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What we talk about when we talk about texts: Identity compressions and the ontology of the "work"

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Abstract: The ideal of an "authoritative text" is no longer a taken-for-granted assumption among editorial and critical theorists of the literary text. Rather, texts are, and should be thought of as, composites of distributed activities of multiple social agents. This view has many virtues, but it quickly runs up against the deeply entrenched gestaltism of the "underlying work" stance, a perspective that invades some of the most commonplace ways of talking about Anglo-American literary texts. We explain the fundamental tensions that arise from this stance and offer a general ontology of literary artifacts that can account for the ways we habitually conceptualize texts and their effects. We provide a basic cognitive framework for understanding the ontology of the document, in its most generalized form, which can embrace a wide range of practices, literary and otherwise, that have significant implications for understanding editorial, authorial, and readerly behavior.

Keywords: social texts, document acts, cognitive compressions, Marianne Moore, Raymond Carver

1 What is a book?: A practical dilemma

From the 1960s onward, a general theme of critical theories has been that there is no text "itself," separate from practices of interpretation and dissemination, the physical accidents of form, and the apparatus of notes, variations, indices, and so on. Following Don McKenzie's lead, Jerome McGann (1983, 2001, 2006) has argued forcefully and persuasively for a new paradigm of text editing that departs from the traditional divisions of European genetic and Anglo-American eclectic methods, both of which aim to produce an "authoritative" final text.

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McGann's social-text alternative starts with the proposition that texts in general and literary texts in particular are first-and-foremost "social objects," whose stability resides not so much in the final intentions but in their formation and reformations that result from the distributed nature of the creation and reception. In short, a text is not simply a self-identical object but a history of its creation by many agents and agencies as well as the "user logs" of its readers. A text is not a "thing" but a "process," and social text editing seeks to build artifacts for users to jointly attend to it as part of past, present, and future uses thereof. McCann himself has invested heavily in digital technologies that have provided a proof of concept that the social-text approach be achieved in the creation of digital archives (2001, 2006).

Consider now the literary text from the perspective of the author producing a "new" version of the same poem or story. For example, the American poet Marianne Moore famously revised and re-revised her own work well after it first appeared in print. The most extensive and striking manifestation of this habit can be found in the many variations published under the title "Poetry" over sixty-three years and many dozens of printings. In a review complaining of these choices, critic Hugh Kenner referred to the five-stanza poem that was reprinted in the endnotes of Moore's *Collected Poems* as "the one scarred by all those revisions" (1967: 1432). From a social-text perspective, Kenner's statement would be a category error based on a faulty conceptualization of the fundamental nature of texts. And indeed, the very poem that Kenner complains has been "scarred" – that is, damaged in some real and irreversible way – can be found intact in those endnotes, not to mention the earlier printings that remain physically accessible on many bookshelves. But despite the counter-persuasions of the McKenzie-McGann hypothesis and the material facts of the case, there exists a deeply entrenched gestaltism that seems to dispose at least many of us overwhelmingly to cognize texts in this way: as underlying self-identical single objects that may change over time, newer versions supplanting older ones as the current manifestation of a persisting individual entity.

That tendency is even more clearly illustrated in the case of another twentieth-century American author, Raymond Carver. The Carver style is immediately recognizable and widely imitated. Yet Carver himself was very unhappy about the form in which his stories appeared in the first book to bring him major acclaim, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981). He viewed the published stories, which had been heavily edited and in some cases substantially rewritten by the book's editor, Gordon Lish, as a betrayal (Max 1998). There had long been rumors that something of the sort was going on, that Lish "had changed some of the stories so much that they were more his than

Carver's" (Max 1998). The facts of the matter came to public light in 1998, ten years after Carver's death, when D. T. Max wrote a feature story for the *New York Times Magazine* detailing the record of these edits in the manuscripts and correspondence collected in the archive of Lish's papers at Indiana University. Eleven years later, Carver's widow and literary executor, Tess Gallagher, published the original manuscript collection under the title *Beginners* (2010). The editors of the new Library of America edition of his *Collected Stories* have included both *Beginners* and the 1981 text. These publications provided the occasion for many reviewers to weigh in on the Lish/Carver relationship and the editorial history of the stories.

The critical response to *Beginners* varied, but one recurring characterization of Lish's editorial activities pervades both positive and negative reviews:

- Giles Harvey, in the *New York Review of Books* (2010): "Lish sensed a leaner, quieter, more agile book trapped inside the manuscript and he hacked away briskly until he was satisfied he'd found it"
- Blake Morrison, writing in the *Guardian* (2009), complains that "in slashing away 78 % of the text [Lish] mangled rather than improved it."
- In the *New York Times*, Stephen King (2009) wrote: "In many cases, the man who didn't allow editors to change his own work gutted Carver's."
- The poet Craig Raine (2009) had a higher opinion of Lish's interventions, saying for instance of the 1981 "So Much Water So Close to Home": "It is improved *beyond recognition*" (italics his).

