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Parergon

The concept of *parergon* is crucial to understanding current ways of looking at artworks and indicates a deconstructionist sensibility¹. *Parergon* forms a core concept in Jacques Derrida's aesthetics and is illuminated specifically in his influential work, *The Truth in Painting* (1987) (the translated version of *La Vérité en Peinture* of 1978). Although Derrida has expounded the concept of *parergon* in particular, it has wider application to interpretation in general so that reference to other writers is also relevant.

To facilitate an understanding of the nature of *parergon*, some of its ways of manifestation are listed as follows:

***Parergon* as uncovering or interpretation**

Derrida's *parergon* is a supplementary reworking of Heidegger's *ergon*. In *The End of Philosophy* Heidegger (1973: 5) interprets *ergon*, as encountered in Aristotle's ideas, as follows:

Thought in the Greek manner, the work is not work in the sense of the accomplishment of a strenuous making. It is also not result and effect. It is a work in the sense of that which is placed in the unconcealment of its outward appearance and endures thus standing or lying. To endure means here: to be present at rest as work.

Ergon as `work` in this context refers to the act of unravelling or figuring out in the broadest sense. Derrida, however, extends *ergon* by textualising it. In the Derridean context, both artworks and the interpretation around it can be seen as *erga*. Derrida (1987: 22) argues that:

One makes of art in general an object in which one claims to distinguish an inner meaning, the invariant, and a multiplicity of external variations *through* which, as through so many veils, one would try to see or restore the true, full, originary meaning:

¹ The word *parergon* is derived from the Greek words *ergon*, meaning `work`, and *para*, meaning `beside`, `alongside of`, `beyond` (G.E.L. 1935, s.v. `` and `ápyos`.

one, naked. Or again, in an analogous gesture, by asking what art *means* (to say), one submits the mark `art` to a very determined regime of interpretation which has supervened in history: it consists ... in interrogating the *vouloir-dire* of every work of so-called art, even if its form is not that of saying.

Parergon accordingly refers to the discourse of interpretation around the work that attempts to uncover the `presence` of the *ergon*/artwork in its concealed form. `Inner meaning` is used in an ambiguous way by Derrida, since he criticises the different endeavours that have ensued in history to unveil ultimate Truth as a single determined entity, yet he acknowledges the process of interrogation which has taken on multiple forms and can be decoded as *parerga*. Derrida further sees *parergon* as designating:

... a formal and general predicative structure, which one can transport intact or deformed or reformed according to certain rules, into other fields, to submit new contents to it It is the concept of the remark, of this `General Remark`, ... without being part of it and yet without being absolutely extrinsic to it. [Derrida 1987: 55]

This means that one person's interpretation or act of unraveling meaning can be accepted, deconstructed or revised as long as it is consistent with what the text has to say. Remarks or *parerga* as deconstruction have radically departed from the notion of universality (the `General Remark`), yet principally they are still about finding meaning (previously one universal Truth).

***Parergon* as deconstruction**

Parerga as deconstructionist strategies are usually demonstrated by way of `unclosing` or deconstructing texts rather than explanation as a kind of `theory`, since deconstruction's foundation premise regards a deconstructing of critical judgement itself. It is, however, not incorrect to argue that most critical undertakings or interpretations are deconstructionist in character. Any attempt at critical assessment or analysis does include a certain amount of decomposing and/or resolving. J Hillis Miller (1986: 115) argues that deconstruction is really not that new, but is "only the current version of a long tradition of rhetorical study going back to especially the Greeks, though to some degree to an aspect of Greek thought that has tended to be obscured or effaced". An agenda for deconstruction is found, for example, in Aristotle's emphasis on the arbitrariness of the linguistic symbol (Givón 1989: 76-77):

... Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections of the soul, and written marks are

symbol of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. [*De Interpretatione*, translated by J L Ackrill 1963.]

All concepts or theories that rest on arbitrariness are not deconstructionist, however. According to Derrida (Norris 1983: 157), to deconstruct is “to bring out a radical disjunction between logic and rhetoric, intention and sense, what language explicitly says and what its figural workings constrain it to mean.” According to Norris, deconstruction “is a rigorous consequence ... compelling for the fact that [it] work[s] to question or confound all normative concepts of logic meaning” (Norris 1983: 157). These normative concepts primarily regard conventional or traditional ways of analysis, with specific reference to causal, authoritative or logic argumentation. Deconstructionist interpretation cannot be sustained by a stance of `either/or` that is usually encountered in such systems and leads to diverse and contradicting perspectives.

The radicality of deconstruction as critical theory is therefore located in its active praxis of deconstructing texts (*erga*), viewpoints and traditional absolutes. Within deconstruction the possibility always exists of adding to, questioning and/or revising existing interpretations, so that texts are continually subject to `reinscribing` or `over-reading`. This process is reflected in the deconstructionist artist's use of materials. A flux of `both/and` interpretations is valid due to the ambiguous nature of imagery and materials.

