

Academic Achievements' Review
of

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What is more important in life than learning to listen to and speak with one another? Sharing life is the greatest gift (*Gabe*) of being invited into a conversation with the Other. *Con-versatio* becomes the ultimate task (*Aufgabe*): To be a responsible human being in the world with the Other (*Mitsein*). Heidegger reminds us to live responsibility (which is not the same as exercising responsibility) without paternalizing, moralizing, and imposing moral and social rules on ourselves and others. We are called (*vocatio*) to be in the world responsibly. The primordial meaning of responsibility (*ursprüngliche Verantwortung*) guides us to the inviting call to answer somebody/something that addresses us (*Ver-Antwortung*). To give an answer, we must hear the voice of Being. It is the language, as the house of Being (*das Haus des Seins*) that speaks (*die Sprache spricht*). Human life is a permanent exercise in attuning oneself to this voice. To recognize that understanding is the way of being a human being in the world is, as Ricoeur would say, a *via longa* of the discernment that we are historical, lingual, finite, and temporal human beings in the productive tension between αἰὼν, χρόνος, and καιρός. Living this tension helps us grasp the indispensability of being attuned to the present moment, which is congenially elaborated by St Paul, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger as an instant, *Augenblick*: Neither a vague notion of this age (αὐτῷ οὔτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι), nor the age to come (οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι [αἰῶνι], Mt 12: 32). We recognize that we dwell in the lingual space and are called to care (*cura*, *Sorge*) for this dwelling in our concentration of attention. Heidegger privileges thinkers and poets (*Denkenden und Dichtenden*) in Being's self-revealing and self-manifesting. With this privilege comes an immense responsibility to be constantly vigilant, attentive, and alert to the revelatory power of Being. It is precisely the attentiveness of thinkers and poets which brings Being's self-disclosure to shine (φαινέσθαι). As the witnesses to a powerful interplay of ἀλήθεια, concealment and unconcealment (*Verbergung/Entbergung*), they bring the revelation of Being into language and preserve it in language.

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Witnessing to Being's self-disclosure is an indefatigable and delightful but also frightening and worrisome (*fascinosum et tremendum*) exercise of the imagination. In a public realm, the free play of imagination finds its concretization in a conversation. A hermeneutician is particularly captivated by the work of art and the creative productivity of such an engagement. The imaginative process concerns questioning and facing the matters worthy of being addressed (*fragwürdig*). It is the ability to explore constructive questions through a human encounter and, thus, to promote a culture of questioning. Gadamer problematizes the question regarding the productive scholar and production of something new. For him, "it is imagination [*Phantasie*] that is the decisive function of the scholar. Imagination here naturally has a hermeneutic function and serves the sense for what is questionable."

The question to be addressed in this report concerns "the decisive function of the scholar": Is DDr. Hołda, a scholar who with her dignity (*Würde*) and ingenuity can identify, recognize, and appreciate that which is primarily questionable (*das ursprünglich Fragwürdige*)? Is she a thinker and a poet (*Denker und Dichter*) who can responsibly care for Being (*Wächter der Behausung des Seins*)? Can she offer us anything new? Is imagination (*Phantasie*) her way of being a scholar who finds fulfillment in being *l'homme capable comme agissant et souffrant*?

Małgorzata Hołda holds a Ph.D. in British literature from Nicolaus Copernicus University (2006). In her doctoral thesis, *Between Liberal Humanism and Postmodernist Fun: The Fiction of Malcolm Bradbury*, she positions Bradbury's fiction between the liberal humanist's and postmodernist's approach to literary art. Her reading of Bradbury's fiction allows her to unearth aspects that can be seen as evocative of postmodern writing: discontinuity, disruption of language, incongruity, plurality, and unfixed subjectivity. Bradbury's novel way of understanding the writer's genuine right to not just present and represent but celebrate life and entertain brings Dr. Hołda to a philosophically profound inquiry into the (in)comprehensibility of self-understanding's transparency as thematized in Ricoeur's work on narrative identity. Human life can prove intelligible once the story of the life in question has been told. It is the narrative of one's life that constructs one's identity. Human responsiveness to others causes the narrative of one's life to become a coherent unity.

Dr. Hołda's Ph.D. dissertation in Philosophy at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow, *Paul Ricoeur's Concept of Subjectivity and the Postmodern Death of the Subject*, published with substantial modifications under the same title by Ignatianum University Press in 2018, clearly demonstrates that she is ready to face an array of remarkably complex challenges and offer valuable insights on the her-

hermeneutics of the self. Her research into the postmodern philosophy of Jean Baudrillard, Jean Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, and especially Michel Foucault's "technologies of the self" discloses the vicissitudes of the postmodern construction of the self. The efficacy of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics in recuperating the human "self" in the age of the "death of the subject," and especially the dialectics of *idem* and *ipse* identity, allow for the identification of the self as it changes over a span of time. Ricoeur upholds human subjectivity by deploying an extensive theory of interpretation that relies upon the analysis of discourse, metaphor, and symbol. Such an art of interpretation, in fact, speaks for a clear belonging together (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) of theory and practice.

