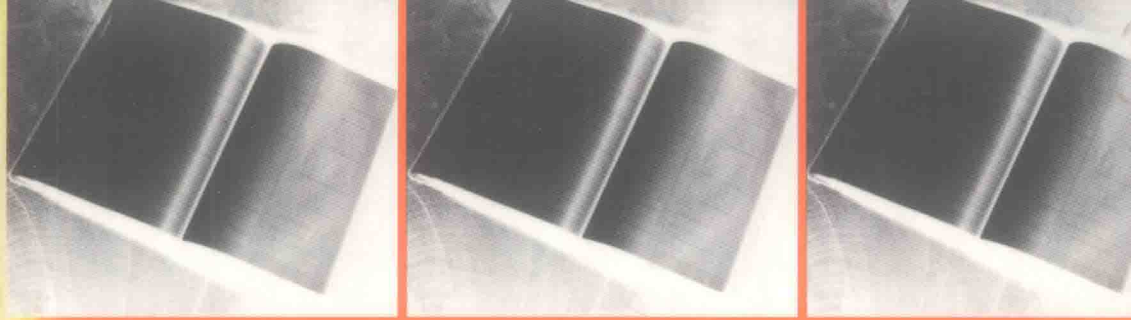
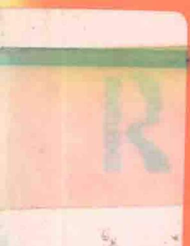


Philosophy of Literature

An Introduction

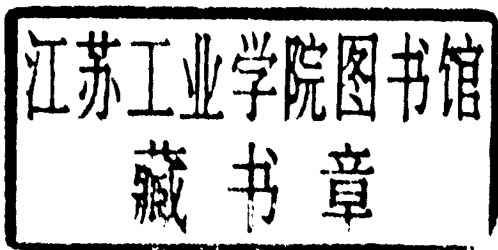
Christopher New



PHILOSOPHY OF LITERATURE

An Introduction

Christopher New


江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

London and New York

First published 1999
by Routledge

11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

© 1999 Christopher New

Typeset in Times by Routledge
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Mackays of Chatham PLC, Kent

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
New, Christopher.
Philosophy of literature: an introduction/Christopher New.
p.cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Literature—Philosophy. I. Title.
PN45.N38 1998
801—DC21
98-39518
CIP

ISBN 0-415-14485-X (hbk)
ISBN 0-415-14486-8 (pbk)

PREFACE

Although this is a book of philosophy, it is intended as much for those with literary as for those with philosophical interests, and I have therefore assumed no prior knowledge of philosophy in the reader. And although it is an introductory book, I have not hesitated to argue for my own views where I thought that other views, even widely accepted ones, were mistaken. I have generally discussed those other views in the text but, where space did not permit that, I have drawn attention to them in the notes.

The standpoint from which this book was written would probably be loosely described as analytic, which differentiates it from the many current theoretical works on literature which are written from a Deconstructionist or generally 'postmodernist' standpoint. I have not discussed postmodernist theories, but that does not imply I do not think them worth discussing. Indeed, I had originally intended to include a discussion of them in the book, and my eventual decision not to do so was based on pragmatic, not critical, grounds. I realised, as the work progressed, that to be of any value, a consideration of those theories would involve lengthy explanations and distracting argument, which would make the book unwieldy and frustrate its purpose as an introduction. This book, therefore, where it deals with topics which postmodernist theories also discuss, does not represent a dismissal of those theories, but an alternative to them.

The nature of philosophical argument tends to make disagreement more prominent than agreement, but that disagreement often occurs against a far wider, if less visible, background of agreement. So it is in this case. I disagree with some of the views of Kendall Walton and Gregory Currie, as well as with some of those advanced in the recent work of Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, and of Malcolm Budd. But I have learnt much from, and agree with much of, what they say. I am indebted to them in particular, as well as to the other writers mentioned in the text, for the various ways in which their thoughts have provoked and helped me clarify my own.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author and publisher would like to thank copyright holders for giving their permission to reproduce extracts from the following copyright material:

Joyce Cary (1968) *Herself Surprised*, Caldar & Boyars, London. By permission of the trustees of the J.L.A. Cary Estate.

W.H.Davies (1943) *Collected Poems*, Jonathan Cape. By permission of the Executors of the W. H. Davies Estate.