What unites these reviews is that all of them take the stance that there is a single "text" or "work" and construe it as a unique, concrete, enduring object: these revisions are truly alterations that fundamentally change that object in apparently irreversible ways. A fundamental tension exists between how we are to properly approach texts as social-historical objects and how we tend to cognize them in most practical domains of everyday life. It is this foundational tension between a reader's sense of the self-identity of a literary work, on the one hand, and the multiple, often textually variant, witnesses by which we can encounter the "work," on the other, that we explore in these pages. We offer an ontology of texts that reflects and respects this dynamic, and ground our proposal in a close, cognitivist reading of the manifestations of this dynamic as they emerge in the language readers use to talk about these texts.

To begin, then, what might account for this tension? The cognitive scientists Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002) have claimed that our understanding of the world is crucially structured in terms of several "vital relations" and that various "compressions" over these relations are central for higher-order cognition. This paper takes up a particular type of conceptual compression that can

be particularly difficult for people to unpack for any length of time, and which we argue underlies the social meaning of texts: one in which differences between analogous separate entities are conceptualized as change in a unique individual. This compression, we argue, serves as a basis for a coherent and cognitively realistic theory of literary artifacts.

Such an exploration is vitally important for the following reasons:

- A theory of textuality needs to be cognitively realistic with respect to the habitual ways human beings tend to conceptualize and interact with artifacts in general and textual artifacts in particular;
- The entrenched forms of talk about texts need to be factored into a general account of the literary artifact;
- Eventually, designers of digital literary archives may, in fact, be able to exploit these entrenched habits of mind and forms of thought to advance their critical and pedagogical goals.

In these pages, we address the first two reasons, focusing first of the general cognitive processes as the basis for a theory of literary artifacts. To get to the heart of the practical and theoretical difficulty of thinking about texts as social processes, we will present a close reading of some grammatical phenomena, and examine their deployment in literary criticism and elsewhere, though the examination of expressions involving proper names, degree achievement verbs (e. g., *shrink* versus *get smaller*) and result-state predicates (e. g., *restored, scarred*, or *intact*), each of which provides evidence of the deeply entrenched manner of thinking that influences how we talk when we talk about texts.

2 "Subtleties of sameness" and the virtual object of attention

As a matter of professional interest, both librarians and legislatures care very much about how to codify when revisions to a document do and do not constitute the creation of a "new" text. It is often in legislators' interest, for example, to introduce new mandates as clauses to already drafted bills in progress, both to avoid the time and labor of shepherding a new bill through the legislative process and for more politically strategic reasons: to put opponents in the position of having to vote against a popular proposal, or one with a popular name; to yoke unwanted requirements to desirable funding; in hopes of avoiding public debate over the details of the mandate in question; or to take advantage of procedural oddities in other ways.

In literature, of course, there is no parliamentary procedure to control the revision process, although there are certainly rules and laws codifying aspects of our treatment of the products of that process. In writing of the "subtleties of sameness" at issue in these and many other cases, we have borrowed and adapted a phrase from the computer scientist Robert French and his 1995 monograph *The Subtlety of Sameness*. French was writing about the challenges involved in designing AI systems that could model aspects of human analogy making and what Hofstadter (1979) called "slippage": the slipperiness and flexibility of reference and identity in conceptualization, the way that closely related concepts can discreetly take one another's place as we talk and think, our "context-dependent tolerance of conceptual mismatch" (Hofstadter et al. 1995: 201).

This paper takes up a particular slippery stance of "sameness" that is challenging, though certainly not impossible, for people to unpack for any length of time: the construal of documents – and, similarly, various other reproducible semiotic artifacts, such as films, photographs, or audio recordings – as expressions of a singular work that may or may not change over time.

The bibliographer and textual theorist Jerome McGann wrote in 2002 of an "upheaval in textual studies that has been going on for almost 40 years and has been at white heat for 20" (McGann 2002: 7). The upheaval in question put on equal footing with "genetic editions" aiming to present, for instance, "the variety and vitality" Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "mind at work" (McGann 2006:11), with editions and corpora aiming to capture the various processes and uses of a text or set of texts, none of which are privileged as a self-identical "thing" but as an attempt to capture both the distributed nature of its "becoming" and its variegated uses. Both approaches, however, terminate in the creation of "reading" and "variorum" texts, but the latter approach does not focus solely on the variation of authorial intention.

Editorial theory within the academy has largely come to favor a "social text" approach, in which authority rests not with a solitary author but in a social process of textual production involving editors, typesetters, proofreaders, censors, anthologists, and others. This approach differs from the former not only in its fundamental conception of the nature of a "text," but also in the final products that it aims to produce.

The social-text approach resists the notion that literature is composed of abstract "works" and their imperfect material "expressions." Literature is instead the extension of a messy array of socially enacted textual productions: not an object but a process involving many different objects and many different participants, including editors, typesetters, proofreaders, censors, anthologists, and others.

The social-text turn in editorial theory thus hopes to "shift our focus away from this idea of the 'final working whole,' the *object* of the book, to the idea of *process* … rather than an artifact" (Cullen 2012: 252).

