genre, appeals to the norms associated with different genres. This is the idea, which I outlined in Chapter 1 §1.1, that each of the genre categories recognised in the artworld have an associated set of norms which dictate what artworks of that genre should (normally) be like. The Nominalist Explanation holds that when we classify an artwork in a genre, this makes it subject to the norms of that genre. The reason the same feature can be good in an artwork of one genre and bad in an artwork of another genre is that the feature complies with the norms of the former, and clashes with the norms of the latter. Consider my earlier example of emotionally extreme character: such a feature complies with gothic norms, which include an emotionally intense mood, but clashes with the norms of psychological realism, which include that characters be psychologically realistic.

Therefore, the Nominalist Explanation draws on social conventions embodied in genre to explain our judgements of artistic value. If this explanation is right, this entails that our judgements of artistic value depend on social conventions.

The Realist Explanation, which holds that the constellations of features associated with genres explain Evaluation Variance, does not appeal to the idea that there are norms associated with genres. It holds that a feature contributes to the artistic value of an artwork in one genre, and detracts from the artistic value of artworks in another, because of how it relates to the artwork's genre-typical features, not how it relates to genre norms. Therefore, if it is correct, this does not entail that our judgements of artistic value depend on social conventions. According to the Realist Explanation, the relation between genre-typical features and other features of an artwork explains Evaluation Variance cases because some collections of features of artworks are mutually reinforcing as means of realising artistic value, whilst others are incompatible, or mutually undermining.

For example, consider two of the classic artistic values I specified in Chapter 1 §3.1: emotional expression, and demonstrating truths about human life. These values are realised by gothic and psychological realist novels respectively: features like atmospheric setting and emotionally extreme characters help gothic novels express emotion; whilst features like verisimilitude and psychologically consistent characters help psychological realist novels demonstrate truths about human life. However, the more emotionally extreme a character is, the less realistic they are – thus, this way of realising the value of emotional expression prevents the realisation of the value of demonstrating truths about human life.

Thus, the Realist Explanation holds that emotionally extreme characters contribute to the artistic value of a gothic novel, yet detract from the artistic value of a psychological realist novel, because emotionally extreme characters combine well with the other typical features of gothic fiction to realise artistic value, but frustrate the typical features of psychological realist novels in realising artistic value. Emotionally extreme characters would undermine the verisimilitude of other characters, situations, and relationships in a psychological realist novel, limiting its ability to demonstrate truths about human life.

1.2 Contextualism

If correct judgement of an artwork's artistic value depends on the social conventions embodied in our scheme of genres, as the Nominalist Explanation claims, then we need to know about these conventions to judge an artwork's artistic value correctly. For example, if the reason that unstable compositions with distorted perspective contribute to the artistic value of mannerist paintings is the norm that mannerist paintings should be dramatic and atmospheric rather than realistic, we would need to know this norm to correctly judge their contribution.

This doesn't mean that we need to be *conscious* that there is a norm that mannerist paintings should be dramatic and atmospheric rather than realistic. Absorbing genre norms the way we absorb the grammar of our native language would be sufficient. However, what we glean merely from perceiving an artwork, even if we correctly determine all its aesthetic properties, would not be enough to correctly judge the artistic value contributed by unstable composition, if the Nominalist Explanation is correct.

Even if Walton is right that we need a similar kind of contextual knowledge to correctly determine which aesthetic properties an artwork has, the knowledge of genre norms which the Nominalist Explanation entails that we require for correct judgements of artistic value is different. Walton argues that to correctly determine an artwork's aesthetic properties, we need two kinds of knowledge. The first is knowledge of the categories to which an artwork belongs, which might require knowledge about how the work would have been classified at the time of its production, and the creator's intentions for its classification. The second is knowledge of which non-aesthetic properties are standard, contra-standard or variable for those categories.¹⁵

One might think knowledge of which features are standard for a genre is the same as the knowledge which the Nominalist Explanation entails that we need for correct judgements of artistic value – knowledge of genre norms. However, this isn't correct. Standard features are those “in virtue of which works in that category belong to that category” (1970, p.339). By contrast, on the Nominalist Explanation's conception of genre norms, these norms stipulate the features which would make artworks in the genre artistically valuable, not the features which artworks must have to belong to the genre.¹⁶ For example, being flat is a standard feature for paintings, but not a feature which genre norms say paintings should have – paintings are not artistically valuable in virtue of their mere flatness.¹⁷ Thus it is different from unstable composition, which, according to the Nominalist Explanation, would be amongst the genre norms of mannerist painting because it is a feature in virtue of which mannerist paintings are artistically valuable. Therefore, knowing which features are standard for some genre is not sufficient for knowing the norms associated with that genre, according to the Nominalist Explanation.

Therefore, if correct judgement of an artwork's artistic value depends on the social conventions embodied in our scheme of genres, then to reach correct judgements of artistic value, we need contextual knowledge beyond that which Walton argues we need to correctly determine an artwork's aesthetic properties. As I argued above, the Nominalist Explanation

¹⁵ See Chapter 1, §2 for a more detailed exposition of this view.

¹⁶ I will eventually argue, in §3.2 of this chapter, that the conception of genre norms to which the Nominalist Explanation appeals is mistaken. However, in this stage of my enquiry, my task is to explain what would follow if this conception were correct, without prejudice to whether it is or not.

¹⁷ I am referring to the physical feature of flatness, not the aesthetic property close in meaning to inexpressiveness.

entails that correct judgement of an artwork's artistic value depends on the social conventions embodied in our scheme of genres, and the Realist explanation does not. So, if the Nominalist Explanation is correct, we will need more contextual information to reach correct judgements of artistic value than if the Realist Explanation is correct.¹⁸

Hence, the distinction between the two explanations is a distinction between two positions which transpose formalist and contextualist positions about interpretation to the matter of judgements of artistic value. Formalists about interpreting artworks say that all that matters to interpreting an artwork is what is available to us simply by inspecting the work – what can be directly perceived in it.¹⁹ Contextualists say that to correctly interpret an artwork, we need to know contextual facts about an artwork's origins, the intentions of its creator, the sociological categories to which it belongs, etc. Part of interpreting an artwork correctly is determining which aesthetic properties it has. Therefore, Walton demonstrates that the contextualist is partly right – to correctly make aesthetic judgements about an artwork, we need to know which categories it belongs to, and which non-aesthetic properties are standard, contra-standard and variable for that category.

So, in distinguishing these two explanations of Evaluation Variance, I am asking whether we ought also to be contextualists about evaluation. Is the value of an artwork influenced only by the aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties which it has, or do the categories to which the artwork belongs in virtue of these properties have an influence on its artistic value which extends beyond the influence of the properties themselves?

Working out which of these explanations is correct is a difficult task – since the two aspects of genre go together, we cannot compare cases where genre-typical features have changed but the label has not, or vice versa, especially because if Walton is right that changing the

¹⁸ If the Realist Explanation is correct, we will still require all the contextual knowledge which Walton argues we need to correctly identify an artwork's aesthetic properties. Whichever explanation is right, to correctly judge an artwork's artistic value we will have to start from a baseline of correctly identifying its aesthetic properties. The Realist Explanation merely entails that we don't require any *further* contextual knowledge than this.

¹⁹ Wollheim has argued, in *Art and Its Objects* and elsewhere, against the formalist position because it is badly drawn. The idea is roughly that we always need some amount of contextual knowledge to interpret artworks – for example, knowledge of a language and its idioms – so in distinguishing itself from the contextualist position, formalism draws an arbitrary line in the sand to distinguish knowledge which the formalist concedes is necessary, and knowledge which is properly contextualist. I am sympathetic to this argument: however, my purpose here is to indicate the two positions as they are often distinguished to make a comparison, not to establish how they should be distinguished, or whether they are coherent.

category to which a work belongs changes which aesthetic properties it has, we will not be comparing like with like. I will argue that the Realist Explanation, rather than the Nominalist Explanation, is correct: it deals well with a range of examples of genre's influence on judgements of artistic value. I will give two arguments against the Nominalist Explanation. The first is that the key idea to which the Nominalist Explanation appeals is false: the norms associated with genres are not relevant to artistic value. The second is that if the Nominalist Explanation were correct, it would have a highly implausible consequence for the justification required by judgements of artistic value. Hence, we should not think that it is correct.

2. Argument for the Realist Explanation

In this section, I will argue that the Realist Explanation explains all the ways in which genre influences artistic value, except for one aspect of how rebellion against genre norms contributes to the artistic value of artworks.

First, I will explain the thought behind the Realist Explanation: that some groups of features are mutually supporting, and other groups mutually frustrating, in realising artistic values; and that there are some incompatibilities between different artistic values. I will then demonstrate in detail that the Realist Explanation can explain Evaluation Variance. Subsequently, I will explain how it accounts for the other two ways which Abell demonstrates genre can influence evaluation, and for the fact that following the rules of a genre too closely can detract from the artistic value of an artwork.

I will then argue that the Realist Explanation can explain part of why rebelling against genre norms can contribute to an artwork's artistic value. However, I will argue that to fully capture the ways in which genre rebellion allows artworks to create complex and artistically valuable meanings, we must appeal to the Nominalist Explanation.

2.1 Interrelations between features and Evaluation Variance

The Realist Explanation holds that the constellations of features typical of a genre explain the effects I have detailed in Chapter 1 §1, because of the way they relate to other features of an artwork. Some groups of features are mutually reinforcing as means of realising artistic

value, whilst others are incompatible, or mutually undermining. This is partly because of the range of different artistic values – some can be realised together, whilst there are incompatibilities which hinder the joint realisation of others.

Thus, genres, as templates, effectively rule out certain features of artworks and kinds of artistic value from being able to realise their potential for value in an artwork: once you have the features typical of the genre in an artwork, certain others won't be able to contribute to the work's artistic value. There are strong associations between particular genres and particular (sets of) artistic values, because of the artistic values which their typical features realise.²⁰

For example, psychological realist novels are strongly associated with the artistic value of demonstrating truths about human life, because the typical features of psychological realism, including psychologically consistent characters, social critique, verisimilitude in the events and human relationships depicted, and detailed descriptions of the everyday, are well-suited to demonstrating truths about human life. There is an incompatibility between this artistic value and the expression of emotion, in that some means of facilitating emotional expression in artworks, for example through characters which are consistently in extreme emotional states of passion, anger, jealousy etc., hinder how faithful the artwork is to what human life really tends to be like, preventing it from demonstrating certain truths.