In her other published work, Hołda addresses an impressive number of topics pertaining to the relationship between contemporary philosophy and literary theory. In particular, she contributes substantially to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self, the polyphony of human speech, the dialectic of question and answer, and language's essential dialogical contextuality. Interrogating the topic of narrative identity, Hołda extends the scope of her research on the relevance of narrative in the formation of selfhood and the role of narrative in an understanding of human existence by drawing on a wide spectrum of theoretical standpoints which indicate the resurgence of narrative and narrativization in literary studies, contemporary philosophy, and historiography: Linda Hutcheon, Jean François Lyotard, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Hayden White.

In the sequence of articles engaging the fictional works of Malcolm Bradbury, David Lodge, Kazuo Ishiguro, Rose Tremain, Graham Swift, Angela Carter, Beryl Bainbridge, and Ian McEwan, Hołda discusses a host of topics featured in British postmodern fiction. She enriches her already substantial interrogation of human subjectivity by exploring how postmodern writers evoke socially constituted selfhood and pursue the culturally determined models of femininity and masculinity. Discussing the intricacies of the representations of gender in postmodern fiction, she extensively draws on the critical feminist perspectives of Helen Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Rosi Braidotti. Those articles address the question of the violation of ethical values and the transgression of humanity pervasive in the postmodern culture. Significantly, it is not only the versatility of themes, but also the form of the postmodern fiction, and more specifically, the elements of self-reflexivity, metafiction, and pastiche that Hołda skillfully examines.

Researching various understandings of *mimesis* in postmodernity, Hołda focuses on how postmodern writers use fabulation, surrealism, and expressionism, acknowledging, at the same time, the impact of

modern fiction's experiment on the development of the artistic forms of expression in postmodern fiction. Exploring the themes of temporality, desire, mourning, and epiphany in her analyses of the modern works of Woolf, Eliot, Joyce, and Kipling, she touches upon the fundamental question of the rejection or continuity of the modern in the (post)modern. Tracing the roots of the postmodern destabilization of the referential function of language in the classic works of modernism, she advocates for *the hermeneutics of continuation* rather than the *hermeneutics of rupture*. Speaking of continuation and rapture, it is essential not to be mistaken by the simple opposition of the concept of continuation and rapture but to think change and permanence in time hermeneutically. Here, further deepening of the Heideggerian Destruction (*Destruktion, Zerstörung, Abbau*) and Derridian Deconstruction is instrumental.

Hołda's double allegiance to literature and philosophy and her intense attunement to their interweaving paths transpire in her apt exploration of the topics that profoundly suffuse literary and philosophical discourse alike: being-in-the-word, the unique unrepeatability of the self, and the situatedness of human experience. Her examination of the dialectic of familiarity and strangeness ("Kazuo Ishiguro's 'A Family Supper' – the Hermeneutics of Familiarity and Strangeness") and her insights into the hermeneutic ethics of forgiveness ("Can Forgetting be Constructive? – The Hermeneutics of Memory, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation") exemplify her creative contribution to the hermeneutics of the self and the ontological understanding of our being-in-the-world, which is always being-with. Situating her reflection in the horizon of Heidegger's philosophy of facticity, she probes the understanding of human existence as being-toward-death (*Sein zum Tode*) and the complex nature of mourning ("The Other, the Irrevocability of Death, and the Aporia of Mourning – the Hermeneutic Approach"). Following her commitment to delve deeply into Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics and Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, she is also interested in the less known thinkers such as the late Pamela Sue Anderson, an excellent reader of Ricoeur through Kant. Brooding on the legacy of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the capable subject (*l'homme capable*), Anderson's inimitable way of theorizing feminine capability is presented as particularly inspiring and constructive. It was Pamela, who first told me of her friend in Poland, the late Dorota Filipczak at the University of Łódź. Unfortunately, with the death of Pamela and, very soon after, Professor Filipczak, the plans for our collaboration were gone.

Hołda has actively participated in academic seminars, conferences, and congresses. Her engagement with the questions of the universal character of hermeneutics, the lingual nature of being-in-the-world, as well as the issues of identity, freedom, and phronetic wisdom dis-

— cussed against the backdrop of the classic narratives of Woolf, Kipling, and Joyce (e.g., “Aporia of Time in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and ‘Kew Gardens’ in Light of Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics,” “The Other, the Irrevocability of Death, and the Aporia of Mourning: The Hermeneutic Approach”) presented at both international and national conferences reveal her intuiting into the inexhaustibility of understanding and the never-ending procession of meaning, which arises from the co-substantial nature of literature and philosophy.