This approach is philosophically appealing: it captures the distributed nature of authority, material culture, and textual construction. At the same time, the social text approach has to grapple with the irascible thought that texts are self-identical things, that they are of a single authority, that they are self-identical over time, and that a text's "use" is, in fact, an expression of some underlying "work."[1]

Socially and practically, it often seems to be easier and more natural – and more compelling – to adopt the stance that texts not only exist but are ontologically basic. It is under this stance, for instance, that all the students in a course can read the "same" poem, that we can "correct" the proofs of our article, that an author can sell the rights to publish "her novel" in translation. For the purposes of the present analysis, we will call this construal the *underlying work stance*. As suggested above, the stance itself reflects how human minds generally work.

Even when readers do focus on the editorial process, we often do so primarily from this stance. Many readers are aware of and even acutely interested in the editorial history of a text – but at the same time, to take these events as the "history" of a "work" is also ultimately to take the underlying work stance. The examples cited above indicate a need for an explicit ontology of texts as artifacts.

A basic outline of this ontology is as follows.

Texts, broadly construed, can be understood and interpreted according to three distinct but interrelated strata.[2]

The first stratum is the constituent grammatical/sentential elements comprising a given whole at any given time. At this stratum, the whole is viewed as a set of constituent parts. The text is seamed and considered as a collection of discrete expressions. The second stratum is that of an artifact, a seamless whole at a given time, which is intentionally produced or "realized" by an agent or (more accurately) multiple agents, but whose significance is discernable as properly a function of all the constituent sentences taken together and self-

1 The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, for example, makes use of these categories in its *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* (1998: 16–18, italics in original): "A work is an abstract entity … Relating *expressions* of a *work* indirectly by relating each *expression* to the *work* that it realizes is often the most efficient means of grouping related expressions."

2 Ingarden (1973: 29–33) famously divided the literary work into five heterogeneous strata. Ingarden's five strata account comports most completely with the constructional stratum in our model.

enduring through time. The third stratum is the social system or systems of documents of which the item in question is taken to be a kind of text: in the case of "Poetry," a poem; in the case of *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, a collection of short stories.

Editors and editorial theorists of literary works are constantly switching across and among these strata, and their theoretical orientations change with their perspectives, particularly as it pertains to the second stratum. The genetic/facsimile editorial tradition, for instance, compresses all authorial agency into one person, the author, meaning that her or his intentions comprise what we would call the sole basis for this specifically dependent realized artifact (the work), with everything else being subordinate and incidental to it. Moore's revisions to "Poetry" count as bona fide instances of one poem because she is the sanctioning authority in the social system in which the poem was produced, published, and disseminated.

The social text tradition, however, conceptualizes the second stratum as a composite of multiple agents and agencies, each of equal worth, turning the artifact itself into a seamed composite, with prismatic effect – different wholes emerge when examined through the lens of the author, compositor, printer, etc. As such, seemingly inconsequential facets of the text's production, such as typeface, can gain significance.

Another way to describe the social text construal is that items ordinarily thought to occupy only the first stratum of constituent parts come to affect the meaning of the intentional whole. These are elements that we have been traditionally treated (since the rise of the author as a legal entity) as matters of generic dependence. Imprints of the same text in Times New Roman and Cambria are standardly taken to be instances of the same intentional object, and thus are generically realizable as the same artifact despite these discrepancies. These are in the social text view treated as *differences that make a difference*, and a variorum text shows the artifact in its disparate modes of production in and over time, much like an exploded Beauchene skull reassembled in disarticulated form, a practice in anatomy cognate with all manner of "exploded" figures and diagrams.[3]

We argue that the final authorial intention position is cognitively intuitive (at least to present-day readers) precisely because it treats the basic artifact stratum as a coherent and singular intentional message that is itself not stratified. It provides readers with an intuitively useful continuously existing object, self-identified through time, that we can all look to in what we take to be

3 As shown at, for example, http://repository.countway.harvard.edu/xmlui/handle/10473/1819?show=full.

harmonized synchrony (even though we may see different facets and have different reactions to it). In fact, seeing the text as one singular, self-identified object that goes through changes over time fits the default ontological mode.

The right to change one's own work is part of the social ontology of modernist poetics – Moore "owns" her poem; creates it; and, hence, enjoys the rights and privileges to change it. Critics like Kenner can state their preference for one text over another, and lament these acts as mutilations, but will not deny the later texts' existence as intended new versions of the original conceit. This compression is real, at least in the sense that any piece of intellectual property is real. This despite the fact that the original version still exists, and exists alongside the others, framed as their progenitor.

Social text theory has the signal virtue of creating additional granular partitions within the artifact stratum itself, an ontological zoom lens that shows how a seemingly individual act is the product of distributed agents in time. The view emerges that there is no coherent intentional object, but a conspiracy to perpetrate the illusion of a single intentional object.