Hence, once a novel has a good number of the features typical of psychological realism, a character with persistently extreme emotional states, where these are treated as perfectly sincere and normal rather than unusual, would likely be a flaw.²¹ Whilst this might contribute the value of emotional expression, it would probably undermine the credibility of the realistic characters, relationships, and plot elements in the novel, preventing them from demonstrating truths about human life, and so ultimately undermining the novel's key means of realising artistic value.

²⁰ I give an indicative list of artistic values inspired partly by Gaut's cluster account of art in Chapter 1 §3

²¹ If the character is considered immature, like Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*, or an oddity in some other way which undermines the sincerity of their emotions, this does not undermine realism. However, it hinders the ability of the character to facilitate emotional expression, because we don't take their emotional states seriously.

However, typical features of gothic novels include a suspenseful and emotionally intense mood, having an element of the supernatural, a remote and atmospheric setting, highly-wrought language and perhaps a monster or other evil character. Characters which sincerely display extreme emotions like passion, terror and excitement combine well with these features to create an exciting and emotionally expressive artwork. Hence, Cathy and Heathcliff's extreme anger, passion and spite contribute greatly to the artistic value of *Wuthering Heights*.

Therefore, the Realist Explanation convincingly explains this example of Evaluation Variance. It deals equally well with another, Abell's observation that laughter contributes to the artistic value of a comedy but detracts from that of a horror. The characteristic means by which comedy realises value is humour. The reasons why something is funny often concern our cultural identities – consider the role of British class anxiety in *Fawlty Towers*. Thus comedy realises artistic values including expressing emotion, expressing truths about humanity, and helping people understand themselves better.²² The connection between humour and the artistic values comedy realises explains why if a comedy makes us laugh, this means it is good. Even if it isn't strictly true to say that the fact that it makes us laugh contributes to the artwork's artistic value, it is evidence that the part of the artwork making us laugh contributes to the artistic value the artwork realises.

Horror realises similar artistic values to comedy, but with different characteristic means. It frightens an audience with scary situations, suspense, psychological disturbance and gore. The reason that making an audience laugh means a horror film is bad concerns the relationship between these characteristic means and laughter. Laughter undermines the efficacy of some of these means in frightening the audience – atmospheric tension can be shattered by laughter. Furthermore, laughter can be evidence of a failure to credibly generate fear. If special effects or costumes aren't convincing, or a plot or setting is too clichéd, this can make us laugh. So, if a horror film makes us laugh, this both frustrates its means of artistic value, and indicates that its means of realising artistic value fall short of success.

²² Comedy realises other values which are hedonic, not strictly artistic – laughter is intrinsically pleasurable. It doesn't affect my argument whether this contributes to comedy's artistic value.

A virtue of the Realist Explanation is that it can deal with a potential objection to how Abell characterises this phenomenon. One might think not all instances of laughter in horror make it bad. What about a film which alternates between making us laugh and frightening us – surely this could unsettle an audience further, with dramatic shifts in mood creating more tension and making the scary bits scarier? If so, unlike Abell’s theory, this account can explain why: in these cases, laughter is enhancing the characteristic means by which horror realises artistic value rather than frustrating them.

2.2 Abell’s other effects; over-following rules

The Realist Explanation can also explain some of the other ways in which genre influences our evaluation of artworks, which I set out in Chapter 1: our evaluations of whole genres; our evaluations of artworks as members of their genres; and the fact that following genre rules too closely or slavishly can detract from artistic value.

It explains our evaluation of whole genres as evaluations of how good a basis a genre’s typical features provide for yielding artistically valuable artworks, given the fact that the presence of these features will rule out certain features of artworks and kinds of artistic value from being able to realise their potential for value in an artwork. So when we say things like “tragedy is better than melodrama, or...horror is emotionally overstimulating” (Abell, 2015, p.27), we are saying that the affordances of typical features of tragedy for yielding artistically valuable artworks are greater than those of melodrama, or that the typical features of horror tend to yield emotionally overstimulating artworks.

The typical features of some genres combine well with a wide range of features and artistic values, whilst the typical features of others will prevent many features from realising their potential for artistic value. For example, more features can realise their potential for value in a psychological realist novel than in a detective novel, which is more formulaic. However, a genre which forecloses more features and artistic values from realising their potential value is not necessarily worse than one which forecloses fewer. Tragedy forecloses the possibility of a range of features with more optimistic outlooks: moments calculated to give us warm fuzzy feelings, or hope for the future, would all fail to reach their potential for artistic value in a tragedy. However, this allows it to realise the potential for value in expression of negative emotion and demonstration of negative truths about human life to a greater extent.

Related to this is the account the Realist Explanation provides of the second effect Abel notes. This is that “we also evaluate works as members of a genre: a film may be better or worse as a horror, and our evaluation of it as such need not mirror our overall aesthetic evaluation of the work” (p.27). Realising the potential for artistic value afforded by genre-typical features is one way an artwork realises artistic value – but it also does so in other ways unrelated to its genre. For example, epic is a genre associated with the telling of stories about extraordinary deeds with significant consequences for the course of history. An epic poem can realise artistic value by telling stories about extraordinary deeds which have shaped the world we live in, but also in virtue of complex narrative techniques which are not typical features of the genre: the radical shifts of perspective in Homer’s similes in *The Iliad* are not typical of epic, although the use of simile is. When we evaluate an artwork as a member of its genre, we are evaluating how well it exploits the potential for artistic value offered specifically by the typical features of its genre. When we evaluate it overall, we are evaluating how well the work realises value through both genre-typical features and others. Moreover, an artwork may do better at realising the potential value offered by the typical features of its genre than it does at realising artistic value in general, or vice-versa.

The Realist Explanation puts the fact that following genre rules too closely or slavishly can undermine an artwork’s artistic value down to the fact that the potential of typical features of genres to realise artistic values can be undermined if, in doing so, an artwork becomes predictable or boring. The extent to which typical features are vulnerable to this varies – the typical features of a fugue can be realised in a wide variety of ways which prevent them from becoming boring or the resulting artworks from feeling formulaic. However, the typical features of detective fiction do not afford as much potential for variation – hence, we can become bored with books which succumb to clichés like the butler committing the murder.

2.3 Rebellious against genre norms

The Realist Explanation accounts for part of why disobeying genre rules contributes to the value of some artworks. The typical features of genres relate to each other in complex ways, such that the superstructure of the typical features genres deploy to realise artistic values is itself realisable in different, and sometimes incompatible ways. Consider epic poetry, which realises artistic values including helping people understand themselves, emotional expression,

and communicating complex meanings. The superstructure of the typical features which it uses to realise these values are a story about the extraordinary deeds of ancient heroes battling fate, super-human forces and their enemies, thereby shaping the identity of a people. The typical ways of realising this superstructure in Greek epic involved merciless and fearless heroes, like Achilles in the *Iliad* and Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. However, the same superstructure can be realised with the different kind of hero we see in the *Aeneid*, particularly because humility and piety were central to the identity of the people whose mythic genealogy the story tells – the Roman upper classes.

The fearless merciless hero was a typical feature of epic when the *Aeneid* was written, hence, the *Aeneid* rebels against what was typical for epic in introducing a fearful and pious hero. However, this new feature combines extremely well with the other typical features of epic in realising the artistic values which the genre typically realises. Hence, the rebellion actually allows this example of the genre to realise its characteristic artistic values in new and original ways, contributing the value of the *Aeneid*. However, if an artwork rebelled against genre norms in a way which hindered the other typical features from realising the genre's characteristic artistic values rather than helping it, this would not contribute to an artwork's artistic value. Hence, *Giri/Haji*'s attempt to rebel against the norms associated with gang dramas and LGBTQ+ coming-of-age stories fails, because it undermines, rather than enhances, the way in which the typical features of these genres realise artistic values.

However, there is a second way in which rebelling against genre norms can make an artwork artistically valuable which the Realist Explanation cannot fully explain. Rebelling against genre norms isn't just a matter of altering the typical features of the genre. It also adds to the cognitive content of the artwork, often conveying a rejection of some of the values associated with the genre against which the artwork rebels. In the case of the *Aeneid*, the rejection of the typical hero functions as a rejection of Ancient Greek masculine ideals. The character of Aeneas is a means of asserting Roman masculine virtues like piety, humility and citizenship against Achilles' individualism, physical strength and blind courage.

Sometimes this rejection is more comic than serious: the merging of *Pride and Prejudice* with a zombie horror plot is less interested in making moral points than sending up a previous literary style through parody. Artworks can combine both together, however: one aspect of genre rebellion which we must account for is its ability to ground meanings in artworks of

exceptional subtlety and emotional complexity. For example, in Chapter 1 §1.2 I mentioned *Albert Herring* as an example of an artwork rebelling against the norms of English pastoral by caricaturing the character archetypes associated with the genre. This humorous opera makes a serious point. It is part of a tradition, including Alan Bennett's plays, of parodies of little England which alternate humour with bleak glimpses of the tragedies of the excluded – often queer-coded men who fail in the performance of conventional masculinity. Albert's joyous liberation from parochial mores at the end of the opera, and his terror about navigating the adult world at the beginning of Act 3, unite to condemn the society which has caused him so much unhappiness.

This phenomenon cannot be explained by appealing merely to the typical features associated with genres: it works by exploiting the network of cultural associations woven through our socially constructed genre classification system. Because it is explained by appealing to the fact that the rebellious artworks belong to a certain genre, and the associations of this genre, the Nominalist Explanation is the correct account of this phenomenon, not the Realist Explanation.

3. Against the Nominalist Explanation

The rest of my thesis will consist in two arguments against the Nominalist Explanation. The first, which will make up the rest of this chapter, argues that the genre norms to which the Nominalist Explanation appeals are not actually relevant to judgements of artistic value. The second, which I will present in Chapter 3, argues that the Nominalist Explanation has highly implausible entailments for the kind of justification required by judgements of artistic value.

My first argument will have two parts. The first will argue that, although mere genre classification does affect which aesthetic properties an artwork has, this cannot explain our change in judgement in all cases of Evaluation Variance because our evaluation of an artwork's artistic value is not exhausted by establishing which aesthetic properties it has. This is because, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1, there is a second stage of evaluation, in which we establish whether the properties an artwork has are artistic merits or defects, in the context in which they appear. If the Nominalist Explanation is to explain all cases of Evaluation Variance, then mere genre classification must affect this second stage of evaluation.