***Parergon* as framing**

Parergon as interpretation reflects the artificial framing of vision in the use of the camera. The aperture in the visual field, thus in the mind's eye, seems to be imbued with personal preferences, however `objective` the viewer might try to be. Framing refers to an `arbitrary bounding of a field of vision creat[ing] a situation of acknowledged fragmentation as it isolates a discrete part of a, theoretically, infinite continuum`. (Rosand 1981: 28). Accordingly, David Rosand (1981: 28) sees framing, that is, articulating a point of view, as composing, the selecting of parts from a greater whole, although the `cropped` images continue beyond the `frame` via mental imaging.

Framing or the point of view points to the relationship between viewer and world, and viewer and artwork². According to Heidegger, man/woman already belongs to Being as world (his notion of *Weltbild*) before discourse or framing arrives on the scene, so that discourse attempts to disclose that to which we already belong (Caputo 1985: 253). Consequently, *parergon* as disclosure of the *ergon* presumes a oneness with the subject (artwork). The idea of the *parergon* reflecting the subject/object relationship is a Romantic notion, a kind of `window to the world` concept. The window is an effective metaphor for the point of view, creating a kind of framework or perspective from which the present (or artworks) can be viewed.

The idea of a window is not only a Romantic metaphor, but is already found in Renaissance conceptions. Joseph Masheck (1991: 35) refers to Leon Battista Alberti's famous idea of `a painted image as window like`, which "does not simply apply to the (overall) surface of a painting, assumedly framed". According to Masheck, the "flat surface with edges precedes what Alberti calls a window, which is a construct, willfully imposed". He goes on to argue that the `window` idea is "a trope, and a signal of the essentially fictive poetics of painting". The idea of a `window`, a `frame` or a *parergon* concerns the viewer and the artist. The viewpoints of both contribute to construct meaning.

Relatedness

Meanings are not universally valid, but constituted by personal acquaintance and the point of view. *Parerga* are therefore relative. Referring to description and the point of view, Givón (1989: 1) argues "The description of an entity is incomplete, indeed uninterpretable, unless it specifies the point of view from whence the description was undertaken". Accordingly, "A picture is not fully specified unless its frame is also specified" (Givón 1989: 2), indicating an important relation between meaning and

² The notion of the frame of understanding has been radicalised to perspectivism with Nietzsche and Ortega Y Gasset.

context. Givón (1989: 2) says: "The meaning of an expression cannot be fully understood without understanding the context in which the expression is used".

Since the content of an image is open-ended, it is via context or the viewer's overreading of the *ergon*, in a culturally determined way, for instance, that its `concealed` meaning is disclosed. A context, according to Givón, is a mental construct, involving different degrees of consciousness (1989: 98). *Parergon* as uncovering of the context of the text via the point of view is also a mental construct.

The notion of interpretation as a relative construct (also *parergon*) has become evident in the writings of several theorists. Conceptual discourses on art have until recently been dominated by the logocentric tradition of Idealism in which projects of progress (through the postulation of universal answers) are undertaken via mind constructs. Such assuring conceptual premises are dismantled the moment the *parergon* takes place. In deconstruction value dichotomies and hierarchies such as true and false are questioned as they have been historically produced. Deconstructionists in general do not foresee that universal or objective values will discontinue, but they question the validity of such values as local values (Fekete 1988: 124), that is, that they will be valid for all persons, cultures and times.

The notion of locality or specificity is of special importance in *parerga* as relative constructs. French phenomenologist, Paul Ricoeur broadens this concept by identifying one of the pivotal problems in hermeneutics as centering on epistemological specificity (Ricoeur 1981: 165), since the concept of interpretation seems, at the epistemological level, to be opposed to the concept of explanation. This concept has given rise to many disputes since the time of Dilthey and Schleiermacher (Ricoeur 1981: 165).

According to the tradition to which the latter authors belong, interpretation has certain subjective connotations, such as the implication of the reader in the processes of understanding and the reciprocity between interpretations of the text and self-interpretation. This reciprocity is known by the name of the hermeneutic circle; it entails a sharp opposition to the sort of objectivity and non-implication which is supposed to characterise the scientific explanation of things. [Ricoeur 1981: 165]³

³ The hermeneutic circle is a concept already emerging in classical philological hermeneutics, the circle being the grammatical whole-part relationship. Words are understood in the context of the sentence, and the meaning of the sentence is

Other theoreticians such as Hans-Georg Gadamer radically influenced hermeneutics by altering its course from scientific verification (or explanation) to a theory or method of understanding. The move away from `truth` as Idealist notion as still propounded by Kant, to `method` at the turn of the century (initiated by Nietzsche) is a crucial turn which has implications for the notion of *parergon* as uncovering truth or understanding.

Gadamer sees understanding as "a standing within a happening of a tradition, *Überlieferungsgeschehen*" (from Gadamer's first major influential publication on hermeneutics: *Truth and Method: Fundamental Features of a Philosophical Hermeneutic*, 1965: 293) or as *Wirkungsgeschichte*. He views the conditions under which understanding takes place as crucial (Kisiel 1985: 6), a notion which necessitates an acceptance of plurality⁴. A *parergon* in this context will be partly motivated by the condition of the time and place, and will therefore be relative and specific.