McGann and others wish to make new texts that produce "exploded views" of the different agents and agencies of production, much as Claude Beauchene produced exploded skulls, with the disarticulated bones highlighting the constituent parts of a human head, often to serve pedagogical ends. As valuable as these products are there still is no escaping the reification of the author/poet and work compression.

Aesthetic object compressions are not only cognitively convenient; they are socially real. It is possible, and indeed methodologically desirable at times, not to consider the artifact as a seamless whole. Much is to be learned by doing so, but it is not a perspective that can be maintained for long, and there is no active system of texts (i. e., genres) that operates on the principle that texts are decompressed artifacts.

We can always choose among many different stances with respect to the identity and nature of a book or any other kind of text: We can apprehend it as a singular physical object: is it an object we own, one we borrowed from the library, one of special historical significance, in pristine or delicate condition? We can attend to it as a collection of words and sentences. We can take it as a message from a particular author, as a representation of speech, as a script, as a set of instructions. We can see it as an instance of its genre – a personal letter, a novel, a warning sign, a poem, a collection of poems. We can attend to its significance as a performative social object: something that enacts an apology, say, or a new tax on soft drinks.

In this analysis, we will be taking up the underlying work stance (and alternatives to it) in language. Giving things a name of course both encourages

and reflects thinking of them as one thing, but that is not the only kind of linguistic expression that does so. We will discuss several other constructions that signal deeply entrenched habits of artifactual thinking. The fact is that we very commonly treat texts as self-identified wholes that can be the objects of our joint attention. A social-text approach can only stand alongside the ways that people habitually interact with texts; it cannot replace them.

3 From diffuse to compact: Chunking, packaging, schemas, compressions

Cognitive psychologists, linguists, philosophers, neuroscientists, and sociologists have all taken an interest in the general question of how and when human minds organize diffuse experiences and perceptual inputs into compact, unified, discrete objects of conceptualization. It is a riddle of long standing not only how the apparent unity of conscious experience can arise from the distributed sensory and neural processes that underlie it, but also why those underlying integrations are so difficult to untangle, and whether the unified perceptions or their synthesis from more basic elements should be considered more primary.

As Treisman and Gelade (1980: 97) put it, "Analysis of our experience into more elementary sensations is difficult, and appears subjectively to require an unusual type of perceptual activity" even though "the physiological evidence suggests that the visual scene depends on "specialized populations of receptors that respond selectively to such properties as orientation, color, spatial frequency, or movement, and map these properties in different areas of the brain." This means that visual experience, and cognition in general, proceeds piecemeal and in such a way as the pieces themselves retain their ontological priority.

Causally, there is every reason to believe that our sensorimotor skills are tuned to pick up specific features of a scene, with a definite division of labor existing among the various neural substrates. However, the utility of evolving these skills depends crucially on the whole scene being the proper object of engagement. That is to say, the whole scene is ontologically primitive: "grasping" the "gist" of the scene drives perception and cognition, rather than the converse.

If cognition depends on the irreducible significance of whole scenes/artifacts (and we think it does!), then a theory of textual artifacts must account for how agents conceptualize the significance of these wholes. We give priority

neither to individual neural substrates nor to the atomized causal actors in the chain of textual production, but to the actual experience of visual scene in the case of perception and to the experience of whole texts in cases of literate, aesthetic production.

We call this the *mesoscopic* view, a *human scale* view of world-involving interaction. Everything of causal significance results from this ontologically primitive vantage. We can *drill down* (microscopic) to view the pre-primitives of causation and causality, or we can *gaze up* (macroscopic) to view the productive relationships between these different artifacts.

The principal point to be emphasized here is that the literary artifact is undeniably an effect of causal processes that operate piecemeal along several heterogeneous strata, as suggested by Ingarden (1973), but which can also be extended beyond the machinations of a single author. From this perspective, it is appropriate to regard a text as a collection of individual constructions or of individualized actions of editors, compositors, and so on. Once the compression is achieved and readers experience it as a coherent whole, the artifact takes on a life of its own as an intentional object.

Indeed, the enduring status of "the work" as an enduring ontological category remains in force even among the editors of social texts. After all, a variorum edition of Lord Byron's poetry still has to be recognized as Byronic poetry, just as a Beauchene skull must be recognized as a human or animal skull if it is to perform its proper pedagogical function. This kind of "artifactualization" seems to comprise a necessary condition of texts. If that is so, then textual theories need to account for the ontology of artifacts, and the ontology of artifacts has to account for identity.

4 Occurrents and continuants

The ontology of the underlying work can be broken down into two subcategories, following the core of philosopher Barry Smith's account of "document acts" (2013 [2005]: 4–5). Speech acts – in their canonical, spoken form – are ephemeral, existing only in their executions or in the biological memories of their execution. They are *occurrents*, events occurring in time. Documents, by contrast, are *continuants*, objects enduring self-identically *through time*, and thus, as Smith puts it, "have the capacity to float free from the person or persons who were involved in their creation and to live lives of their own" (2013 [2005]: 4). Continuants are special because, according to John Searle (2010), they manifest "standing declarations." This is most easily illustrated in the case of fiat currency: A $10 note is in effect a promise from the Secretary of the Treasury "to pay the bearer the sum of

$10 printed on the note." The note is good regardless of who occupies the executive office.