The second part will argue that mere genre classification does not affect whether an artwork's properties count as artistic merits or defects in context. The Nominalist Explanation holds that if an artwork is classified in a genre, it is subject to norms associated with that genre which dictate whether certain properties count as merits or defects. However, I will argue that these norms are not actually relevant to judgements of artistic value, but merely stipulate conditions for belonging to genres.

I will then consider four brief replies to this argument. The first argues that there are aspects of genre's influence on evaluation which only the Nominalist Explanation can explain: the fact that some genres are better than others, and the fact that audience reactions to Chekhov's *The Seagull* changed dramatically based on whether it was performed as a tragedy or a comedy. I will argue that the Realist Explanation can accommodate both phenomena. The third and fourth replies argue that there is an aspect of genre which I have overlooked, which grounds the relevance of genre norms to judgements of artistic value. The third reply argues that this is the fact that genres create expectations, and the fourth reply argues that this is the fact that artists intend to create artworks in certain genres.

3.1 Two stages of evaluation

In Chapter 1, I distinguished two different stages in our evaluation of artworks. I argued that, though genre classification does affect the first stage, this is not sufficient to explain all cases of Evaluation Variance – this is why Walton's theory in *Categories of Art* isn't able to explain what is going on in all cases of Evaluation Variance. Here, I will argue that the fact that genre classification does not affect the second stage of evaluation is a problem for the Nominalist Explanation.

It might seem that we have obvious reason to reject the Nominalist Explanation: just as a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, why would the section of the library where the book is kept make any difference to the value of what's inside? Genre labels seem beside the point when it comes to evaluating an artwork, where what matters is the artwork's content or meaning. Surely the *Molto allegro* of Mozart's 40th symphony (K. 550) would be equally artistically valuable whether we happen to categorise it with other classical symphonies, or with other pieces in the key of G minor. Why would this make any difference to how evocative we find its chromaticism, or how much its rhythmic urgency compels us?

However, if Walton is right in *Categories of Art*, then mere genre classification *does* affect an artwork's artistic value. Walton argues that the categories to which an artwork belongs, including genre, determine which aesthetic properties it has, which in turn affects the artistic value of the work. Walton's argument in *Categories of Art* focuses on categories and the taxonomies of features within categories, so we can infer that the aspect of genre relevant to his argument is genre membership as such – the socially constructed label, rather than the collection of features in virtue of which the genre label applies.

However, the fact that genre classification as such can affect which aesthetic properties an artwork has does not mean that the Nominalist Explanation is the correct way to explain all cases of Evaluation Variance. This is because, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1, not all cases of Evaluation Variance are explained by a change in the aesthetic properties the feature in question contributes to the work in which it appears. I conceded that some cases are explained in this way, such as the case of the scribbly line in an Audubon sketch and Quentin Blake's bird drawing.²³ But, as I pointed out, there are many cases which cannot be explained this way, because there are many Evaluation Variance cases where the feature we consider is itself an aesthetic property, and it remains fixed between the two cases. For example, I mentioned the fact that dissonance can be good in a modernist musical work, but is generally bad in a classical piece, where it will tend to sound like a wrong note. (There are of course well known exceptions to this rule, but the fact that they are well known to be exceptions proves the rule.)²⁴

The reason that there are cases of Evaluation Variance which are not explained by a change in aesthetic properties is that we can distinguish two stages of our evaluation of artworks. In the first, we establish which aesthetic properties an artwork has. In the second, we establish to what extent these properties contribute to or detract from an artwork's artistic value in context. The reason for this distinction is that the contribution an aesthetic property makes to an artwork's artistic value can vary. Properties like elegance and charm do not always

²³ See Chapter 1 §2 for more detailed discussion of this case, Walton's theory and the two stages of evaluation.

²⁴ For further examples, see Chapter 1 §2

contribute towards the value of an artwork, and properties like discordance and clunkiness do not always make it bad.²⁵

So, if the Nominalist Explanation is to explain the other cases of Evaluation Variance, then mere genre classification must affect this second stage of evaluation: it must affect whether the properties an artwork has, aesthetic and non-aesthetic, count as artistic merits or artistic defects. This is exactly what I deny.²⁶ The Nominalist Explanation claims that genre classification affects whether the properties an artwork has count as artistic merits or defects, because by classifying an artwork within a genre, we make it subject to the norms of this genre, which dictate what artworks in the genre should (normally) be like. However, I deny that these norms are relevant to our judgements of artistic value. Therefore, mere genre classification does not affect whether an artwork's properties count as artistic merits or defects.

3.2 Genre norms are not artistic norms

In this section, I will argue that the conception of genre norms to which the Nominalist Explanation appeals is misguided. First I will set out the conception, before providing examples which call it into question.

The Nominalist Explanation holds that mere genre membership affects whether certain features contribute to, or detract from, the artistic value of artworks in which they appear, because there are norms associated with genres. According to this explanation, some of these norms partly determine what makes an artwork belonging to the genre valuable as a work of art. Norms can both prescribe and prohibit features: for example, the norms of Greek tragedy stipulate *inter alia* a consistently serious tone with no room for humour or optimism.

²⁵ It is a point in favour of the Realist Explanation that other features of the artwork can influence whether an aesthetic property is an artistic merit or defect by being part of the context which decides whether a feature is good or bad in this instance. To return to the example of *Slow Reader* by Allan Ahlberg, which I develop in Chapter 1 §2, the feature which makes the poem's clunkiness valuable is the implied narrator's character: it is through dramatising their sullen slowness that the clunkiness is expressive and hence valuable.

²⁶ This is consistent with my argument that to explain the full extent of the contribution made by rebelling against genres to artworks' artistic value, we must appeal to the Nominalist Explanation. The aspect of the contribution made by rebelling against genres which I argue we must explain by appealing to genre membership is the contribution made by meanings which artworks have in virtue of rebelling against their genres: for example, rejections of social norms. Thus, I am claiming that genre membership affects the meaning of the artwork – which aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties it has – rather than whether these properties constitute artistic merits or artistic defects in context.

Therefore, the Nominalist Explanation implies a conception of evaluating artworks a bit like marking an exam, where different genres have associated with them different mark schemes: genre norms specify some of the criteria relevant to establishing whether an artwork is artistically valuable, but it requires judgement to establish whether and to what extent the criteria are met.

Moreover, the Nominalist Explanation holds that the features in question contribute to or detract from artistic value *because* they are prescribed or prohibited by certain of the norms of that genre. The Nominalist Explanation is compatible with thinking that there are general ways in which features contribute to artistic value – by allowing an artwork to express emotion, display significant skill, or facilitating the realisation of any other of the artistic values I identified in Chapter 1 §3. However, it holds that features relevant to genre-identity contribute to or detract from artistic value because genre norms stipulate that they are merits or defects, not because of general considerations about how features realise or frustrate artistic values, as the Realist Explanation alleges. Genre norms, on the Nominalist Explanation, create exceptions to these general considerations about artistic value. They establish certain features as artistic merits or defects within the genre, irrespective of whether the features would generally realise or frustrate artistic values.

For example, according to the Nominalist Explanation, the norms of the gothic genre dictate that good gothic artworks have an intensely emotional mood. This is why characters like Cathy and Heathcliff, which display extreme emotion, contribute to the artistic value of the gothic novel *Wuthering Heights*: not because characters with extreme emotions generally allow artworks to realise the artistic value of emotional expression.

However, I argue that the norms associated with genres don't function like this: they dictate which features qualify an artwork for membership of a genre, not which features make artworks in that genre artistically valuable. The Nominalist Explanation holds that compliance with genre norms makes genre-typical features contribute to the artistic value of artworks, and that whether features would normally realise certain artistic values is irrelevant. If this were true, there would be a strong relationship between complying with norms and artistic value – the more compliant with genre norms, the better the artwork. However, this doesn't hold. For example, the norms of history painting include depicting a moment of action in a narrative story, featuring religious, allegorical, mythical or historical subjects,

having multiple figures and having an emotionally serious character. A historical painting which conforms with all these norms isn't thereby a good historical painting: it could be either formulaic or masterful. It certainly isn't true that the more closely a painting complies with the norms associated with its genre, the more artistically valuable it is.

Equally, an artwork which fails to conform with certain genre norms isn't thereby worse – in most cases, it simply has a lesser claim to membership of the genre. For example, *Pride and Prejudice* conforms to a few of the norms of psychological realism, featuring social critique and detailed descriptions of everyday life, but doesn't have a realistic plot: it ends with two Bennet sisters making improbably good marriages for women of their fortune in Georgian England. However, this doesn't make *Pride and Prejudice* a bad novel – it just means that it isn't accurate to call it a realist novel.

Where an artwork clearly qualifies for membership of a genre but fails to comply with salient norms, it could be confused and dissatisfying; or alternatively, inventive and original. John Le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* is an example: though clearly a spy novel, it rebels against the norms of the genre through its antihero George Smiley. Rather than the dashing ladies' man popularised in the *James Bond* novels, he is a nervous man with ill-fitting suits whose wife is perpetually having affairs with his colleagues. Compare this with another example in the wider whodunnit genre: Erle Stanley Gardner's *The Case of the Long-Legged Models*. This novel fully complies with genre norms, following the adventures of the erudite lawyer Perry Mason and his doting secretary, Della Street. Yet its artistic value is far less than Le Carré's novel. We would expect the opposite, if the Nominalist Explanation were correct.

One might wonder whether these examples can't be explained in a way compatible with the Nominalist Explanation. What if complying with genre norms *does* contribute to the artistic value of *The Case of the Long-Legged Models*, but its contribution is outweighed by the contribution which originality makes to the artistic value of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*? However, if we compare artworks which comply with genre norms but differ in their artistic value, it doesn't seem that mere compliance makes any contribution to their artistic value. Rather, it seems that what influences their artistic value is *the way in which* they comply with genre norms. For example, there are many technically correct but artistically unrewarding fugues written every year by undergraduates in counterpoint exams, whilst Bach's *Fugue in*

G Minor (BWV 578) manages to comply with the norms of the genre in elegant, beautiful and fascinating ways.