T.S. Eliot (1923) 'The Function of Criticism', *Criterion*, October. By permission of Faber and Faber Ltd.

A.E. Housman (1939) *A Shropshire Lad*, Jonathan Cape, London. By permission of the Society of Authors as the literary representative of the Estate of A.E. Housman.

R.D.Laing (1970) *Knots*, Tavistock Publications.

Philip Larkin (1995) 'Places, Loved Ones' from *The Less Deceived*, Marvell Press. By permission of The Marvell Press, England and Australia.

S.H.Olsen, 'Literary Aesthetics, Literary Practice' in *Mind*, October 1981, pp. 521-41. By permission of Oxford University Press.

Amos Oz (1974) *Elsewhere, Perhaps*, Martin Secker & Warburg. By permission of Random House and Harcourt Brace & Co. Edition cited in text, Penguin 1979.

Dylan Thomas (1952) *Collected Poems*, J.M. Dent and Sons.

Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders. If we have inadvertently failed to acknowledge copyright, please contact the publisher.

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

CONTENTS

Preface vii
Acknowledgements viii

1 What is literature? Clearing the ground 1

2 What is literature? Definitions and resemblances 19

3 Fiction 39

4 Psychological reactions to fiction 53

5 Imagination 69

6 Metaphor 81

7 Interpretation and intention 96

8 Literature, truth and morality 108

9 Literary appraisals 124

Notes 138
Bibliography 148
Index 149

1
WHAT IS LITERATURE? CLEARING THE GROUND

Prologue

Suppose you are reading Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, or Chekhov's *Ward Number Six*. What you are reading is a poem, a play, a novel, a short story. We would also say you are reading a work of literature, or of imaginative literature – though in the case of *King Lear*, some might be inclined to deny that, wishing to distinguish literature sharply from drama.

Now suppose you are reading the classical Athenian politician Demosthenes's *Philippics*, Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial*, the Roman poet Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*, or the Sermon on the Mount from the New Testament. What you are reading now is a work of oratory, an essay, philosophy or scripture. But, again, we would also say you are reading a work of literature – what you are reading is both a work of oratory, an essay, philosophy or scripture and a work of literature.

Suppose, finally, you are reading Frederick Forsyth's *Day of the Jackal*, the products of a Victorian poetaster, a story in *Just Seventeen*, or the Reverend C. T. Awdry's *George, the Big Engine*. What you are reading now is a novel, poetry (or verse), or stories. We might also say you are reading literature, but we would scarcely say it was serious literature – it is 'popular', or 'light', or 'children's' literature. Or some might say it was not ('was not really') literature at all. It is not good, or important, enough, they might say, to deserve the title of literature.

These are some of the things we must explain in trying to understand what literature is. Three things seem to stand out immediately: we may doubt whether drama is literature; a literary work need not be exclusively, or even primarily, a literary work; and we may use the term 'literature' and its cognates in either a neutral or an honorific way. I will say something about each of these points in turn.

The problem of drama

Why should we doubt whether drama is literature? One answer is that drama is a performing art, while literature is not. We do not perform novels or poetry, it may be said, while we do perform dances, plays and music. Hence drama must belong with the performing arts, not with literature.

This conclusion is too hasty. Why should not drama belong to both categories? Why should not some works of literature be performable? Indeed, we may wonder whether someone giving a reading of a novel (e.g. on the radio), or a public recital of some poetry, is not giving a performance just as much as actors are in acting a play. If they are, then novels and poetry are as performable as plays, although they may not 'require' to be performed in the way plays normally do.