The literary work is similarly a continuant. Under this logic, Moore's "Poetry" continues self-identically *through time* as a standing declaration: "This poem is from the desk of Marianne Moore." The poem consists of five stanzas at time *t*; it consists of only one stanza at $t+1$, and of three lines at $t+4$, its final iteration. This compression of identity provides the ontological basis for Hugh Kenner's preference for the earlier occurrent state of this continuant object. In fact, the very basis of his criticism loses all its punch if "Poetry" becomes a series of occurrent events completely severed from one another. In similar vein, a $10 note would cease to function in the same way as fiat currency if its issuance did not allow for fluctuating occurrent values. The franc, for instance, no longer endures as a standing declaration, having been replaced by the euro.

5 Identity compressions and their linguistic expression

The puzzle we see in Marianne Moore's "Poetry" and Raymond Carver's *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* is this: If textual histories are irreducible, and different versions in those histories all persist in the record, where does the experience of loss and change that so strongly characterize the reception and production history of these texts come from? Our diagnosis is that the prevailing understanding of the *literary work* rests on a strongly entrenched construal in which many diffuse actions and artifacts are understood as a unique individual entity that continues through time and undergoes changes. This way of thinking about texts is routine, relatively opaque to self-reflection, and difficult to set aside.

Conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2000, 2002; Fauconnier 2005; Turner 2006) proposes that a relatively small set of partially compositional processes – "blending" – underlie the creative construction of meaning in language and thought. Blending takes place dynamically over partial conceptual structures called mental spaces (Fauconnier 1985, 1997), which people construct as they think and use language. These mental spaces can serve as inputs in conceptual integration networks. Structure is selectively projected from input spaces into new "blended" mental spaces, where these projected elements are integrated, and new structures emerge.

One of the recurrent features of these integration networks is that they frequently involve *compression* of relatively diffuse relationships into something

more tightly linked and compact in the blend. The graphical "desktop" interface of a computer, for instance, involves compressions over space, cause/effect, and change, so that the complex series of events involved in moving a mouse horizontally across a table, or your finger horizontally over a touchpad, and the nearly simultaneous apparent vertical motion of an arrow on the screen are integrated into a single seamless action: moving the cursor.[4]

Quite commonly, variability across a group is "compressed into," or conceptualized as, change in an individual. Everyday language is full of expressions for compressing disanalogy into change in this way. A sentence like *Every year my cell phone gets smaller and my bill gets bigger* presents a conceptual blend in which there are two single things whose size or magnitude changes. We can easily unpack this blend, however, and recognize that we are speaking not of single entities that grow and shrink, but of a situation in which the individual cell phone filling the *role* of "my cell phone" is successively smaller each year, and the amount I am called upon to pay in the successive bills filling the role of "my bill" is larger each time.

This general pattern of compression, illustrated in Figure 1, where analogies are compressed into uniqueness, and cross-space disanalogies in the inputs then become changes to those singular individuals in the blend, structures our thinking about documents at multiple levels. The very notion of "a text" or "a work" depends on it. But not all compressions of this sort are equally unpackable.

Why do we think that the passages we quote at the outset of this paper are symptomatic of our diagnosis, that they represent cases where people feel there

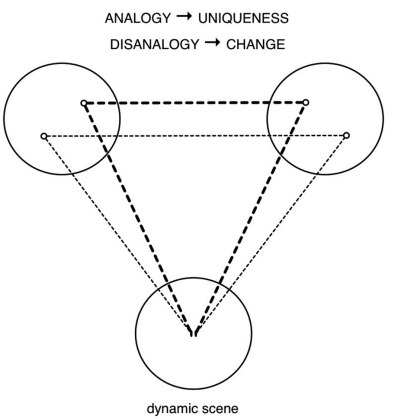

Figure 1: Analogies compressed to uniqueness, disanalogies compressed to change.

4 See Fauconnier (2001) for an extended analysis of this example.

"really is" one text undergoing "real" change? We began with them because we felt it would be intuitively evident that there was something special in need of explanation about these reports. But we would like to do better on this count than simply appealing to shared intuitions.

As it happens, there are grammatical constructions that are generally reserved solely for referring to entities that speakers take to be "really" singular, unique individuals that persist in time. When a particular compression to uniqueness is sufficiently entrenched in culture and experience, that conceptual "packaging" licenses the use of such constructions to express them. Then the use of these constructions can reinforce that packaging. This is exactly what we find in the case of the underlying work stance and the discourse that surrounds the revision history of texts, which we will analyze in detail in the following section.

This compression is, on the one hand, highly constructed and, on the other, extremely natural and – for literate people – ubiquitous. This means that keeping the internal and external complexity of information artifacts in mind involves a conceptual stance that is possible to take, but often difficult or impractical to sustain. This is perhaps why we need to create comprehensive, highly regulated programs of praxis and cultural institutions to perform them.