Moreover, if the Nominalist Explanation were correct, we would expect features which technically contravene genre norms, but which are very similar to the features the norms mandate, not to contribute to the artistic value of the artwork in which they appear. If what makes genre-typical features artistic merits is the fact that the norms mandate them, rather than anything about how the features generally relate to artistic values, then if a feature contravenes those norms, it shouldn't be an artistic merit, irrespective of its similarity to what the norms mandate.

However, the opposite is true of the contrapuntal ending to Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. This piece ends with passage that he entitles "fugue", and which begins in a way very conventional for that genre, but goes on to rebel against its norms. Fugues are multi-voiced works built around a short theme, with which each voice enters the texture, transposed into different keys. There are rules for how the different voices should relate to each other, and for altering the theme through processes such as augmentation, where the values of the notes in the theme are elongated. The fugal passage in Britten's piece is based on a theme loosely adapted from a passage by Purcell. In a particularly thrilling moment after the whole orchestra has entered the texture, Britten reintroduces the original Purcell passage on which the fugue subject is based in the brass, in a major key, and at a grandiose tempo – the note values are much longer than those in the rest of the orchestra, and the beat is displaced relative to them. This is an echo of the fugal technique of augmentation. It isn't proper augmentation – for one thing, the new subject is not the same as the one which is the subject of the counterpoint. So, technically, this is a break with the genre norms of counterpoint. However, it has all the excitement and grandiosity which augmentation contributes to a fugal texture.

If the Nominalist Explanation were correct, we would expect the brass entry to be an artistic flaw rather than an artistic merit: it breaks the rules of the fugue genre. The fact that it makes such a contribution to the artistic value of Britten's work suggests, rather, that the Realist Explanation is correct. The effect of the brass entry is similar to that which augmentation tends to have in a fugue – it gives a sense of stateliness underpinning the other voices and evokes feelings of excitement, awe and satisfaction. This similarity suggests that the reason

that both true augmentation, and the echo of it in Britten's piece, are artistically valuable is the common way in which they realise artistic values like emotional expression, beauty, and the exercise of significant skill: not the stipulations of genre norms about what fugues should be like.

Thus, the Nominalist Explanation appears to be incorrect, because the genre norms to which it appeals to explain genre's influence on evaluation do not determine what makes artworks in the genre artistically valuable. Rather, they do something similar to creating puzzles for artists to solve. Genre norms articulate frameworks which put limitations on artists. They pose conditions which artists can meet well or poorly: in ways which are interesting or boring, elegant or clumsy.

3.3 Four counterarguments

In this section, I will consider four replies to my claim that the Nominalist Explanation fails to explain all cases of Evaluation Variance. Two of them appeal to a phenomenon which the Realist Explanation, supposedly, cannot explain. I argue that the Realist Explanation can accommodate both. The second two argue that there something which I have not fully appreciated about genre norms which legitimises their relevance to artistic value. The first appeals to the fact that genre norms create expectations, and the second to the fact that artists intend to create works which comply with the norms of genres, respectively. I argue that neither of these facts is a reason to think that genre norms are relevant to artistic value

i) Some genres are better than others

First, one might think that the fact that we consider some genres better than others implies that genre norms are relevant to artistic value, as the Nominalist Explanation alleges. What makes some genres better than others is surely that the norms of some genres mandate better works than the norms of others do. But if so, then genre norms *do* influence artistic value.

However, this thought actually vindicates the Realist Explanation, rather than the Nominalist Explanation. If some genre norms are better than others at yielding artistically valuable artworks, then the value of genre-typical features must depend on what those features are like, rather than merely that they are compliant with genre norms. If mere compliance

explained the value of genre-typical features, it would be much harder to explain why some genres are better than others, because as long as artworks in a genre tend to be equally compliant with the norms of their genre, the value of their typical features should be the same. It is only if we allow the way genre-typical features generally realise artistic values to affect their artistic value that we can account for the fact that we consider some genres better than others, by hypothesising that the typical features of some genres are better at realising artistic values than the typical features of others.

ii) *Chekhov's The Seagull*

The second counterargument concerns a specific case, for there is a prominent example of genre's influence on evaluation which might seem to demand the Nominalist Explanation. The first performance of Chekhov's *The Seagull* as a comedy was a flop, but it received wide acclaim in a new production directed by Stanislavski, in which the play was presented as a tragedy. The text of the play did not change between the two productions – only its genre classification. So, if mere genre classification doesn't influence whether an artwork's features realise artistic value, how can we explain the change in reception?

My reply to this counterargument is as follows. Firstly, the two productions weren't the same – there were significant differences between them besides the change in genre classification. Stanislavski's direction was highly interventionist – he stipulated when actors should “wipe away dribble, blow their noses, smack their lips, wipe away sweat, or clean their teeth and nails with matchsticks” (Worrall, 1996, p.109). Any of these changes in how the play was performed might account for the audience's reaction, rather than the change in which genre label it bore. Secondly, if Walton is correct, as a result of the change in genre classification, the two productions will have had different aesthetic properties.

Moreover, genres are extremely useful as interpretative heuristics. By signalling to the audience that an artwork belongs to a particular genre, creators give them a template for interpreting the artwork which primes them with an expectation of which kind of features will be salient or not. Perhaps Stanislavski's presentation of *The Seagull* as a tragedy provided the audience with better tools for understanding the play, and thus accessing the artistic value it offers. The way genres function as heuristics might explain why critics so frequently refer to

them in reviewing artworks – Walton makes a similar suggestion concerning other contextual features:

...the tendency of critics to discuss the histories of works of art in the course of justifying aesthetic judgments about them has been remarkably persistent. This is partly because hints derived from facts about a work's history, however dispensable they may be "in principle," are often crucially important in practice. (One might simply not think to listen for a recurring series of intervals in a piece of music, until he learns that the composer meant the work to be structured around it.) (Walton, 1970, p.336-7)

So we needn't hold that genre classification affects whether the properties of an artwork realise artistic values to explain the difference in the audience's reception of the two productions of *The Seagull*.

I will now turn to the final two counterarguments, which take a different tack. Instead of presenting an example which supposedly demands the Nominalist Explanation, they appeal to a fact about genre norms to argue that they are, in fact, relevant to artistic value. The first appeals to the fact that genre norms create expectations, and the second to the fact that artists intend to create artworks which fulfil the norms of a particular genre.

iii) Expectation

One might protest that there is more to the fact that genres create expectations than I am allowing. As I have said, by signalling to an audience that an artwork belongs to a particular genre, creators give them a template for interpreting the artwork which primes them with an expectation of which kind of features the work will have, and which will be salient. This though is common to Currie's view of genre and Walton's analysis of the standard features of categories of artworks (Currie, 2004), (Walton, 1970).²⁷ We are psychologically disposed to enjoy an artwork when genre expectations are satisfied – this is a similar idea to Walton's view that because they fulfil expectations, standard features give an artwork a sense of correctness.²⁸ Perhaps this explains why I enjoy the contrast between the first and second subject of the first movement of Mozart's 40th symphony, K. 550 – I expect such a contrast between the first two subjects in the sonata form taken by the first movements of classical

²⁷ Currie does not explain the evaluative effects of genre in these terms; hence, my dismissal of this counterargument does not constitute disagreement with his view.

²⁸ *Categories of Art* (1970), p.348. See Chapter 1 §2 for a detailed exegesis of Walton's view.

symphonies. And perhaps this explains the change in the audience's reaction to *The Seagull* – perhaps the play satisfied more of their expectations for tragedies than for comedies.

However, if this idea is to justify thinking that genres can influence whether the properties of an artwork are artistically valuable, we must go further, and claim that not only do we enjoy it when artworks satisfy genre-related expectations, but satisfying these expectations makes them artistically valuable. We can enjoy artworks in ways which are unrelated to their artistic value, so however plausible the idea that we enjoy artworks where our genre-related expectations are satisfied, this alone doesn't give us enough to justify the relevance of genre norms to judgements of the artistic value of artworks. Either we need reason to think that our enjoyment is sensitive to something else which is itself a ground for the relevance of these norms to judgements of artistic value, or we need reason to think that a consequence of the fact that we enjoy having our expectations satisfied is that artworks doing this are more artistically valuable.

However, reflecting on experiences with art where features of artworks satisfy our genre-related expectations does not support the idea that the reason such features are valuable is that having our expectations satisfied is pleasurable. Consider the authentic portrayal of friendship between Elizabeth and Charlotte in *Pride and Prejudice*. The reason why this contributes to the artistic value of the novel is not that realistic portrayals of relationships between characters are characteristic of literary realist novels. It is that one of the reasons we value art is its ability to help us understand human experience by demonstrating important truths about it. One such truth is the emotional dynamic of our relationships with others, such as the pain of a friendship waning under the realisation that the parties to it do not agree on important matters any more. So, the authentic portrayal of this friendship contributes to the artistic value of *Pride and Prejudice* because it exemplifies a paradigm cognitive value of art – not because it satisfies our expectations of the genre.

iv) Intention

One might argue that genre norms are relevant to artistic value because they shape artists' intentions for the artworks they produce. Artists have particular genres in mind when they create – they intend to write a gothic novel, to compose a symphony, etc. This means that

they have the norms of particular genres in mind when they create artworks.²⁹ Given this, whether they succeed relative to these norms is relevant for judging the success of their artwork.

The problem with this argument is that judging the success of an artwork relative to its artist's intentions and judging its artistic value are not necessarily the same. Hence, the fact that genre norms are relevant to judging whether an artist has succeeded in realising their intentions for an artwork does not entail that genre norms are relevant to judgements of artistic value.

A supporter of this argument might object that I am missing the point. Artists intend their works to be particular ways because, in doing so, they hope to create artistically valuable works. So judging whether an artwork succeeds in realising the intentions of an artist isn't as separable from questions of artistic value as I have implied. However, this doesn't mean that an artist's intentions for the kind of artistically valuable experience they want their work to afford set the parameters for evaluating the work they actually create. Say an artist fails to realise the kinds of values they were trying for, but realises others along the way – the fact that this wasn't what the artist was aiming for doesn't prevent the experience their artwork affords from being valuable in these ways.