Yet there are plays which clearly cannot be literature – mime plays, for instance. The reason why they are not literature indicates, unsurprisingly, not only the solution of the question of drama, but also something about the nature of literature itself. Literature is necessarily linguistic; it is distinguished from painting, sculpture, music, dance, architecture, etc., by its use of language. Language, that is words, is to the author roughly (only roughly) what paint is to the painter. The difference between the poet and the novelist on the one hand, and the dramatist on the other is that the poet and the novelist are restricted to language alone, while the dramatist is not. The poet and the novelist have nothing but language with which to depict character, action, feeling, thought, location, etc., whereas the dramatist can rely also on gesture, movement, and visual or sound effects. But that does not mean the dramatist's work cannot be classed as literature. It will count as literature to the extent that he, too, uses language as the nondramatist author does to depict character, thought, feeling, action, etc., and this is a matter of degree. At one extreme, there are mime plays, which are the works of mime artists, and dance dramas which are the works of choreographers, not playwrights. Since language has no part in these works, they are not classifiable as literature. We also have acted, but wordless, plays (not mimes), such as Samuel Beckett's *Breath*. At the other extreme, we have radio plays without sound effects, in which the whole work is done, as in a novel, by the author's use of language, and the actors' speaking of it; and these are works of (dramatic) literature. In between lie the majority of dramas, such as *King Lear*, in which language is used in conjunction with the resources of the stage; and in these plays, too, the author's use of language justifies us in calling them literary works. (That is why film scripts are rarely classifiable as literary works – in films language is almost invariably subordinate to the visual image.) Drama is thus a category that cuts across literature. To say that a work is literary is partly to say that it uses language. To say that it is drama is to say, among other things, that it standardly requires to be performed. But being a work that

requires to be performed does not prevent a play from being a work of literature as well.

But what do we mean by 'language'? We can speak of the language of music or films, the language of dance, the language of love, and body language. ... If 'language' has so many meanings, it may seem, not much will be excluded, so not much will be being claimed when we say that literature is essentially linguistic. The sense of 'language' in which I make this claim, however, is a restricted one. 'Language', as I am using the term, refers to a lexicon, syntax and semantics, such as is exhibited by French, English, Russian, Chinese, etc. Music, films, dance, love and bodies do not have a language in that sense. There is no lexicon of love or syntax of body language as there is of Chinese and French. Nor is there a semantics of music. It is only language in the restricted sense that is essential to literature.

Uses of 'literature'

Having settled the doubt about drama, we can turn to the other two points that emerged from my brief survey of usage. These are more positive. The first was that literary works need not be exclusively literary works. A work on urn burial, philosophy or science may also be a work of literature, whether good or bad. We may agree or disagree with the speculations Sir Thomas Browne founds on the evidence of urn burial, and we may also enjoy or dislike the metaphors and cadences in which he presents those speculations. The first response expresses an archaeological, the second a literary, interest. It seems, moreover, that works which are not literary works at all may yet have literary qualities, good or bad. A philosophical argument may be expressed clumsily or elegantly, a text book may be vivid or dull, and even the minutes of a board meeting may be written in a way that is either crisp or soggy. We would not call these things literature, as we would call *Urn Burial* or *On the Nature of Things* literature; and if we ask why not, we raise the second positive point that emerged from our survey of usage. For the answer seems to be either that their literary qualities play a minor role in the whole work, and therefore they are not classifiable as literature, whether good or bad; or else their literary qualities are poor and unremarkable, and therefore they do not deserve the honorific title of (good) literature.

In the one answer, we are classifying works neutrally, by the size of the role that literary qualities play in the whole work, whether those works exhibit good or bad instances of such qualities; in the other answer, we seem to be classifying works only according to the value of their literary qualities. And the second positive point was just that literature and its cognates may be used in a neutral or an honorific way. When we contrast literature with science or history, or contrast serious literature with escapist literature, we are using the word 'literature' in a neutral, value-free way. If we say of a *Just Seventeen* story that it is not literature, we are using the word in an honorific

way – the story, we imply, simply lacks literary *value*, and for that reason should not have the title of literature conferred upon it. The cognate phrases 'work of literature' and 'literary work' function in the same way. If asked to place all the books on a desk into two piles, one labelled 'literary works', or 'works of literature', and the second labelled 'other works', we might put books we regard as worthless fiction onto the first pile, along with *Anna Karenina* (taking 'literary works' in a neutral way), or we might put them onto the second pile (taking it in an honorific way). In neither case would we be wrong; we would merely be classifying according to the different principles which the flexibility of the expression permits. That is why a crisp agenda for a board meeting, if a copy were on the desk, would normally be placed on the pile labelled 'other works'. For by neither principle would it normally be classified as literature; its nonliterary qualities as a business document play a far more prominent part in the whole than its sole literary quality of crispness; so that prevents it from being classified as literature according to the neutral sense of the word. Its sole quality of crispness has only mild literary value; so it does not count as literature in the honorific sense, either.