Hołda’s tracing of the productive infiltrations and co-influences of literary and philosophical discourses can be discerned in a vast range of topics in papers on British postmodern fiction, where she dexterously responds to writers of such diverse provenance and literary output as Carter, Ishiguro, or Martel (e.g., “Evasion or/and Expiation? – Telling/Reading Stories in *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* by Kazuo Ishiguro,” “Acting and Being; Image/Identity Inversion in Angela Carter’s *Flesh and the Mirror*”). Her presentations in this area show her capability of weaving together insights on the constitutive and expiative role of storytelling, selfhood, and alterity. Hołda’s reflection on British postmodern fictional imaginings is supplemented with her explications of the postmodern cultural phenomena such as existential void, fragmentation and alienation of human existence, relativism, and consumerism. She heavily draws on the contemporary French philosophy of Baudrillard, Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida.

Hołda has a significant list of papers presented at the International Summer School in Philosophy and Education, in which she has been participating since 2016. The wide range of themes that she explores in her presentations shows her engagement with the intersections between literature and philosophy. Her inimitable response to anthropological and phenomenological queries demonstrated in her intensely creative interrogations of the ethical issues of hospitality, vulnerability, fragility, and solidarity, enriched with close readings of literary texts, testifies to her commitment to in-depth and interdisciplinary research. The unfolding of the topic rendered in “Between Excruciation and Alleviation: Virginia Woolf’s Fragile Worlds and the Question of the Capable Self,” “Solidarity as an Enactment of Community. Solidarity and Inclusivity: Gadamer’s Hermeneutics of Similarity. A Critical Reflection,” “Positivity of Forgetting, Forgiving and Learning Anew,” to name but a few papers, indicates Hołda’s noteworthy discernment and understanding of the precepts of the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer, and the ways they intertwine with ethical and aesthetic themes featured in modern British fiction. Her manifold contribution to the Summer School, co-organized by the International Institute for Hermeneutic, of which she is a Junior Associate Fellow, the Arizona State University (USA), Bar – Ilan Universi-

ty (Israel), and Memorial University of Newfoundland (Canada) show her involved and continuous participation in the hermeneutic academic debate in an international milieu.

Hołda has frequently and actively participated in the International Seminars in Philosophy and Education at the University of Warsaw, presenting papers that captured the interconnections between literary evocations and philosophical considerations of human subjectivity, temporality, and aesthetics (“From Suffering to Understanding: The Phenomenological Hermeneutics of the Constrained Self,” “In Search of Authentic Time: Martin Heidegger’s *Augenblick* and Virginia Woolf’s ‘Moment of Being,’” “Beauty’s Indispensability in the Ethical Imagination of Phronetic Education.”)

Hołda’s international collaboration is visible in her active participation in the workshops, lectures, and readings as a member of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain. On numerous occasions, she has served as a blind peer reviewer of interdisciplinary texts for *Philosophy Study*, *Phainomena*, and *Analecta Hermeneutica*. Her international academic exchange has also encompassed research visits at the University of Manchester and the Faculty of Philosophy and Education, University of Vienna. She has presented papers at the international conferences of the Polish Association for the Study of English, of which she is a member.

Hołda’s has been teaching a variety of literary and cultural courses, including those of a more specialized scope (Multiculturalism and Regionalism in American Literature, European Literature). For several years she has been lecturing on British and American. Her engagement with teaching seminars and pro-seminars in British and American literature and supervising eighty BA theses deserve special notice. The versatile area of literary and cultural courses that her teaching embraces is supplemented with teaching on the Theory and Practice of Translation, as well as courses in Practical Rhetoric and Technical English.

Hołda is also an accomplished translator. She has translated texts in philosophy, theology, and information technology, contributing to academic journals, e.g., “Information Processing Letters” and “The Person and the Challenges: The Journal of Theology, Education, Canon Law and Social Studies Inspired by Pope John II.” Her hermeneutic understanding of the role translation plays in our everyday lives shows us that what Ricoeur calls the “ordeal of translation” has implications for our own self-understanding, and thus education in its most profound sense, and our relations with others, and thus ethics in its most profound sense. Ricoeur’s “paradigm of translation” aims at elucidating what is happening to us in the act of translating. Claiming

- that translation is virtually impossible and realizing the linguistic and ontological implications at the various levels of translation, we must translate if we wish to arrive at our self-understanding.