5.1 Grammatical symptoms of conceptual entrenchment

We now proceed to provide a close reading of *underlying work* characterizations in terms of their deployment of three special categories of linguistic phenomena – proper names; "degree achievement" verbs; and predicates expressing result states – together with an explanation of how these expressions reflect and produce the sense of change and loss we see in the discourse surrounding the editorial history of texts like "Poetry" and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*.

5.1.1 Names, naming, and existential presupposition

Giving something a name is an excellent way of reflecting and enforcing its construal as a unique entity. First of all, to call something by name is to take for granted – to presuppose – that it exists. Gottlob Frege observed in 1892 that "If anything is asserted there is always an obvious presupposition that the simple or compound proper names used have a reference. If one therefore asserts 'Kepler died in misery,' there is a presupposition that the name 'Kepler' designates something" (1952 [1892]: 69).

Indeed, proper names like "Kepler" seem to take even more than existence for granted. Much work in analytic philosophy on names, ordinary descriptions, and identity has for some time been framed around the question of when these statements involve what Saul Kripke (1980) termed "rigid designators." Rigidity is usually defined in terms of possible world semantics: a term designates rigidly when it picks out the same object in every possible world in which it exists (Kripke 1980: 48). Names, in this account, are rigid designators.[5] It might seem, then, as if the construal of the work as a singular entity that persists and undergoes changes in time is fundamentally a matter of naming – and names do play a significant role in this process.

Simply changing a work's name, however, is neither necessary nor sufficient to supplant the original. *Dr. Zhivago* is a novel by Boris Pasternak (1957), a film by David Lean (1965), and a mini-series production of the Campiotti (2002). Each tells "the same" story with the same principal characters, and the three are clearly linked. However, the movie and television series deviate (sometimes significantly) from the novel, yet most consumers have little difficulty using the same name without rigidity and without the sense that disanalogies between the productions constitute a set of changes to some single underlying work. Performed works and adaptions in general exhibit this quality. A new staging of *Measure for Measure* set in 1970s New York, for instance, retains the original title and connection to the underlying work, and may even be referred to as "a new *Measure for Measure*" but with no sense that the play *Measure for Measure* "itself" has undergone a fundamental revision.

Even personal names can be used creatively in constructions that permit role readings, so that they suggest an identity relationship but not necessarily one of uniqueness. We can refer to the coworker who has taken the position previously held by someone named Alison as "the new Alison." We can use character names to refer to different fillers of a (literal) role: "I like this Hamlet better than the last one."

Thus names do not *require* rigid designation. Nonetheless, using a proper name does seem to *encourage* us to treat that name's referent as a unique, distinct, and enduring entity. For instance, Moore's 1951 and 1967 versions of "Poetry" were three times and a third of the length of the version she published in her 1935 *Selected Poems*, making the 1967 "Poetry" a tenth the size of the 1951 "Poetry." Yet, as we've noted, critical appraisals do not tend to treat the versions as distinct poems.

5 Kripke also holds that natural kind terms such as "H2O" and indexicals such as "you" and "this table" are rigid designators.

The long period over which these many printings and revisions appeared is often treated as a period in which Moore's degree of public renown and influence with other poets increased, but her own performance as a poet was in decline (cf. Molesworth 1990; Willis 1990). However, this characterization of her later output relies on assumptions about what kinds of activities constitute "writing" or "doing" poetry. One can easily imagine a world in which Moore gave these different revisions different titles, and critics spoke of Moore's reuse of material and revisiting of themes in several different poems produced over several decades. Relatedly, part of the rationale for giving *Beginners* its own title was to mark the seriousness and magnitude of its difference from the published, Lish-influenced *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. This move facilitates talking about the two texts in relation to one another; it also acknowledges, perhaps, that the former is unlikely to unseat or supplant the latter.

The fact that texts are the sorts of things that get names in our culture both reflects and reinforces the enthralling character of the underlying work stance and the compression to uniqueness that this stance entails. These identity compressions serve the ontological goal of maintaining continuity against the vagaries of occurrences. This, as it turns out, is a grammatico-conceptual theme that extends beyond the use of proper names.

5.1.2 Degree achievements

Sweetser (1997) has observed that there are two closely related classes of constructions in English, both used to express change over time, which differ according to whether they do or do not permit a role reading for their subjects. To see this contrast in action, consider the different interpretations of the subject noun phrases suggested by the paired expressions in (1–4):

(1) a. Your office gets smaller every year.
b. Your office shrinks every year.

(2) a. Each car went slower (than the one before).
b. Each car slowed (down).

(3) a. Your students get better every time I visit.
b. Your students improve every time I visit.

(4) a. The trees get bigger as you walk toward the beach.
b. The trees grow as you walk toward the beach.