This is demonstrated by Chekhov's *The Seagull* – Chekhov intended it to be a comedy, and thus to realise the kind of artistically valuable experience which comic norms tend to yield. However, the work was considered far more valuable when Stanislavski presented it as a tragedy. The tragic values the artwork realised were not undermined by the fact that they weren't what Chekhov was aiming for. Another example of this can be found in the genre of devotional painting. Artists working on devotional paintings intended them to enhance worship and prayer, but nowadays critical appreciation of them focuses on their aesthetic qualities as fine art, rather than their ability to inspire prayer. If it were true that an artist's intentions for the kind of artistically valuable experience they want their work to afford set the parameters for evaluating it, then critics would be mistaken in attending to the aesthetic qualities of devotional paintings separately from the question of how they inspire piety.

²⁹ This is true even when they intend to transgress the norms of a particular genre: they intend to rebel against the gothic, against realism, to create a tragi-comedy, etc.

So, the fact that artists' intentions for their artworks are part of an overall intention to create artistically valuable art doesn't mean these intentions are relevant to judging the artworks' artistic value.

This completes my consideration of replies to my argument that the Nominalist Explanation cannot be the general explanation for Evaluation Variance. Thus, my claim stands that the Nominalist Explanation fails to account for many cases of Evaluation Variance, because it appeals to a mistaken picture of genre norms.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the majority of ways in which genre influences our judgements of artistic value should be explained by appealing to the typical features of genres, as the Realist Explanation holds, rather than genre membership as such, as the Nominalist Explanation holds. The exception is that the Realist Explanation can only partly explain the contribution which rebelling against genres can make to an artwork's artistic value – to explain how the meanings artworks have in virtue of rebelling against their genres contribute to their artistic value, we must appeal to the Nominalist Explanation.

In §1, I distinguished the Nominalist Explanation from the Realist Explanation and argued that if the Nominalist Explanation is right, then we need a greater amount of contextualist knowledge to correctly evaluate the artistic value of artworks than if the Realist Explanation is right.

Then, in §2, I argued that the Realist Explanation explains the majority of the ways in which genre influences judgements of artistic value, because there are relationships of mutual enhancement and inhibition between different combinations of features of artworks and artistic values. I demonstrated that it explains cases of Evaluation Variance, our evaluations of artworks as members of their genres, and our evaluations of whole genres. The Realist Explanation also accounts for why following the rules of a genre too closely can limit an artwork's artistic value. It can explain partly why rebelling against genre norms can make an artwork good –one kind of rebellion against genre norms consists in finding atypical ways of realising the typical superstructure of the genre which nevertheless combine well with the typical features retained. However, the Realist Explanation cannot explain the contribution

made to artworks' artistic value by the *meanings* they have in virtue of rebelling against genre norms – to explain this, we need to appeal, with the Nominalist Explanation, to genre classification as a cultural system.

In §3, I argued against the Nominalist Explanation on the grounds that there are many examples of Evaluation Variance which it cannot explain. I argued that there are two stages to our evaluation of artworks, and that genre membership can affect only the first of these stages, whilst there are many examples of Evaluation Variance which must be explained at the second stage. I argued that genre membership cannot affect the second stage of evaluation because to do so, it must appeal to a conception of genre norms as relevant to judgements of artistic value, and this conception is mistaken. I considered four replies to this argument, showing that they all fail.

Therefore, whilst it is possible that the Nominalist Explanation has a role in explaining some of the examples of Evaluation Variance which are accounted for at the first stage of evaluation, the most persuasive general explanation of this aspect of genre's influence on evaluation is that given by the Realist Explanation. Admittedly, there are cases where the aesthetic properties which a feature has change because of the change in genre membership. However, how this translates into a change in the artistic value of the feature depends on the relationship between these aesthetic properties, and genre-typical features of the artwork in which the feature appears. Thus, we still need to appeal to the Realist Explanation to account for such cases.

Chapter 3

Introduction

In this chapter, I will argue that we should not subscribe to the Nominalist Explanation of genre's influence on evaluation, because it entails that a plausible account of the justification required by judgements of artistic value is false.

In Chapter 1, I argued that genre influences our judgements of the artistic value of artworks. In Chapter 2, I distinguished two ways of explaining this: the Realist Explanation, which appeals to the typical features of genres to explain genre's influence on evaluation; and the Nominalist Explanation, which appeals to mere genre membership. I then argued for the Realist Explanation, and against the Nominalist Explanation, on the grounds that the conception of genre norms to which the Nominalist Explanation appeals is mistaken. In this chapter, I will build on my first argument against the Nominalist Explanation to present a second: that it requires us to sacrifice a plausible and intuitive view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value. The Nominalist Explanation entails that some cases of Evaluation Variance, where our judgement of a feature shared by two artworks changes depending on the genre of the artwork in which it appears, are counterexamples to this view of justification.

This charge is presented in the Justification Argument, which proceeds as follows:

1. We correctly judge that the artistic value of some features of artworks changes depending on the genre of the artwork in which they appear. (Evaluation Variance)
2. The change in artistic value is due to the change in genre membership between the artworks in which such features appear. (Nominalist Explanation)
3. In some cases of Evaluation Variance, genre membership does not affect the kind of reasons we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value.
⇒ Therefore, our judgements in some cases of Evaluation Variance are not justified by the kind of reasons we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value.

I will argue in §1 that intuitively, we think that judgements of artistic value should be supported by appropriate reasons. Appropriate reasons are those which refer to the nature of the artwork we are evaluating, explaining how it realises artistic values. If we change our judgement of a feature's artistic value, as we do in Evaluation Variance, we think this must be justified by a change in such reasons.

The Justification Argument shows that the Nominalist Explanation challenges this intuitive view. According to the Nominalist Explanation, our evaluation of a feature in Evaluation Variance changes because of the change in genre membership between the artworks in which the feature appears, as premise 2 states. However, as premise 3 states, there are some cases of Evaluation Variance where genre membership as such does not affect the kind of reasons which we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value. So there is no change in intuitively appropriate reasons to justify the change in our judgement.

Premise 1 states that our judgements in Evaluation Variance, that the artistic value of a features shared by multiple artworks changes depending on the genre of the artwork in which it appears, are correct. This seems right – after all, there is a wide variety of examples of the phenomenon. However, this means that some cases of Evaluation Variance are counter-examples to the intuitive view of justification: they are correct judgments of artistic value, despite lacking the justification we intuitively think correct judgements of this kind require.

I will give my argument for premise 3 in §2. This premise states that in some cases of Evaluation Variance, genre membership as such does not affect the kind of reasons which we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value. In Chapter 2 §3.1, I identified two stages in our evaluative reasoning concerning how features of artworks realise artistic values. I argued that whilst some cases of Evaluation Variance could be due to something affecting the first stage, other cases cannot. I then argued, in §3.2, that genre membership as such affects only the first stage, not the second. Thus, in cases which cannot be explained at the first stage, genre membership as such does not affect reasons concerning how features of artworks realise artistic values – reasons of the kind we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value.

After arguing for premise 3, I will consider the implications of the Justification Argument being true, in §3. I will explore what it could mean for the Nominalist Explanation to explain

our judgements in Evaluation Variance, if it does not do so by providing the kind of justification which we intuitively think such judgements require.

I will then consider some objections to my argument that the Nominalist Explanation entails the falsity of our intuitive view of the justification required by judgements of artistic value. The first objection, in §4, challenges premise 1 of the Justification Argument, arguing that our judgements in Evaluation Variance are incorrect. The second, in §5, argues that the Justification Argument implies a conception of reasons which particularists cannot accept. I will argue that both objections fail.

1. Justifying judgements of artistic value

The Justification Argument holds that on the Nominalist Explanation, Evaluation Variance is a counter-example to a view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value. In this section, I will set out Budd's classic statement of this view, arguing that it is highly plausible and intuitive.

Budd's view is that judgements of artistic value can only be justified with reference to "features [...] that must be appreciated if the work is to be understood – features of the work that are open to others, that endow it with value and that constitute good reasons for responding as you do".³⁰ Otherwise, judgements "lack any right to be thought of as indicative of the work's artistic value" (1995, p.40). The last of these conditions is less clear - what constitutes a good reason for evaluating the work as one does? Budd says that such features "ground the attribution of artistic value and ... constitute the particular forms of value the work exemplifies". So, for a feature to be a good reason for responding as I do, it must influence how an artwork realises artistic values in a way that explains my response: by explaining what is bad about the artwork in the case of a negative judgement, or what is good about it in the case of a positive one.

Budd's view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value accords strongly with our intuitions about our evaluations of artworks. They feel like things which claim

³⁰ The former condition requires a proviso: in the case of a negative evaluation, justification must involve reference to features which in some way limit or undermine its value, as well as those which endow it with value. I will take this as read in what follows.

agreement from others.³¹ An alternative picture would be that my evaluation of an artwork's artistic value is just a report of my response, such that if you reach a different evaluation, we aren't really disagreeing, just reporting different responses. If this were the case, then our evaluations of artistic value wouldn't require any justification in terms of the features of artworks. As long as they were sincere reports of our responses, they would meet all the standards for being correct judgements of artistic value, because on this view, all that determines artistic value is my positive response - the fact that I value the artwork.

Neither this picture, nor the corresponding view of justification, accord with how our artistic experiences feel. Our evaluations of artworks don't intuitively seem like mere reports of our sentiments about an artwork, but judgements grounded in features of the artwork, which therefore require justification in terms of such features. Of course, it is possible that our intuitions are wrong, but most of us feel that the aspects we love of our favourite artworks are valuable independently of our valuing them.

For example, if I admire Debussy's *La Mer* and you don't, it feels to me that you are missing something – the artistically valuable aspects of *La Mer* which you too should consider valuable. I can point to the lush extended harmonies and emotional immediacy of the churning orchestral textures, its repeated trailing of the final climactic theme in different orchestral voices as if from different perspectives, the exhilaration of the ending. That isn't to say that you should *enjoy* these features – they might not be to your taste – but you should at least concede that, matters of personal taste aside, they are valuable. They are ways of realising things like emotional expression, beauty, and complex meanings, which I identified in Chapter 1 §2.1 as artistic values.

These features of *La Mer* fulfil Budd's requirements for features which can justify judgements of artistic value. For example, the lush extended harmonies must be appreciated if the work is to be understood, since they are key to the distinctive atmosphere and sound world of the work. They are open to others – they don't depend on my private interpretation of the work. They endow the work with value, because they partially ground its distinctive capacity for emotional expression. Thus, the way they influence the intrinsic value of the

³¹ See above, p. 23 n. 11.

experience the work offers accords with my positive evaluative response, constituting a good reason for my response on Budd's view.