In her application for the Habilitation, Holda indicates as her main academic accomplishment *On Beauty and Being: Hans-Georg Gadamer's and Virginia Woolf's Hermeneutics of the Beautiful*, Transatlantic Studies in British and North American Culture 33 (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021). The main title suggests that the author attempts to think Beauty and Being. The hermeneutics of the beautiful will be discussed with reference to Hans-Georg Gadamer and Virginia Woolf. *On Beauty and Being*, hints that the writing is a song of praise, a hymn on τὸ καλὸν and τὰ οὐσία. What happens when the hymn on τὸ καλὸν is sung? What could this enchantment possibly mean? Plato gives us a fabulous clue in *Symposium*:

αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ἰδεῖν εἰλικρινές, καθαρὸν, ἄμεικτον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τε ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ ἄλλης πολλῆς φλυαρίας θνητῆς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸν δύναιτο μονοειδὲς κατιδεῖν;

But tell me, what would happen if one of you had the fortune to look upon essential beauty entire, pure, and unalloyed; not infected with the flesh and color of humanity, and ever so much more of mortal trash? What if he could behold the divine beauty itself, in its unique form? – Plato, *Symposium* 211e.

The Platonic Beauty in its ethical and transcendent dimension is never totally separated from the beautiful figures like Helen or Aphrodite or beautiful paintings of ὁ πᾶς καλός, an inscription frequently found on Attic vases and graffiti, mainly during the Classical period from 550 to 450 BC. This “looking upon” and “behold the divine beauty itself” is the source of happiness and sorrow since we are not yet there to enjoy it fully. We are on the way (*Unterwegssein*) to Beauty, “infected with the flesh and color of humanity.” The experience of Beauty can be encountered in the disorder of reality, as Gadamer reminds us, “with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions.” Beauty has its strong ontological purpose: It bridges the chasm between the ideal and the real.

Philosophical reflection on Being, revolutionized by Heidegger's critiques of the forgetfulness or oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*), centers around the distinction between Being (*das Sein*) and a being (*das Seiende*). This is apparently the primary source of the forgetfulness of Being, the forgetfulness of the ontological difference (*ontologische Differenz*). The translation of the Greek ὑπαρξις as *existentia* and οὐσία as *essentia*, while reserving ὑπόστασις for *subsistentia* has created substantial confusion in understanding Being (ὑπαρξις versus

■ οὐσία) in its being Being (*das Sein in seinem Seiendsein*). Since Dasein is always in relation to Being, it understands itself explicitly in its being there of Being. As Heidegger clarifies, “Man remains referred to Being, and he is only this. This ‘only’ does not mean a limitation but rather an excess. A belonging to Being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being.” We distinctly hear the longing for the primordial belonging together in this belonging. And one of the constitutive elements of this relationship is Dasein’s listening attunement to Being.

It is an intriguing question why *On Beauty and Being* and not *On Being and Beauty*, or simply *On Being*, or *On Beauty* in the main title. It could be a matter of *ars poetica*, a hermeneutic ear, or a hermeneutic eye. But it could also be a matter of metaphysics when we think of an axiom, “*Ens, verum, bonum et pulchrum convertuntur in unum.*”

Hołda’s *Habilitationschrift* reveals that the hermeneutic reading of literature engages more versatile insights into what is commonly understood as literary and philosophical texts. Treating them as pertinently influencing one another, Hołda sets herself with a task to trace their intersecting pathways, focusing on Gadamer’s philosophical thought and Woolf’s fictional creations. Indicating the limitless possibilities, which arise from the deployment of such a perspective, Hołda’s work brings to the fore the inexhaustibility of understanding and the richness of the hermeneutic, and, thus, overarching, and welcoming that which is marginal and underappreciated, approach to philosophizing, conceiving, and interpreting literary texts. Rather than viewing Woolf’s fiction as a *belles lettres* stage for the dramatization of Gadamer’s philosophical ideas, by situating her insights on philosophical and literary works in a singular work of criticism, Hołda focuses on the two authors’ common idiom and the centrality of the hermeneutic thought, in which their discourses partake. A hermeneutic reading of literature provides a close examination of the subject, whose vulnerability is a constitutive trait of consciousness and who is bound to bodily experience. Placing side by side those two apparently separate strands of writing, she leads us on a pathway that resists the instant and surface associations with what each of the two modes of thinking purports to offer. And, thus, questioning the oft-claimed distinctions, she successfully unsettles the preconceived ideas of what literature and philosophy encompass, inspiring us to approach them in a more open and challenging fashion. Hermeneutic reading of literature is not about deciphering philosophical aspects or ideas in literary texts. It is not a deliberation on philosophy in literature, philosophy of literature, or philosophy and literature, but a response to what I call “the imperative to think the incommensurable.” I love the poetry of Fernando Pessoa, but unfortunately, when he says about himself, “I am not a philosopher with literary interest, I am a poet interested in

philosophy,” our ways part. What makes us thinkers is that we think Being and/or Beauty in their primordially and share our thinking with others. The *modi* of thinking and the *modi* of expression are the subjects in themselves.