These pairs hinge on what Dowty (1979) described as "degree achievements" – verbs that entail some kind of comparative end state: to become more X. In English, a sizable subset of these verbs are derived from the word denoting the property concept state plus the +en suffix (brighten, loosen, shorten), though there are others, such as *grow, shrink, cool, enlarge*, and *fade*, that do not fit this pattern. Of this latter group, there are still many that are otherwise de-adjectival (the adjective *cool* gives us the verb *cool*; the adjective *empty* gives us the verb *empty*; the adjective *large* gives us verb *enlarge*), and all denote some kind of gradual change in a property of an argument. This quality, what Kennedy and Levin (2008) call "the adjectival core" of these verbs, is the reason why they all have multi-word, or "paraphrastic," counterparts like "get larger" or "get cooler," as seen here.

Sweetser's observation is that periphrastic change predicates permit a role reading, while their single-word counterparts do not: *Each car went slower*, for instance, can refer to a sequence of successively slower cars, while *Each car slowed* can only refer to a situation in which each individual car changes speed. Another way to describe this distinction is in terms of the compressions over vital relations described in Fauconnier and Turner (2002). In this account, the grammar of *Your office gets smaller every year* presents a blend in which there is ostensibly one office, getting smaller over time. In order to interpret this sentence as referring to a succession of different, progressively smaller offices that sequentially fill the role of "your office," you must unpack that blend (Figure 2).

The individual interpretation demanded by the expression in *Your office shrinks every year*, by contrast, involves no such decompression. In this reading, there is only one office, which changes over time, and only one mental space (Figure 3).

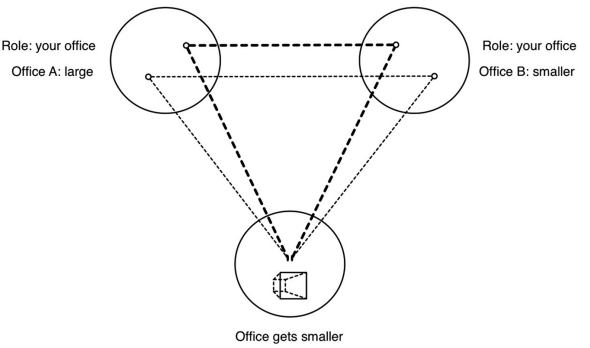

Figure 2: Role reading, "Your office gets smaller every year."

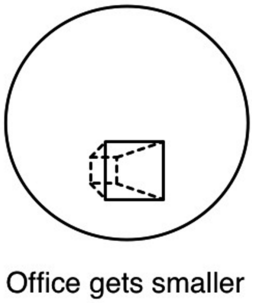

Figure 3: Individual interpretation, "Your office shrinks every year."

However, as described in Tobin (2008), single-word change predicates can, under the right circumstances, license the kinds of interpretations that are usually reserved for their periphrastic counterparts, as seen in the following sentences (from Tobin 2008: 333).

(5) She shortened/expanded the poem in every edition.

(6) Can you enlarge this photograph in the next issue?

These examples suggest that what is really at issue in the causal-predicate distinction is how thoroughly the entity in question is *construed* as a unique individual (or, in the case of plural subjects, as a set of unique individuals) undergoing individual change. In all of these cases, the compression to uniqueness is less accessible to introspection and perhaps more habitual than the similar compressions invoked in examples (1–4). It is clear, we think, to most readers of *Your office gets smaller every year* that the office in question need not actually be changing size. But it is less immediately evident that the described change to the poem in (5) is fictive in any way. Strange goings-on are afoot.

Consider the passages in (7) and (8), about three early Shakespeare editions and the many hypothetical contemporary manuscript copies of Cicero's *De Amicitia*, respectively:

(7) If one or two actors were recreating the text from memory, as is usually assumed, we should expect certain parts of the play to be better remembered than others. The fact is, however, that the text deteriorates progressively. (Wiles 2005: 83)

(8) The result is, the wider the circulation and the oftener the transcription of the book, the more rapidly the text deteriorates. (Hinsdale 1872: 117)

In both of these examples, the single-word change predicate *deteriorates* invites a reading in which *the text* is taken to refer to an individual that changes, rather than to a succession of individuals filling a role identified by the noun phrase. And yet the individual texts referenced in these examples are quite different from the more straightforwardly unitary "text" depicted in a sentence like (9):

(9) The text deteriorates toward the end.

In (7) and (8), multiple, non-identical documents are taken to be merely versions or manifestations of one underlying literary work. These construals highlight scenarios of continuous objects, eliciting the sense of a unique object, irrevocably altered, that underlies both Hugh Kenner's and Raymond Carver's feelings of loss and distress.

The apparent exceptions to Sweetser's rule seen in these examples illustrate that the compression to uniqueness involved in the underlying work stance is highly entrenched in the way we think and talk. In other words, the fact that single-word change predicates can be used in these cases provides grammatical evidence for the claim that this construal is the default; unpacking it is effortful at best.

Next, we will show how this same quality of non-decompression extends to some related constructions, particularly those involving result states, and discuss how these persistently frame our typical talk about texts.