So, if the Nominalist Explanation entails that artistic value judgements don't always require justification by reasons referring to features of the work, this conclusion will be extremely counter-intuitive. Supporters of the Nominalist Explanation would need an error theory explaining why such a widespread set of intuitions about artistic evaluation and justification is mistaken.

Moreover, not only will we have to abandon a plausible view – we will also have to accept the independently implausible consequences of its being false. If judgements of artistic value don't require justification in terms of features of the artwork we are judging, this implies that artistic value isn't determined by the nature of artworks, but merely by our responses to artworks. We must give up thinking that what makes an evaluation of an artwork appropriate or inappropriate is the nature of that artwork. We might even have to give up thinking that any sincere evaluative responses to artworks can be inappropriate at all. Surely it is more likely that the Nominalist Explanation is false than that this picture of justification and evaluation is true.

Now that I have established the stakes of the Justification Argument, I will argue that its central claim, expressed in premise 3, is true.

2. Justifying premise 3

Premise 3 of the Justification argument claims that in some cases of Evaluation Variance, genre membership does not affect the kind of reasons we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value. So, if the Nominalist Explanation is right, there are some Evaluation Variance judgements which, despite being correct, do not have the justification which we intuitively think judgements of artistic value require. Therefore, the Nominalist Explanation entails that some cases of Evaluation Variance are counter-examples to Budd's plausible view of Justification.

Genre membership as such does not affect the kind of reasons we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value, in some cases of Evaluation Variance, because genre membership only affects the first stage of our evaluative reasoning.

In Chapter 2 §3.1, I argued that there are two stages to evaluation. Firstly, we establish which aesthetic properties an artwork has. Secondly, we consider whether the artwork's properties, both aesthetic and non-aesthetic, are artistic merits or defects in context. Now, this claim assumes that evaluations of artistic value consist in, and are exhausted by, consideration of reasons about the nature of artworks and how they realise artistic values – an assumption closely related to the intuition that judgements of artistic value should be justified by such reasons. It is more accurate to say that there are two stages in our evaluative reasoning about the nature of artworks, and how they realise artistic values, or in other words, that there are two stages in our consideration of the kind of reasons we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value. Firstly, we establish an artwork's aesthetic properties, which will join its non-aesthetic properties to form the basis of these reasons. Secondly, we consider whether these properties are artistic merits or defects: whether they allow the artwork to realise artistic values like those I identified in Chapter 1 §3 or not.

In Chapter 2 §3.1, I argued that in some cases of Evaluation Variance, something seems to affect the first stage in our consideration of the reasons which we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value. In such cases, the aesthetic properties of the feature we are evaluating are different in the different artworks in which the feature appears. For example, consider the case of the Audubon sketch and Quentin Blake's bird drawing. A scribbly line in the latter bears aesthetic properties of vitality and exuberance, but would not do so in the former, where it would look mistaken.

However, I argued that in other cases of Evaluation Variance, the first stage in our evaluative reasoning seems unaffected: the aesthetic properties of the feature are the same in both. For example, there are many Evaluation Variance cases where the feature we consider is itself an aesthetic property, and it remains the same between the two cases. An aspect of an artwork being elegant would contribute to the artistic value of a ballet, and detract from the artistic value of a hyperpop song. Garishness is an artistic merit in drag-inspired fashion, but an artistic flaw in a 1930's couture gown.

Now, if Walton's argument in *Categories of Art* is correct, it is possible for a change in genre membership to affect the first stage of our evaluative reasoning, by changing the aesthetic properties of a feature of an artwork. However, genre membership cannot affect the second stage of our evaluative reasoning. As I argued in Chapter 2 §3.2, one might think that the norms associated with genres allow genre membership to affect whether the properties of artworks constitute artistic merits or defects in context, in the following way: genre norms dictate which properties make artworks within their genre artistically valuable, and which don't. An artwork is subject to the norms of a genre if it is a member of that genre. Thus, genre membership influences whether properties of artworks count as artistic merits or artistic defects. However, I have argued that genre norms do not function like this: they do not determine what makes artworks within their genre artistically valuable. So, if I am right, genre membership cannot affect whether an artwork's properties constitute artistic merits or artistic defects.

Therefore, in cases of Evaluation Variance where the first stage of our evaluative reasoning is unaffected, genre membership does not affect reasons about the nature of the artwork and how it realises artistic values. Hence, it does not affect the kind of reasons which we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value. In these cases, the first stage in such reasoning seems unaffected. Genre membership in itself is unable to affect the second stage. So, in some cases of Evaluation Variance, genre membership does not affect such reasons at all.

So, if premise 2 is true, and the Nominalist Explanation is correct, then some cases of Evaluation Variance are counter-examples to our intuitive view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value.

3. The implications of the Justification Argument

So, if the Nominalist Explanation is correct, and it entails that some Evaluation Variance cases are counterexamples to our intuitive view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value, what follows? How can genre membership as such meaningfully explain cases of Evaluation Variance if it does not do so by justifying our judgements in the intuitive way?

In §1, I argued that the alternative to our intuitive view about justification is that our judgements of artistic value are determined, at least in part, by our responses to artworks, rather than by the nature of artworks themselves. The justification required by judgements of artistic value in this case depends on the extent to which our judgements of artistic value are determined by our responses rather than by the nature of artworks themselves, and on whether they are determined only by our individual responses or by how people tend to respond.

For example, if the artistic value of an artwork depends only on my personal response, no justification is required for my judgements of artistic value, as long as I report my responses honestly. On this picture, to say that the Nominalist Explanation of Evaluation Variance is correct is to say that genre membership as such, rather than genre-typical features, causes us to individually reach the same judgements in cases of Evaluation Variance, even though genre membership does not justify such judgements. This isn't because the judgement is incorrect, but because our judgements of artistic value don't require any justification as long as they sincerely report our responses to artworks. So, to claim that the Nominalist Explanation is correct, on this view of justification, is to claim that genre membership causes most people to individually respond with positive evaluation to certain features of artworks, and with negative evaluation to the other features. What those features are like is of no importance, because on this view, our responses to artworks, rather than their nature, determine their artistic value.

An alternative picture consistent with the conclusion of the Justification Argument is that our reasons for positively or negatively evaluating artworks are dependent for their validity on being considered as such by people in general, or a particular group of people: perhaps those with relevant expertise, or people in my community. On this view, an individual's judgement of artistic value is justified when, and because, it takes the same things as the group to be reasons for and against positively evaluating artworks. Thus, the artistic value of an artwork depends on group responses to whether its features constitute artistic merits or flaws. If this is the case, to say that the Nominalist Explanation of Evaluation Variance is correct is to say that people – people in general, or people with relevant expertise, or people in my community – think that genre membership, rather than genre-typical features, affects whether certain features of artworks are artistically valuable or not. This is what justifies my judgement when I accord with them.

If the conclusion of the Justification Argument is correct, then the Nominalist Explanation will have to appeal to a view of the justification of judgements of artistic value similar to those I have sketched above to explain the tough cases of Evaluation Variance. However, this is compatible with thinking that, in the cases of Evaluation Variance where genre membership influences which aesthetic properties features have, our judgements of artistic value are justified by reasons concerning the nature of artworks and how they realise artistic values. It is possible to hold that in some cases, artistic value is determined by our responses to artworks, and in others, it is determined by the nature of artworks themselves.

Nonetheless, these options all involve abandoning the intuitive and highly plausible view that judgements of artistic value always require justification by reasons referring to the nature of artworks themselves and how they realise artistic values. Just because the conclusion of the Justification Argument is possible does not mean that it is likely. In the light of my arguments for the Realist Explanation and against the Nominalist Explanation in Chapter 2, surely it is far more likely that the Nominalist Explanation is false than that the picture it entails about justification and evaluation is true.

This completes my argument against the Nominalist Explanation on the grounds that it entails unacceptably implausible conclusions about the justification required by judgements of artistic value. I will now consider two counter-arguments.

4. Against premise 1: confusion with aesthetic properties

In this section, I will consider an objection against the first premise of the Justification Argument. The objection claims that our judgements in Evaluation Variance cases are not correct, arguing that we are confusing features' bearing aesthetic properties like rightness and out-of-place-ness with their actually contributing to or detracting from the artistic value of the artworks in which they appear. I will respond that this cannot explain all cases of Evaluation Variance.

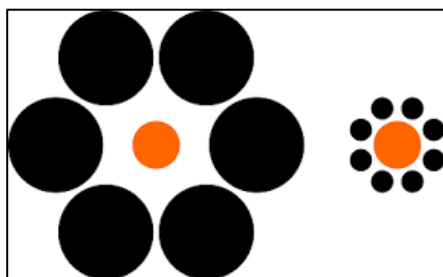


Fig. 4: optical illusion

I justified my claim in premise 1 of the Justification Argument, that our judgements in Evaluation Variance cases are correct, by appealing to the variety and persuasiveness of the examples of Evaluation Variance. However, it is possible that we are collectively wrong. We could be undergoing something analogous to an

optical illusion, like when two blobs appear different sizes because of the size of the blobs they are surrounded by. Perhaps the context makes it falsely appear that the value of the features in question differs in different genres. Our insight into our evaluation of artworks isn't perfect – evaluation is the result of a complex combination of conscious and unconscious mental processes. It isn't always clear for any given feature of an artwork whether it is a merit or a flaw, or whether such a question is even appropriate.

Perhaps in cases of Evaluation Variance, rather than detecting a difference between the artistic value of a feature in an artwork of one genre rather than another, we are detecting a difference in the aesthetic properties the feature bears in an artwork of one genre rather than another. Walton argues that which aesthetic properties an artwork bears depends on whether its non-aesthetic properties count as standard, contra-standard or variable relative to the categories to which the artwork belongs.³² Standard features, “[b]ecause of the very fact that [they] do not seem striking or noteworthy, that they are somehow expected or taken for granted, they can contribute...a sense of order, inevitability, stability, correctness” (1970, p.348). On the other hand, “we are likely to find [contra-standard] features shocking, or disconcerting, or startling, or upsetting, just because they are contra-standard for us” (p.352).