Hermeneutic reading of literature follows the logic of conversation with the text in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. According to Gadamer, the conversation partners are being led by the conversation rather than leading it. There is the matter (*die Sache*), which finds its way of articulation in “convincing illumination of truth and harmony, which compels the admission: ‘This is true.’” The hermeneutic conversation as the mode of being in the world and the way we experience the beautiful in art becomes the way we approach the work of art in its enticing beauty, “which shines forth most clearly and draws us to itself, as the very visibility of the ideal.” What is so essential in this hermeneutic interpretation of art is that the work of art captivates us, takes us into its own possession, and presents us with the unapologetic ethical appeal to radical personal responsibility powerfully expressed by Rilke’s “You must change your life: *Du mußt Dein Leben ändern.*” There is nobody who can give an answer for us (*re-spondeo*). Therefore, any interpretation of an artwork happens in this horizon of radical responsibility. It underscores the hermeneutic claim to universality (*Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik*), which expresses that *anything* can be understood, and “Being that can be understood is language: *Das Sein, das verstanden werden kann ist Sprache.*”

Philosophy and Literature, Philosophy as Literature, Literature in Philosophy, Literature as Philosophy, all those areas of academic research testify to the multifaceted approaches to the intimate and problematic liaisons between literature and philosophy. Instead of simply deciphering philosophical themes and ideas in literature, Hołda’s book leads us to acknowledge the incommensurability of Philosophy and Literature. This division is not to be overcome but thought through, faced, and lived.

Sensitizing her readers to not follow the artificially constructed and clear-cut differentiation between the philosophy and literature, Hołda’s book potently demonstrates that they belong together while participating in the beauty of the unpredictability of language as an *event*. Her close readings of Woolf’s three major novels, *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *The Waves*, draw our attention to the novelist’s firm belief in the power of language to enact Being. At the same time, being intensely aware of language’s potential to perform, Woolf not only knows how the flow of discourse gets deconstructed by the unavoidable gaps and fissures but makes those meaningful crevices and pregnant silences into part of her modernist stylistics. Embarking on a journey to hermeneutically investigate Woolf’s fic-

tions, Hołda reveals how those narratives, riven with ambiguities, equivocations, as well as syntactical inconsistencies, participate in the hermeneutic interplay of the said and the unsaid (*das Gesagte und das Ungesagte*), and how Woolf's writing concords in manifold ways with Gadamer's gloss on language and his explication of the concealment/unconcealment of Being (*Verborgenheit/ Unverborgenheit*) as enacted through language.

Highlighting the import of the recognition of language's metaphoricity as constitutive of the literary and philosophical discourse alike, *On Beauty and Being* focuses on aesthetic queries and unfolds the intimate connections between language, Being, and Beauty (understood here in terms of the beauty of artistic creation, nature, human beings, and objects). It is the Aristotelian notion of *ποίησις*, elaborated later by Heidegger and Gadamer, which stands at the very center of Gadamer's and Woolf's aesthetics. They both show that in the making of poetry (*ποίησις*) and our reading of it, something emerges. For Gadamer and Woolf alike, poetic language is the space in which Being discloses itself to us. Sensitizing us to the power of the poetic word to enact Being, Woolf's lyrical narratives and Gadamer's interrogation of poetry show that in Being's meaningful disclosures, understanding occurs as an *event*: "Poetry is the unique space in which we can experience Beauty as a gateway to Being. In the poetic word Being reveals itself to us. After Heidegger, Gadamer argues that the poetic word embraces the whole of the human experience. In a similar vein, Woolf's lyrical narratives disclose that it is the poetic word that can hold the entirety of an experience of being a human being." (204)

The focus on the hermeneutics of the beautiful opens the possibility of reaching out for the uniquely rich regions pervasive in the intellectual paths of the two authors. Gadamer commences his hermeneutic inquiry in his *opus magnum*, *Truth and Method*, with recourse to art and the notion of the beautiful, viewing aesthetic encounter as the path of hermeneutic interrogation. Woolf satiates her artistic vision with aesthetic questions, bringing Beauty to the center of her literary enterprise. Hołda capably discusses the multifarious aspects of the hermeneutics of the beautiful while touching upon a vast range of topics that pertain to it, also the less obvious ones. At the heart of her work lies the question of Beauty and Truth as belonging together. This Platonic view of Beauty is explored alongside a panoply of other crucial themes, melancholy beauty, the circularity of time, and the universal patterns of the beautiful shown against the backdrop of the exterior (the clock time) and the interior time (relating to inward human experience). The enactment of the beautiful in Woolf's literary art goes arm in arm with her reflection on subjectivity and intersubjectivity: "The problem of intersubjectivity that *The Waves* tackles is entwined with the scheme of listening and responding. For Heidegger, the crux