These last points suggest we can define 'literature' in two ways, corresponding to the neutral and the honorific uses of the word. We can define it, we may think, either as writings that have a certain neutral property, or properties, 'literariness'; or as writings that have a high degree of a certain type of value, 'literary value'. This could only be a first step of course, for until we eliminated the words 'literariness' and 'literary value' from them, the definitions would be circular. So the next step, apparently, would be to establish which features of writings confer literariness, and which confer literary value upon them.

A double programme thus seems, dauntingly, to present itself. However, I intend to follow only one of them, the easier one of establishing what it is that makes a work a literary work. The second question, what makes a literary work a good one, is a question I shall not discuss here. Of course, the answer to that question is provided in an empty way by the answer to the first one: what makes it a literary work at all? For if literary works are works with certain properties, then good literary works will be those with good instances of those properties, just as, if metaphysical books are inquiries into the nature of things, then good metaphysical books will be those which are good instances of inquiries into the nature of things. But that does not tell us what counts as a good or bad instance. Although I shall not discuss that question explicitly here, I shall give reasons in Chapter 9 for thinking there is a subjective element in literary appraisals and that the goodness of literary works therefore lies partly in the mind of the beholder.

Leaving the question of literary value on one side for the present, then we might think we ought to start the search for literariness now; but we need to settle a preliminary issue first, an issue which may have occurred to some

readers already. The issue is this: I have been speaking of literature and the definition of literature, in terms of writings, and all the examples I have given so far have been of written works. But this way of speaking is inaccurate, the examples misleading. For many literary works are not written at all; they are oral works. It might seem a simple matter to resolve this issue. All we have to do, we might think, is replace the word 'writings' with some such phrase as 'written or oral works' and it is true, that would remedy the inaccuracy. But it would tell us nothing of the role of writing in literature, or of the complex and interesting relations of the written and the spoken word. These relations deserve to be explored a little, not least because they rarely are. I shall therefore delay examining the idea of literariness until I have said something about them. This in turn will lead to a discussion of the identity criteria of literary works, from which we shall return eventually to the question of literariness.

Oral and written literature

What has writing to do with literature? Since many literary works were composed, and hence existed, before they were written down (and some never have been written down, and never will be), it is clearly wrong, despite the etymology of the word, to define literature as we did just now, and as the dictionary does, in terms of writings alone. Literature may exist in either written or oral form. Indeed, all the earliest literature existed only in oral form; the market place storyteller, the ancestor of today's novelist, recited oral, not written, stories. This point, once stated, seems numbingly obvious and we may wonder, therefore, why we nevertheless speak as if it were not even true, never mind obvious; as if, that is, literature consisted entirely of written works.

The answer, I suspect, is twofold. First, the great bulk of extant, and especially of sophisticated, literature, whether originally oral or not, is now in written form; it is this that meets the eye, especially, perhaps the scholar's eye. Second, we tend to suppose, perhaps, that whereas all oral literature could exist in written form (as most surviving literature that was originally oral does now), not all written literature could exist in oral form. This second reason deserves a closer look. There seem to be two claims involved in it, one of causal, the other of logical, impossibility: one, that long and complex works such as, say, Proust's twelve volume *Remembrance of Things Past*, could not have been composed in unwritten form, since they exceed the mind's ability to compose, revise and edit with the resources of memory alone; the other is that some written works exploit features peculiar to written language, and consequently could not have been composed or subsequently exist exactly the same in unwritten form.

The first claim is hard to settle conclusively. On the one hand, the human mind is capable of prodigious achievements, but there are surely limits to

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

what it can do unaided; and if these are not transgressed in Proust's work, there must be possible works which would transgress them. (I am not thinking here of unfinished works of infinite length, but simply of very long completed works.) On the other hand, no oral work can be too long or complex to have been originally composed in written form or be subsequently written down. However, the deficiencies of our memories could well have been made good by the use of such technologically advanced extensions to them as tape recorders rather than by writing. And while it is hard to see how the considerable body of theory and instructions for its application, upon which the invention of recording devices depends, could possibly have existed without the prior invention of writing – particularly when we include the writing of numerals and the construction of wiring diagrams – this is irrelevant. For 'literature' might still have been an oral phenomenon. There seems no particular reason to think that any written work is so long or complex that it could not have been composed orally.