What if our judgements in Evaluation Variance confuse a feature contributing to or detracting from the artistic value of the artwork in which it appears with it bearing an aesthetic property like rightness, or out-of-place-ness? For example, when we perceive a feature like a timely perfect cadence in a classical symphony, where it is a standard feature, we interpret it as contributing orderliness or correctness to the work. But perhaps we also mistake it merely communicating correctness for it actually itself *being* correct, and thereby contributing to the artistic value of the artwork in which it occurs. Were we to hear the same perfect cadence in an atonal serial work, where it would be contra-standard, we would interpret it as out-of-

³² See Chapter 1, §2 for a more detailed exegesis of Walton's view.

place, or mistaken. Perhaps we would also mistake it merely communicating a sense of out-of-place-ness for actually *being* mistaken – for detracting from the artistic value of the artwork in which it occurs.

If this objection succeeds, then the Nominalist Explanation does not entail that some cases of Evaluation Variance are counter-examples to our intuitive view of the justification required by judgements of artistic value. Judgements in Evaluation Variance only challenge the intuitive view of justification if, despite not being justified by reasons concerning the nature of artworks and how they realise artistic values, they are correct. So if they are mistaken, there is no challenge.

However, not all cases of Evaluation Variance can be explained in this way – particularly, not some of the cases on which the Justification Argument turns. As I argued in Chapter 1 §2, in Evaluation Variance, a feature which is standard with respect to the genre in which it seems good, and contra-standard with respect to the genre in which it seems bad, need not communicate aesthetic properties like correctness and stability in the artwork where it is good, and aesthetic properties like shockingness or out-of-place-ness in the artwork where it is bad. Almost the reverse can be true - a feature can communicate aesthetic properties, in the artwork where it is good, closer to shockingness than to correctness. In cases like this, we can't be confusing a feature's actually being correct with merely communicating correctness, or confusing a feature's actually being mistaken with merely communicating out-of-place-ness, because the feature in question does not communicate such an aesthetic property.

In Chapter 1, I gave the example of expressive chiaroscuro lighting: a standard feature of film noir which contributes to artistic value by making the films dramatic and unsettling. Another example is the scribbly, rough outlines of the feathers in Quentin Blake's bird, which would be a flaw in a naturalist depiction of a bird like those by Audubon, but seem good in Blake's children's illustration. Such lines are standard features of cartoonish children's illustrations by Blake and other illustrators in similar sketchy and cartoonish styles, such as in Searle's illustrations of cats. However, they do not communicate aesthetic properties like a sense of correctness, stability, or order – rather, they contribute a chaotic vitality.

Moreover, the Justification Argument picks out particular cases of Evaluation Variance which, on the Nominalist Explanation, present counter-examples to our intuitive view about justification. These are cases which cannot be explained by something affecting the first stage

of our consideration of the reasons which justify judgements of artistic value on the intuitive view. Since genre membership cannot affect the second stage of our consideration of such reasons, our judgements in these cases are not, according to the Nominalist Explanation, justified by the kind of reasons which we intuitively think are required.

I argue that there are examples of such cases of Evaluation Variance which cannot involve confusion with aesthetic properties. One of my examples was *The Hangover* – in stoner comedies, grossness is an artistic merit, because it contributes to the humour. However, in a film like Terence Malick's *The Tree of Life*, it would be a flaw, because it would disrupt the reflective, dreamy aesthetic. Gross-out jokes are standard features of stoner comedies – a central joke in *The Big Lebowski* is that some thugs wee on a rug belonging to the film's main character, The Dude, when they trash his house after mistaking it for one belonging to a millionaire with the same name. The film frequently returns to the joke, and as such it makes an important contribution to the artistic value of the film. However, the grossness of this joke does not contribute aesthetic properties like a sense of correctness or stability to the film – rather, they contribute to its chaotic sense of humour.

Therefore, the cases of Evaluation Variance which are central to the claim in the Justification Argument that the Nominalist Explanation entails the falsity of our intuitive view about justification cannot be mistakes of the kind this objection alleges. Perhaps some cases of Evaluation Variance do confuse a feature contributing to or detracting from artistic value with its bearing certain aesthetic properties. Nonetheless, this cannot be true of those cases which the Justification Argument alleges are counter-examples to the intuitive view of justification.

5. Particularists about reasons in artistic value judgements

In this section, I will consider what might look like a promising counterargument to the Justification Argument from aesthetic particularists, and particularists about reasons more generally. This is that particularists cannot accept the Justification Argument because it assumes a conception of aesthetic reasons which particularists deny. I will argue that this objection misunderstands the particularist's claim.

Particularists about reasons argue that reasons depend on the context in which they appear: that the same feature can be a reason pulling one way in one context; and in another, be no

reason at all, or a reason pulling the opposite way. Particularism is opposed to generalism about reasons, which holds that the same thing is the same kind of reason in any case.

The core of particularism is its insistence on variability. Essentially the generalist demands sameness in the way in which one and the same consideration functions case by case, while the particularist sees no need for any such thing. A feature can make one moral difference in one case, and a different difference in another. Features have, as we might put it, *variable relevance*. Whether a feature is relevant or not in a new case, and if so what exact role it is playing there (the ‘form’ that its relevance takes there) will be sensitive to other features of the case. This claim emerges as the consequence of the core particularist doctrine, which we can call the holism of reasons. This is the doctrine that what is a reason in one case may be no reason at all in another, or even a reason on the other side.³³ (Dancy, 2017)

There is a similar debate between aesthetic particularists and generalists concerning whether our aesthetic judgements employ general principles or not. Aesthetic generalists note that we “often appeal to descriptive features of works in support of our judgments of their value, and...this may make it seem as if we must be appealing to principles in making those judgments. If in support of a favorable judgment of some painting a critic appeals to the wavelike contour formed by the figures clustered in its foreground, it may seem as if his judgment must involve tacit appeal to the principle that any painting having such a contour is so much the better” (Shelley, 2020).

Aesthetic particularists, such as Isenberg (1949), argue that despite appearances, this cannot be right, because no such principle is generally accepted: “There is not in all the world’s criticism a single purely descriptive statement concerning which one is prepared to say beforehand, ‘If it is true, I shall like that work so much the better’” (Isenberg, 1949, p.338). Particularists say that one and the same consideration, like making the audience laugh, a scribbly line or an emotionally extreme character, need not function in the same way case by case. They can make a positive contribution to artistic value in one case, and detract from it in another.^{34,35}

³³ This summary of the particularist view discusses moral reasons, but “[p]articularists suppose that this doctrine is true for reasons in general” (Dancy, 2017), including reasons for judgements of artistic value.

³⁴ So far, I have described Evaluation Variance in terms of a change in *artistic* value, not *aesthetic* value. The debate between generalists and particularists focuses on aesthetic value, so here I’m shifting the terminology so as to accurately reflect the debate in the literature. Given that the core cases of Evaluation Variance which I discuss are cases where the changes in overall artistic evaluation are plausibly down to a change in aesthetic value, this doesn’t make any difference to my argument.

³⁵ Other more recent defences of aesthetic particularism include Frank Sibley’s “Aesthetic Concepts” (in Sibley 2001) and Mary Mothersill’s *Beauty Restored* (1984). Sibley’s view is more complex than Isenberg’s, in that he holds a version of generalism about some properties which can serve as reasons for aesthetic judgements: those which are not value-neutral or merely descriptive, such as grace (see “General Reasons and Criteria in Aesthetics” in Sibley, 2001). “Sibley’s particularism and generalism... both have to do with judgments falling

The Justification Argument proceeds on the basis that the fact that features in Evaluation Variance make one aesthetic difference in one case, and a different difference in another, is something which demands explanation. In one case, the feature we are judging constitutes a reason to value the artwork in which it appears, and in the other, it constitutes a reason not to. The argument holds that since, in some cases of Evaluation Variance, genre membership cannot provide the kind of justification for the change which we intuitively think judgements of artistic value require, this view of justification must be wrong. Would a particularist not consider it a mistake to think that this change in what reason the feature constitutes in the different contexts is something that requires explanation? Surely this is assuming that, all else being equal, the same feature should make the same difference to the artistic value of the artwork in which it appears. Without an argument for generalism about reasons, is that assumption warranted?

The thought is that for the particularist, there's no grounds for expectation that the features would have functioned in the same way as artistic reasons in the first place. So, if in some cases of Evaluation Variance, genre membership is unable to influence the kind of reasons we intuitively think should justify artistic value judgements, as premise 3 of the Justification Argument claims, there's no cause for revising our view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value. We needn't assume that the change in evaluation in such cases is not accounted for by a change of reasons of the right kind. The features we are evaluating might just make one artistic difference in one artwork, and a different artistic difference in another: presenting us with reasons to value them and the artwork in which they appear in one case, and not in another.

However, I argue that this suggestion misunderstands the particularist's view: rather than leading us to reject the claim that the Nominalist Explanation entails the falsity of the intuitive view of justification, it should lead us to support the Realist Explanation.

in between descriptions and verdicts. With respect to a distinction between descriptions and a set of judgments intermediate between descriptions and verdicts, Sibley is straightforwardly particularist. With respect to a distinction between a set of judgments intermediate between descriptions and verdicts and verdicts, Sibley is a kind of generalist and describes himself as such" (Shelley, 2020).

The Nominalist Explanation claims that the aspect of genre which explains our changing judgement in Evaluation Variance cases is genre membership as such, rather than the presence of different genre-typical features in the two artworks in which the feature appears. Thus, it claims that the only change of circumstance in Evaluation Variance cases relevant to understanding the change in how the feature we are evaluating functions is the change in genre membership. So, if the particularist accepts the Nominalist Explanation, then they cannot appeal to any differences in context other than the change in genre membership to explain the change in the difference made to artistic value by the feature we are evaluating. Thus, if they are to claim that the feature we are evaluating might make one artistic difference in one artwork and a different artistic difference in another, without any influence from the change in genre membership, they must hold that it is possible for reasons to randomly mutate: for the same consideration in the same circumstances to function one way and then randomly change.

However, the particularist does not hold that reasons randomly mutate. They merely deny that there are any reasons invariant to circumstance – reasons which are always reasons for the same thing in every case.