of poetry is the interplay of those two faculties. Using the German word *Zugehörigkeit*, which could be translated as ‘belonging in listening,’ he asserts that listening is a response to Being’s call. In the response, the call first resounds like an echo... The poetic world of *The Waves* operates in accord with the paradigm of listening and responding. As the six differing voices constitute an individuated poetic lyrical ‘I’ each time they are ‘given a voice,’ the images which are created through them comprise a response to the listening to Being which discloses itself in its manifold ways.” (235) Delving deeply into those issues, the book offers an important extension of Hołda’s exploration of the hermeneutics of the self in *Paul Ricoeur’s Concept of Subjectivity and the Postmodern Claim of the Death of the Subject*.

In the tripartite composition of *On Beauty and Being*, Hołda renders respectively Woolf’s fictional embodiments of beauty in her three major novels and the significant aspects of Gadamer’s hermeneutics of the beautiful. She navigates her interrogation by bridging questions that pertain to the Gadamerian understanding of Beauty and Being with a detailed textual exegesis of Woolf’s narratives, indicating the novelist’s hermeneutic perception of the beautiful. In the mirror-like fashion, in separate sections, Hołda juxtaposes Woolf’s embodiments of the beautiful with analogous claims regarding Being and the beautiful in Gadamer. The simultaneous interpretations of Gadamer and Woolf in the book’s main parts are rounded up with a more detailed rendition of the affinities between the two authors in the Intersections. The book’s meticulous analyses of Woolf’s fictions show the novelist not only as evoking beauty but as meditating on Being and Beauty. Woolf interprets the beautiful in the liveliness of daily human experience and the gloriousness of love which transcends the temporariness of human experience. With the backdrop of human finitude, vividly portrayed via the images of war, loss, and decline, love is captured in Woolf’s fictional imaginings in its capacity to intensify our sense that Being and Beauty are close to one another.

One of the central issues tackled by Hołda in her meditation (*Besinnung*) on Beauty and Being, which she locates within a wider philosophical context, is her reflection on the ontology and phenomenology of time. The issue of time emerges here in relation to the notion of authenticity in Heidegger (*Authentizität* in *Heideggers frühen Freiburger Vorlesungen* and *Eigentlichkeit*), which is close to the idea of responsibility. It can be understood as one’s unique response (*respondeo*) and an unrepeatable engagement with the world. At this point, we can see that early Heidegger’s notion of authenticity indicates a strong relationship between authenticity and narrativity, elaborated later by Ricoeur. Drawing on Heidegger, Hołda interprets Woolf’s novel *Mrs. Dalloway* as reflecting on the possibility of living an authentic life when one genuinely faces the inevitability of death

■ (*Sein zum Tode*). Woolf sees each moment of the passage of time as dramatizing Being. The intensity of living a life saturates the transience of human experiences and reveals that human existence happens in time and escapes the limitedness of being in time, of a life constrained by finitude: “Even though modern writers mourn the fragmentation of human existence and view this state of being as an irrevocable loss, like Eliot, Woolf sees the beauty of time in the portentousness of its unredeemable passage. To arrest time is impossible, yet the grandeur of time lies exactly in its passing. The way, however, in which we perceive time as passing is related to a response of an individual, in which the provisionality and contingency of human existence as permeated with time play the most significant role.” (186) Pursuing the interconnection between Beauty and Being, Gadamer engages the question of time in relation to art and elucidates the entrancing force of aesthetic experience, which happens in the time of lingering in front of an artwork. According to him, human response to Beauty involves a phenomenology of a lived experience. Beauty presents itself to us, captivates us, and entangles us in a conversation.

It is the *presencing* or *eventing* of art that Gadamer sees as the core of the aesthetic experience. Gadamer’s *Erfahrungsästhetik* places an accent on the dialogical element in our perception of art rather than on an individual sensation (*Erlebnis*). Contemplating the beautiful, we enter a relationship that is of profound significance. This dialogical model of aesthetic experience focuses on the *being of art* and our *being-as-addressed-by-art*, wherein art puts a claim on us and precipitates a response that acknowledges the *happening* of art on the ontological and phenomenological level. Instead of a passive, atemporal life of art, Gadamer speaks of art that is actualized in an intimate dialogue with its recipient: “In the entirety of its uniqueness and importance, an aesthetic encounter is an event (*Ereignis*). Crucially, Gadamer contends that an experience of the beautiful is transformational – an aesthetic experience involves *metanoia* – the recipient undergoes a decisive change.” (22) This can be illustrated by recourse to Iris Murdoch (a great admirer of Woolf), whose double allegiance to literary creation and philosophizing incarnates the intermingling character of the two disciplines. In the climax of her famous novel, *The Bell*, Dora, its female protagonist, enters a moment of revelation while contemplating Thomas Gainsborough’s portrait of his daughters in the British Museum. Addressed by art, Dora undergoes a profound change. Her life project is undermined, and she must construct it anew.