If the first claim is contestable, though, the second is not. Works that make use of certain resources of written language cannot exist unchanged in oral form. We must think here, of course, only of the resources that are peculiar to written language. It would be wrong to cite the use of bold type, for instance where that is simply the written counterpart of oral emphasis, just as the question mark is the written counterpart of a questioning intonation in speech. The cases we should consider are, rather, the use of italics to indicate introspection or a change of time; of the symbolic layout of some metaphysical religious poetry (the altar poems of Herbert, the cruciform verses of Traherne or the diamond shapes that Dylan Thomas sometimes uses); of the deliberate use of lower case letters as in ee cummings's verse and much contemporary poetry; of acronyms and eye rhymes. These devices may sometimes be trivial, but they are still features of literary works, and they have no oral counterparts; they are logically dependent on writing. The literary works employing them have therefore an indispensably written, or graphic, dimension. They could neither be composed nor exist intact in oral form, whereas all oral literature could have been composed and could exist in written form.

These facts may explain why we are tempted to think of literature in terms of writing, but they cannot, of course, justify us in succumbing to the temptation. All that they tell us is that some works of literature (not all works) could not have existed as they do if writing had not been invented. It is salutary to recall that the role played by writing in literary composition is often one that could as well be, and sometimes is, played by a tape-recorder. The poet often composes his verses orally before he writes them down line by line, referring to those he has already composed and written down, as he might equally well have referred to his recorded voice. Prose writers often do the same. Writing functions here simply as a means of recording, not as an element in the work itself – it is comparatively few works that have an indis-

pensably graphic dimension. Hence the composition of long and complex works depends on writing only secondarily; an extension to our memory is what is primarily required, and it is that which the invention of writing facilitates.

What I have just said may give the impression that it is mere coincidence that many literary works are composed in oral stages which are then written down. But that would be a mistake. They are composed orally because they are destined for an audience in the original meaning of that term (people who hear). They are to be heard, as well as read; and it is only to be expected that the author should want to hear them himself as he composes.

It is true that some written works exploit the peculiar qualities of written language. It follows from this, of course, not only that they could not have been composed entirely orally, but also that they could not be fully appreciated if they were only heard and never read; a purely auditory apprehension of those works must leave something out. But it is equally true that in many of those works, and in a host of others, there is also an indispensably auditory dimension. They cannot be fully appreciated if they are only read, and never heard. Just as some literature exploits the written, so most exploits the spoken, word. We noticed, discussing drama, that poetry can be recited in a public performance. Whether it is heard in private or in public, all poetry is meant to be heard, even if some is also meant to be seen, but much prose also requires to be read aloud in order to be fully appreciated. We have only to think of the King James version of The Bible or Sir Thomas Browne's writings to be convinced of this, and even in prose works that do not need to be heard in their entirety there are often passages which are not fully appreciated if they are not spoken.

Of course, there are many prose works in which the auditory element is comparatively insignificant, and which not only do not require, but may even require not, to be heard in their entirety. It is possible that the proportion of such works is increasing, for it is hard to find a modern analogue of Sir Thomas Browne. (There is, no doubt, a sociological explanation for this; we read silently more quickly than we read aloud, and we have less time to read than most people who read used to have.) But for all poetry and much prose, it is still true that it must be heard in order to be fully appreciated. For these works, the written word exists not merely to be read silently as we may read an advertisement in the newspaper, but also to be heard, whether aloud, *sotto voce*, or in the reader's imagination. (It is worth remembering how recently it is that people gave up reading aloud to others, as characters do in Jane Austen's fictional drawing rooms – a decline that the advent of the audio tape may be starting to reverse.) The role of writing here is like, though not exactly like, the role of the score in music; the written word, like the musical notation, requires to be translated into sound.

The likeness, I said, is not exact; and we should not be misled by it, for the score and the written word are importantly different. Musical notation

has no other function than to represent sounds, or qualities of and relations between sounds, whereas the written sentences of literature that require to be read or spoken aloud (and, of course, written sentences in general) standardly have the additional quality of being meaningful – a quality they possess whether they are read in silence or aloud. The reading of a musical score is in this sense a merely auditory affair – we either imagine the sounds represented in it, or directly produce them – while the reading of a literary or any other written work is not. Music, we noted earlier, does not have a semantic dimension in the way that literature does.