For example, consider the following case supposed to motivate particularism:

...suppose that it currently seems to me that something before me is red. Normally, one might say, that is a reason...for me to believe that there is something red before me. But in a case where I also believe that I have recently taken a drug that makes blue things look red and red things look blue, the appearance of a red-looking thing before me is reason for me to believe that there is a blue, not a red, thing before me. It is not as if it is some reason for me to believe that there is something red before me, but that as such a reason it is overwhelmed by contrary reasons. It is no longer any reason at all to believe that there is something red before me; indeed it is a reason for believing the opposite. (Dancy, 2017)

The particularist is not claiming that, with no change in circumstances, the fact that it currently seems to me that something before me is red can suddenly cease to be a reason to believe that there is something red before me. They are claiming that given a suitable change, like a change in what I believe the impression of redness to indicate, this fact is no longer a reason to believe there is something red before me.

The same goes for aesthetic particularists: they are not committed to thinking that reasons to value artworks can suddenly, without any change in context, cease to be reasons to value an

artwork. Recall Isenberg's statement that "There is not in all the world's criticism a single purely descriptive statement concerning which one is prepared to say beforehand, 'If it is true, I shall like that work so much the better' (Isenberg, 1949, p.338)". Isenberg is saying that the difference some element of an artwork makes depends on the context – hence we are not willing to say in the abstract, before considering the work ourselves, that some feature is generally a reason to value an artwork.

So, the particularist's reaction to cases of Evaluation Variance isn't that there's nothing to be explained here, because it is normal for reasons to randomly change valence with no change in circumstances. It is that, given changes in the circumstances in which a certain feature appears, we should expect a change in the way the feature functions as a reason to artistically value the artwork in which it appears. So they are as interested as anyone else in understanding how the differences between the two cases explain the difference in how the common feature functions as a reason to value the artwork in which it appears. Thus, if it turns out that genre-membership does not influence the way that the feature functions as a reason in judgements of artistic value, they would endorse the conclusion that, as long as our judgements in Evaluation Variance cases are correct, and absent another explanation, judgements of artistic value cannot require the kind of justification that we had supposed.

However, the particularist is more likely to think that the Realist Explanation is true than that the Nominalist Explanation is true and our intuitive view about how artistic value judgements are justified is false. The Nominalist Explanation claims that the difference between the genre-typical features in the two artworks in which the feature we are evaluating appears has nothing to do with how the feature functions artistically. A particularist would not accept this: this is the exact kind of change in circumstance to which they argue that the way features of a situation function as reasons is sensitive. Thus, they would support the Realist Explanation and attribute the change in the function of the feature to a change in genre-typical features. Indeed, they are likely to want to go further than the Realist Explanation, and claim that not only the genre-typical features of the different artworks, but also features of these artworks unrelated to their genre affect how the feature we are evaluating functions.

Therefore, this attempt to deflate the Justification Argument from a particularist perspective fails, because the Justification Argument does not contain a hidden assumption of generalism

about reasons. Rather, the particularist's view suggests further reason to favour the Realist Explanation over the Nominalist Explanation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that we should reject the Nominalist Explanation of Evaluation Variance, because it entails the falsity of a highly plausible view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value. This is the view that our judgements of artistic value should be justified by reasons which refer to features of the artworks we are judging, which explain how they realise artistic values.

I have presented this allegation in the Justification Argument. The key claim of this argument, in premise 3, is that in some cases of Evaluation Variance, genre membership doesn't affect the kind of reasons which we intuitively think should justify judgements of artistic value. Therefore, if the Nominalist Explanation of Evaluation Variance is right, as premise 2 stipulates, and genre membership explains the change in our judgement in these cases, they do not have the kind of justification which we intuitively think such judgements require. Nonetheless, our judgements in these cases seem correct, as premise 1 holds. Thus, some cases of Evaluation Variance are counter-examples to an intuitive and plausible view about the justification required by artistic value, if the Nominalist Explanation is correct.

My argument for premise 3 draws on some claims I defended in my argument against the Nominalist Explanation in Chapter 2 §3. There, I argued that there are two stages of evaluation – here, I specify that it is more accurate to say that there are two stages to our consideration of the kind of reasons on which our evaluations of artistic value are based, according to the intuitive view of justification. In Chapter 2, I argued that there are some cases of Evaluation Variance in which nothing seems to affect the first stage of this reasoning. Additionally, I argued that genre membership as such cannot affect the second stage, because the genre norms to which it would have to appeal to do so are not relevant to our judgements of artistic value.

Therefore, in cases of Evaluation Variance where the first stage of reasoning is unaffected, genre membership does not affect reasons about the nature of the artwork and how it realises artistic values, because it cannot affect the second stage of such reasoning. Hence, in these

cases, genre membership does not affect the kind of reasons which we intuitively think should justify artistic value judgements.

I have considered two counter-arguments to the claim that the Nominalist View entails the falsity of the intuitive view of the justification required by judgements of artistic value, arguing that neither succeeds. The first challenges premise 1 of the Justification Argument, arguing that our judgements in Evaluation Variance are incorrect because they confuse features of an artwork possessing aesthetic properties like rightness or out-of-place-ness with those features either contributing to or detracting from artistic value. I have argued that this diagnosis does not apply to at least one of the cases which the Justification Argument claims is a counter-example to our intuitive view of justification.

The second counter-argument holds that particularists about reasons cannot accept that the Nominalist Explanation entails the falsity of the intuitive view about the justification required by judgements of artistic value, because it entails a conception of reasons which they deny. I have argued that this misunderstands the particularist view – once we assume that the Nominalist Explanation is correct, the Justification Argument does not rely on an assumption about reasons inconsistent with their view. However, I argue that their view would make them far more likely to accept the Realist Explanation than the Nominalist Explanation. Thus, this counter-argument merely lends more support to my overall argument for the Realist Explanation, and against the Nominalist Explanation.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that genre's influence on artistic value is mainly attributable to the typical features of genres, rather than the positioning of artworks within our cultural nexus of genres. Different features of artworks can combine in ways which either enhance or frustrate their realisation of aesthetic values. The influence of genre on artistic value is mainly to be understood in terms of such relationships between the typical features of genres and features of artworks unrelated to their genres.

I have demonstrated that the Realist Explanation, which appeals to genre-typical features, explains the various ways in which genre influences our evaluations of artistic value, with two exceptions. Firstly, to account for the contribution of the meanings which artworks have in virtue of rebelling against genre norms, we must appeal to the Nominalist Explanation. Secondly, the Nominalist Explanation has a role to play in some cases of Evaluation Variance, where our evaluation of a feature which appears in multiple artwork changes based on the genre of the artwork in which it appears. These are the cases where the aesthetic properties of the feature we are judging change, based on the genre membership of the artwork in which they appear. This is an example of the phenomenon which Walton explains in *Categories of Art*. However, whether these different aesthetic properties constitute artistic merits or flaws depends on how they relate to the genre-typical features of the artworks in which the feature appears.

I have argued that we should reject Nominalist Explanation as a general account of Evaluation Variance for two reasons. Firstly, to explain a wide range of cases, the Nominalist Explanation would have to appeal to a conception of genre norms as artistic norms which I have argued is mistaken: genre norms set conditions for membership in a genre, not for realising artistic value within it. Secondly, if the Nominalist Explanation does account for all cases of Evaluation Variance, then some cases will be counterexamples to a highly plausible view of the justification required by judgements of artistic value. I argue that it is more likely that the Nominalist Explanation does not account for all cases of Evaluation Variance than that this view of the justification required by judgements of artistic value is false.

I have shown that genre membership can only affect the first of the two stages of evaluation which I distinguish in Chapter 2.³⁶ In the first stage, we establish which aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties an artwork has – we establish how we should interpret it. In the second stage, we consider whether the artwork's properties constitute artistic merits or defects in context. The two explanatory roles which I argue the Nominalist Explanation plays both come in the first stage: in the first case, genre membership affects an artwork's aesthetic properties, and the latter case, it affects its aesthetic properties.

I argued that if the Nominalist Explanation of Evaluation Variance is true, two implications follow. The first is that we require more contextualist knowledge to correctly evaluate artworks than if the Realist Explanation is true. The second is that we must abandon our intuitive view that judgements of artistic value must be justified in terms of the nature of artworks and how they realise artistic values. The explanatory role played by the Nominalist Explanation is enough to secure the first implication. However, it is not enough to secure the second.

I argued that, if the Nominalist Explanation accounted for all cases of Evaluation Variance, we would require a particular kind of contextualist knowledge: knowledge of genre norms and their dictates about what features constitute artistic merits or flaws within the genre. However, I have since argued that artistic norms do not function like this. Moreover, whilst the Nominalist Explanation helps us understand some cases of Evaluation Variance, it does not do so by appealing to contextualist knowledge about genre norms. Hence, the explanatory role played by the Nominalist Explanation in cases of Evaluation Variance does not entail that we need any more contextualist knowledge for evaluating artworks than what we require for correctly establishing their aesthetic properties, according to Walton in *Categories of Art*.

Nevertheless, since the Nominalist Explanation explains part of why rebelling against genre norms can be artistically valuable, we require more contextualist knowledge than if the Realist Explanation fully accounted for genre's influence on evaluation. The contextualist

³⁶ In Chapter 3, I argued that it is more accurate to say that there are two stages in our evaluative reasoning about the nature of artworks, and how they realise artistic values, because claiming that there are two stages in our evaluation assumes that evaluations of artistic value consist in, and are exhausted by, consideration of reasons about the nature of artworks and how they realise artistic values. However, I think that we *should* assume this: it is partly on these grounds that I think we should reject the Nominalist Explanation of genre's influence on evaluation. Hence, I will revert in the conclusion to my claim that there are two stages in our evaluation of the artistic value of artworks.

knowledge we need is knowledge of our cultural system of genres and stances associated with them: things like the societal values they espouse, or the views associated with them about what makes artworks valuable. For example, to appreciate the value of rebellion against English pastoral in *Albert Herring*, we need to know that conservative societal norms are associated with the genre.

The role which I argue the Nominalist Explanation plays in accounting for genre's influence on artistic value does not entail the falsity of our intuitive view of the justification which judgements of artistic value require. I argued that if the Nominalist Explanation explained certain cases of Evaluation Variance, these cases would constitute counterexamples to our intuitive view of justification. However, these cases are ones which cannot be explained in terms of interference at the first stage of evaluation which I distinguish. I argue that the Nominalist Explanation has no role to play in explaining such cases – it helps us understand only cases where genre membership has affected the first stage of evaluation. Therefore, the explanatory role of the Nominalist Explanation in accounting for Evaluation Variance is perfectly compatible with our intuitive view: that artistic value judgements require justification in terms of reasons which refer to the nature of artworks, and how they realise artistic values.

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