Throughout her book, Hołda maintains that Gadamer and Woolf use similar premises in addressing Beauty and Being with clarity and passion. Focusing on the captivating power of the beautiful and its inspiring vision, the two intellectuals see the force of the momentary illu-

mination as lying both in the ontological and the aesthetic. Woolf's deep delving into the aesthetic aspect of the revelatory "moment of being" and Gadamer's philosophy of tarrying in front of an artwork, which engenders a seminal change in the onlooker, borrow from Heidegger's notion of *Augenblick*. In *The Fundamental Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger congenially depicts what is happening in the moment of the vision (*Augenblick*): "What is important is only whether the contemporary Dasein, in keeping with its existential possibility, is original enough still to see on its own the world that is always already unveiled with its existence, to bring it to words, and thereby to make it expressly visible for others." Revalidating Heidegger's *Augenblick*, Gadamer and Woolf highlight the ecstatic forgetfulness which occurs as the result of a distinct kind of absorption experienced in aesthetic experience, espousing, at the same time, its transformational character. Hołda's inspirational tracing of the affinities between Woolf's "moment of being," the visionary bliss, which evokes the experience of the eternal as disrupting the flow of the present time, and a similar idea deployed by other authors Joyce, Conrad, Hopkins, Thoreau, T. S. Eliot, and Duns Scotus testifies to her employment of a broader literary and philosophical perspective. It aptly accentuates the book's interdisciplinary character.

Hołda's reflection on Heidegger's legacy in Woolf and Gadamer engages a critical discussion of the mystical and secular aspects of the visionary moment, the breaking into time which is coterminous with the moment of a substantial change, *μετάνοια*. This seems to be of great significance, especially in the context of the growing scholarship on Woolf's secular mysticism. The specificity of the Christian experience of time, having its root in St Paul's teaching, which Heidegger later reformulated, encounters in Woolf's philosophical thinking and her hermeneutic approach to human temporality an exciting realization. Her fictions dramatize the experience of the tension between finitude and infinity. Hołda emphasizes that Gadamer's and Woolf's view of aesthetic experience rests on the human capacity to succumb to Beauty's enticing power and undergo a decisive change (*Kehre*).

Woolf's ingenious descriptions of the beauty of nature, the dinner party, or a journey to the Lighthouse disclose her understanding of the importance of placing her heroes and future readers in an intermedial space of experience. Thus, art becomes *Erfahrungsästhetik* since the reception of the work of art is an *event*, and the visual aspects are not delimited to merely playing an ornamental role. They essentially contribute to the new tangibility of an affective dimension of acting and of creating meaning.

Gadamer's and Woolf's reconfigured inheritance of Heidegger's *Augenblick* encourages us to interrogate their conceptualizations of

Beauty more inclusively and profoundly. Beauty is not just a superfluous adornment added to human existence, but rather it is so overwhelming that it arrests us in time, radiates, and speaks forth. The radicality of transformation that is occasioned when we contemplate Beauty reveals its intervening nature and expresses its co-belongingness with Being. *On Beauty and Being* potently demonstrates Hołda's knowledge of Gadamer's and Woolf's revalidation of the Platonic philosophy of Beauty. The intimate liaison between Beauty and Truth animates the philosophical thinking of Gadamer, which draws on Plato's distinction of Beauty's self-evidence, radiance, and proportionality and the literary imagination of Woolf. The wide range of meanings which the Greek term for Beauty encompasses is, as *On Beauty and Being* shows, present both in Gadamer's hermeneutic aesthetics and Woolf's fiction, most prominently in her novel, *To the Lighthouse*: "Woolf's evocation of the beautiful in *To the Lighthouse*, when juxtaposed with Gadamer's ontology of Beauty, foregrounds her understanding of Beauty as a mode of being in her suggestive and vibrant explorations of the moment of being. Her dexterity in capturing the Beauty of the moment manifests itself in the evocations of the unity of *kalon* and *aletheia*. Woolf's embodiments of those notions meaningfully coalesce with Gadamer's reaffirmation of Plato's ideal of Beauty." (31)

One of the most enticing parts of Hołda's meditation is her engagement with Beauty in the repeatable: Gadamer's concentration on the beautiful as epitomized in ritual and play, and Woolf's evocations of the universal patterns of repetitions in nature and human existence. Hołda's insights contribute to the scholarship on Gadamer's ontology of play as a model of aesthetic experience and highlight the importance of Woolf's unflagging interest in the rites of repetition in which Beauty inheres, inviting us, to a more profound understanding of it.