There are a few literary works with an indispensable graphic dimension, many with an indispensable auditory dimension, and some with neither. Works with an indispensable auditory dimension require to be heard, however they were composed; works with an indispensable graphic dimension may require to be both heard and read. But to return to the definition of literature, literary works are to be defined, if at all, in terms neither of written nor of oral, but of linguistic composition – a conclusion obvious enough, once it is drawn, and one already foreshadowed in our investigation of the status of drama. We could have literature without writing, and we could even have literature without speech; but we could not have literature without language.

Compositions and their forms: copies and originals

We have now answered the questions raised by the existence of oral as well as written literature. But before examining definitions of literariness, we should consider one more question that arises out of what we have just been saying, for not everything is clear here. The same composition can exist in written and in oral form; but what is the relation of the composition itself to the oral and the written forms, which one, if any, is the composition? This question involves another. The same composition can be spoken and recorded, copied and printed, any number of times. What is the relation of the repeated recitations and recordings, or of the printed copies, to the composition of which they are recitations, recordings or copies? These questions extend beyond literature; they arise for any linguistic composition. A political speech and a cooking recipe, for instance, can exist in written or oral form, and can be copied or recorded just as easily as a poem, and the questions that arise for a poem will, therefore, also arise about the speech or recipe – What is the relation of the recipe or speech to the sounds or inscriptions made in producing it, and what is its relation to its copies or recordings? As the questions are so general we can discuss them initially in terms of some nonliterary and simple examples; their very plainness will prevent us from being distracted by the irrelevant qualities that literary examples might also afford.

First, whenever we write or speak, whenever we produce a linguistic

composition, however slight, we utter sequences of written marks (inscriptions) or sounds. (For reasons of economy, not disrespect, I shall ignore here nonvocal, nonwritten languages, such as the American Sign Language. My remarks can, however, be easily adjusted to accommodate them.) These inscriptions or sounds have, as well as other features, certain grammatical and semantic ones that are determined by the rules of the language which we speak or write. These rules determine both how the sequences of sounds or inscriptions constitute words and sentences, and what the sentences mean. (There is a large and pitfall-ridden field of theory on how exactly these sequences get a meaning. As our interest is not in that question – we are presupposing that somehow they do – I shall not venture into it.) The rules also determine (together with certain intentions of the utterer) what statements, questions, orders, etc. we issue when we utter the sentences that are constituted by those sequences of sounds or inscriptions that we speak or write. Thus, whether the sentence 'I will pay you five dollars' is a promise or merely a prediction depends both on the rules of English and on the intentions of the speaker. (We shall return to this topic in more detail in Chapter 2, when discussing the 'speech act' definition of 'imaginative literature'.)

Concatenations of sentences in which statements, questions, orders, etc. are issued form what is sometimes called a discourse. Occasionally, in the limiting case, when by rather obscure criteria, the statement, question, etc. is considered to be both important enough and complete, single sentences may form a discourse. More often they do so only in large numbers, when they are connected by the fairly clear relation of identity of authorship and the fairly murky relation of identity of topic, and when, again, they are considered important enough and complete. Simonides's brief epitaph on the Spartans who died at Thermopylae is a one-sentence discourse:

> Go stranger, tell the Lacedaemonians
> that here, obeying their commands, we lie.[1]

Aeschylus's tragedy *The Persian Women*, written a little later, is a discourse consisting of many sentences. An anthology of poetry is not a discourse, although it contains many discourses. Nor is an encyclopedia or a telephone directory. But poems, political tracts, novels, scientific treatises and parliamentary speeches are all discourses.

What is the relation of the discourse to the sequences of sounds or inscriptions in issuing which we produce our discourses? Is the discourse just those sounds or inscriptions? Or is it both those and the indefinitely many copies that may be made of it in recordings or printings? Or is it neither of these? The question, I remarked, does not concern discourses alone. 'Discourse' is a term we reserve for the grander products of our linguistic endeavours, but exactly the same puzzle arises for the fruits of our humbler

efforts as well. If anyone writes or says the words 'Cats eat fish', and thereby states that cats eat fish (i.e. is not merely practising English pronunciation, talking in his sleep, etc., but expressing his belief), the question arises at once, and in the same way as for *Anna Karenina*, of the relation of his statement to the sequence of sounds or inscriptions in uttering which he made it. Just as there is a related question for *Anna Karenina* of the relation of the novel to the many thousands of copies or recordings that are made of it, so there is a related question for the statement of its relation to the many copies or recordings that could, but probably will not, be made of it.