5.1.3 Result states

The contrasting pairs of expressions in Section 5.1.2 illustrate that certain grammatical expressions may discourage the unpacking of compressions that motivate a given conceptual stance. This phenomenon extends beyond the specific expressions described there.

Linguists have frequently observed (e. g., Cruse 1972; Goldberg 1995; McCawley 1978; Pinker 1989; Smith 1972) that lexical causatives like "kill," for example, are typically used only to express cases of direct causation, while more lexically complex constructions like "cause to die" can be used to express either direct or indirect causation.

Further, Haiman (1980, 1983) has influentially argued that there is a general pattern across languages in which single words typically refer only to unitary, well-integrated events, while lexically complex forms are used to refer to more diffuse, complex, indirectly linked sequences. Thus, there are many single word expressions denoting change that will tend to reflect and encourage interpretations where

the referenced scenario is taken to be "naturally" compressed; in other words, it is conventionally construed as involving actual, direct, unmediated change to an individual. One noteworthy example is the case of single-word, adjectival predicates whose lexical semantics centrally denote a significant change to an entity's physical or essential form: modifiers that denote the concept of a "result state" (Dixon 1982; Levin 1993; Koontz-Garboden and Levin 2005).

These words constitute a morphologically and semantically distinctive class. Dixon (1982: 50) observes that in English, "most adjectives have adjectival opposites (*wide* and *narrow, sharp* and *blunt, quick* and *slow*) but some adjectives – denoting a state that can only be interrupted by some definite action – have participial opposites": the opposite of *raw* is *cooked*, the participle of the verb *cook*; the opposite of *whole* is *broken*, the participle of the verb *break*. Some other words in this class, all derived from change-of-state verbs, include *mutilated, bent*, and *burned*/*burnt*. These participles, their root verbs, and their adjective counterparts are all constructions that strongly encourage a *non-decompressed* interpretation, in which the subject is understood as a true single entity that has undergone actual change.

It may seem on first glance that verbs such as *mutilate* or *cut* should simply be lumped in with the change predicates discussed in Section 5.2. However, as they have no obvious multi-word counterparts of the *get bigger* type, they are not covered by the analysis in Sweetser 1997 or its extension in Tobin 2008, and so they demand some separate consideration. Furthermore, it is by considering them separately and in connection to their expression of result states that we see the relevance to this analysis of adjectives such as *intact* and *whole*. In examples (10–12), drawn from the critical discourse surrounding "Poetry" and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, we see how these constructions instantiate the underlying work ontology:

(10) Mr. Wylie has already spoken with Max Rudin, publisher of the Library of America, a nonprofit publisher, about including the *restored* stories (Rich 2007)

(11) At the back of the volume, however, we find a note, which reprints the entire 1936 text – the one *scarred* by all those revisions. (Kenner 1967)

(12) My biggest concern, as you know, is that the stories remain *intact*. (Letter from Carver to Lish, October 29, 1982 in Carver 2007)

These result state predicates reflect and reinforce the underlying work ontology. Each instance frames the referent teleologically, discouraging the role reading

that other classes of change predicates permit. Our conventional concept of change of state seems to be the default mode for thinking and talking about texts as artifacts that can remain "intact," be "restored," or "scarred," or partake of any result involving deviation from or return to a preferred state. This fact also suggests that ways of talking about literary artifacts are specially conditioned by an incipient teleology that perhaps constrains much of our thinking about artifacts in general. Artifacts are artifacts in part by virtue of their status as stable entities. To ignore this aspect of how artifacts work would leave us with no way to account for the sense that some versions of a work supercede others, and the source of Carver's anguish.

6 Conclusions

This essay may seem to be arguing against the notion of the "social text" and the social text approach. However, we embrace this approach and are much more sympathetic to it than to the authoritative final text view. Our intention is not to advance a rear-guard reinstatement of the "intentional work." What we are trying to do instead is call attention to the need, regardless of approach, to understand the cognitive limits of all of us, and that there is an underlying social ontology of the "work" that:

- Persists in cognition
- Is a default or touchstone conceptualization
- Is of a piece with patterns of conceptual compression that are pervasive and necessary in all kinds of everyday cognition
- Is reflected in and reinforced by the language we use to talk about books/texts, and not just in the most obvious places (i. e. names)
- And, finally, importantly *drives* and *motivates* the social processes surrounding texts which the social text approach takes as its object of inquiry.

In some respects, we would argue, the social text approach has to presuppose the underlying work compression, partly because all the participants are acting with these compressions in mind.

This analysis does not provide a skeleton key for generating better readings of individual texts. But in some particularly fraught editorial and publication histories, we can see some fault lines in various working understandings of texts. The mechanics of the underlying work compression help to show why some readings persist in the face of certain counterevidence, and why some facts about a work seem to be more important to critics and readers and editors than others. What we have to offer is a basic framework for understanding the

ontology of the document, in its most generalized form, which can embrace a wide range of practices, literary and otherwise. It should, we hope, also provide us with better ways of conceptualizing not just the work "itself" but the habits of thought that drive editorial, authorial, and readerly behavior with respect to textual artifacts.

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