The reading of Gadamer and Woolf discloses that the great works of art are always in conversation with one another. Their reciprocal interrogation makes a claim on their readers (*Anspruchsnahme*) and invites them to participate in this conversation. *On Beauty and Being* escapes any facile classifications or overhasty assertions of the final shape of the issues it tackles. Instead of following the standard pattern of literary criticism as created in the shadow of philosophical inquires and reflecting on philosophical ideas as instantiated in works of fiction, Hołda manifests her understanding of the hermeneutic investigation by employing the *to-and-fro* movement, shifting from the philosophical to the literary, and allowing her insights to transpire in the openness to the mutual influence of and conversation between philosophical and literary texts. Considering the versatility of the themes and motifs that *On Beauty and Being* explores through its aptly applied

hermeneutic approach to literature and aesthetics, one could pose a question about the relevance of Hołda's hermeneutic reading of literature in the light of the growing number of inter- and cross-disciplinary studies in the humanities. Undoubtedly, Hołda's book returns us to Heidegger's fundamental question of how we can pose this most pressing and riveting query: "What does it mean to be?" Rather than focusing in her reflection merely on an explication of theoretical stands, Hołda invites us to recognize our particular ways of posing ontological questions and responding to them while apprehending their profound, existential implications. Prompting us, the readers, to see Beauty as inhering in the question of Being, we are called to respond to Beauty creatively.

Interpretation is never a simple retelling but an imaginative journey from hell to heaven, from literal to abstract, monochrome to color, negative to positive. McGregor's experiment in translating literary source material into the three-act ballet (2015) is one of the examples of an inspiring way of reading Woolf. Understanding is not a simple re-production, but it is always a productive undertaking (*Verstehen ist kein reproduktives, sondern stets auch ein produktives Verhalten*). Understanding changes alongside the history of the reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of that which wants to be understood. Understanding is always understanding differently (*anders verstehen*) since Tradition (*Überlieferung*) emphasizes transmission rather than conservation. This transmission (*trans-fero*) does not mean a direct bringing to the opposite side while keeping things unchanged and preserved in their original appearance. It is far more challenging to see things anew and express the old in a new way.

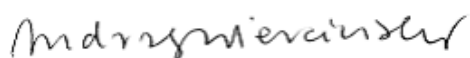
Hołda is an engaged listener experiencing the work of art as a communicative event, which calls for active participation (*participatio actuosa*). The work of art can address us, and its call for understanding is an invitation or a command to be attuned to the work to the point of being totally captivated by it. Here, we can go back to Heidegger's and Gadamer's understanding of existence as *ex-sistence*, *ex-stasis*. This ecstasy is not a matter of being outside of oneself in order to lose oneself. Being outside of oneself is a condition of the possibility of being with the Other or otherness. To be really present, we need to experience self-forgetfulness (*Selbstvergessenheit*), which allows us for the focused turning (*aufmerksame Zuwendung*) to the matter of understanding. To understand the work of art means to welcome a radical exposure of our world to the world of the Other in the human condition as being-in-the-world, which is always a being-with-other (*Mitsein*).

Hołda pursues the interdisciplinary research from hermeneutics as an art of interpretation in relation to literary texts, literary criticism, and

- theory to the studies on hermeneutics in philosophy with an in-depth discernment of its ontological status. Resultantly, the broadening of the hermeneutic horizon by understanding hermeneutics as a *mode of being* means for her an engagement in a new way.

Hołda's academic accomplishments, especially her *Habilitationsschrift*, are hermeneutics in enactment (*Hermeneutik im Vollzug*). Whoever has ever read Gadamer cannot read literature anymore only as the testimony of a triumphant or wrecked talented human being who lived either before us or is living in our time. Essential for Gadamer is that understanding is always in a relationship to the history of its effects (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). What we understand is not the text as the artefact but the text in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*, i.e., what is interpreted is not the text itself but also all the subsequent interpretations that make the text live in the real history of real people. Understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood. We can understand literature only in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*, an artwork of the author, and how this work has been read, interpreted, and transmitted through time to us as contemporary readers. And this remark applies equally to the interpretation of Tradition's masterpieces and the love letter written last night in the bliss of joy or trails of misery. Hermeneutics is not only the way of reading texts but the way we live our lives as human beings.

Emphatically and with great satisfaction, I recommend DDr. Małgorzata Hołda for her Habilitation in the discipline of literary studies.



Prof. dr hab. Andrzej Wierciński