Let us discuss the supposed statement *Cats eat fish* first. Not that there are not important differences between them. *Anna Karenina* is a novel, a work of fiction, whereas *Cats eat fish* is a simple statement of fact; and the one is a much more complex thing than the other. In considering the sentence *Cats eat fish* as a statement, for instance, we assess it solely in terms of truth and falsity. But in considering *Anna Karenina* as a novel, we do not assess it – or certainly not directly, or solely – in terms of truth and falsity; a whole gamut of dimensions is brought in with the novel which are inappropriate to the consideration of utterances merely as statements. But these differences are not relevant now, for both are alike in that they are issued in words spoken or written, and (let us suppose) subsequently repeated, in sequences of sounds or inscriptions. It is only the relation of the thing in each case – of the nonfiction statement or the set of (mainly) fictional utterances – to its sequences of sounds or inscriptions that concerns us now. The further, distinctive, characteristics of fictional, and other literary, works are irrelevant to this concern.

Is the statement *Cats eat fish* just the particular sequence of sounds or inscriptions ('Cats eat fish') uttered at a certain time by a certain speaker or writer? Surely not; for that particular sequence may have been made in a wavering tenor voice or printed large in red ink; and the quality of the voice or the size and colour of the ink, like many other features of the sounds or inscriptions, are clearly no part of the statement made when the sequence 'Cats eat fish' is uttered. Besides, the sounds are evanescent, and the inscriptions can be erased, yet the statement made in uttering them can be considered long after that particular sequence of sounds or inscriptions has ceased to exist – and considered, too, by people who never heard or read that sequence.

What this suggestion fails to recognise is that the statement, and the sentence in uttering which it is made, are not identical with, but an abstraction from, those sounds and inscriptions. We noticed just now that the sounds and inscriptions we produce when we speak or write have certain grammatical and semantic features that are determined by the rules of the language we are speaking or writing. These rules confer on the raw sounds or marks we make the characteristic of grammaticality and meaning; they make them utterances of sentences, and in the appropriate circumstances,

issuings of statements. When we speak and write, we produce sounds and inscriptions, certainly; but it is only certain features of those sounds and inscriptions that are grammatically and semantically relevant; the others can be ignored. It is for this reason that both the sentence and the statement may be called an abstraction from the sounds and inscriptions uttered in making them. It is for this reason, too, that a statement can be made indifferently either in speech or in writing. Ink marks have few physical characteristics in common with sounds. But they both have the same grammatical and semantic features by conforming to the same linguistic rules, rather as two different types of material can both realise the same design. It is by virtue of their possessing the same grammatical and semantic features that uttering these two quite different sequences can constitute making the same statement.

We should, then, amend the suggestion I have just rejected. The statement, we should say, is the sentence that is abstracted from the whole sequence of sounds and inscriptions which the author utters. In uttering the sounds and inscriptions that he does, the author also utters words which constitute a sentence and have meaning. In seriously uttering that sentence with that meaning, he makes a statement; the statement is just that sentence which he utters in making the sounds or inscriptions that he does. (This is oversimplified; it will get refined shortly.) The relation of the sentence which constitutes the statement to the sounds or inscriptions he utters is thus analogous to the relation of a move in chess to the physical motions performed in making it. You can move a piece across the board without making a move in the game, just as you can utter the sequence 'Cats eat fish' without making a statement; in both cases, for instance, you may be pretending or demonstrating. There are many features of the physical movements involved in moving a piece in chess which are irrelevant, such as whether one lifts the piece two or four inches above the board, with which hand one lifts it, or which part of the piece one holds. Similarly, there are many features of the sounds or marks one utters in making a statement that are equally irrelevant, such as the timbre or volume of the voice, the style of the handwriting, the colour of the ink or the size of the type face. What constitutes the sequence of motions as a move in chess is the rules of the game, just as what constitutes the sequence of sounds or inscriptions as a statement is the rules of the language. Finally, making a move in chess is not something over and above performing the motions involved in lifting the piece and putting it down; it is performing that sequence of movements in a way that conforms to the rules of chess. Similarly, making a statement is not something over and above uttering a sequence of sounds or inscriptions; it is uttering that sequence of sounds or inscriptions in a way that conforms to the rules of the language.

There is a plausible objection that might be made here. It is that the suggestion just made is no real improvement on the suggestion it is supposed

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com