The notion of relativism which is operative in the *parergon* can be further illuminated by quoting Derrida's idea of `blindness` : we cannot `see` beyond the personal point of view as frame, and therefore cannot make any authoritative statements. All we have are our own memories and visions (Kelly 1991: 102-104). In such a deconstructionist mind set, all claims to authority are negated, since both artist and different viewers contribute to the meaning of the artwork. The groping gesture of the blind person is metaphoric of the both the artist and the interpreter who gropes in the dark with faint

relevant upon the functions of individual words. The hermeneutic circle theory is sometimes encountered as the hermeneutic spiral.

⁴ According to Ingram (1985: 44), Gadamer's theories reaffirm relativism, `aiming in particular at exploring the movement of understanding in its concrete appropriation of possibility from the transmitted heritage of the past` (Kisiel 1985: 6).

ideas and partial notions of vision, accompanied by memories (Kelly 1991: 103), thus fragments.

Fragmentation

At this point of the argumentation it seems as if *parerga* may be described as the fragmented `unseen` elements in and around the artwork, such as interpretations, meanings and feelings evoked by images, symbolic associations, and the work's Zeitgeist, that is, the spirit of a certain time and place. In broader perspective, fragmentation, as a manifestation of deconstruction, is also noticed in the present age in which consumerism and production dominate. Although fragmentary expression has appeared in multiple forms in history, it is of special importance in the deconstructionist consciousness, a notion that implies that meaning paradigms cannot be stable. This does not imply that interpretation is context-free. Derrida indicates that the structure of the *parergon* is of such a nature that:

... no totalisation of the border is even possible. Frames are always framed: thus, by part of their content. Pieces without a whole, `divisions` without totality [Johnson 1987: 416]

Open-endedness

Contextual frames or *parerga* are always preceded and followed by other frames. The artist makes the artwork within a certain frame of mind which allows the viewer to draw another frame of interpretation around the artwork. These paradigms or contextual structures function in relative manner but are never closed, since viewers differ and works are regarded differently from epoch to epoch.

For Derrida, the `closure` of philosophic concepts - as absolute structures of formalised or systematic knowledge - is the sovereign gesture of logocentric thought (Norris 1983: 22). Closure would imply a starting and finishing point, thus creating barriers and divisions. After the artist has finished the artwork, its boundaries of meaning have been closed. They are, however, simultaneously re-opened by the viewer. In Paul Ricoeur's language, both the artist and the viewer are `talking subjects` (*sprekende subjekte*)

subjects` (*sprekende subjekte*) (Bakker 1973: 163). According to Roland Barthes, the artwork discloses both boundary and perspective, a horizon within the "comforting area of an ordered space" (Sontag 1982: 310). Consequently, as Givón (1989: 45) argues, interpretation hinges on relevance, similarity and/or analogy, drawing associative paradigms around the artwork.

***Parergonal* rules**

Ironically, although a stance of open-endedness has been argued so far, *parerga* are constructed according to `certain rules`, not randomly. Givón (1989: 135) describes such rules as the "unchallengeable information", an epistemic modality. This information provides a paradigmatic beginning in determining the context of the work, already a *parergon*.

Using the metaphor of a coffin for *parergon*, Derrida (1987: 195) argues that this `paradigmatic coffin` of unchallengeable information is constantly vulnerable to being "multiplied, described, serialized, analyzed, detailed, displaced, turned about in all its states (or almost) and from all its angles (or almost)". There are certain imperturbable aspects, which makes the artwork/text stand up to all manipulations of interpretation, "all assaults, ... all perspectives and all anamorphoses" (Derrida 1987: 195, extending his figurative image into a wooden coffin in upright position). As a result of such meanings or interpretations being attached to the artwork, the latter can be transformed by the spectator from its pure physical presentation into a meaningful statement.

Discourse

Discourse is vitally important in the formation of *parerga*, since images are decoded or deconstructed via discourse which then leads to different approximations of the artwork's possible meanings⁵. Semioticians such as Roland Barthes have made the

⁵ Chomsky was the first linguist to focus pertinently on a comparatively neglected aspect of linguistic behaviour, namely its creative character, although he recognises a precursor in Wilhelm von Humboldt (Wiener Vol. IV 1973-1974: 324). Since the 1960s, structuralist views of language, also evident in the theories of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, have become a new way of thinking which had a revolutionary effect on most disciplines (Staton 1987: 133).

notion of discourse relevant to other disciplines, acknowledging the differences in meaning expressed by speakers about the same texts, underlining the process of the production of meaning.

Discourse reveals difference, so that an inevitable pluralism is reached within the deconstructionist consciousness. In the Heideggerian thesis the notion of difference, originating in Nietzsche and Saussure especially, means identity, although the idea of difference has no place or determination (Heidegger 1973: xii).

A phenomenological stance

The current emphasis on pluralism and identity is rooted in nineteenth and early twentieth-century aesthetics, more specifically the *aporia* caused by the historicism of the time. Although still based on universals, the emanating idea from the period was the fact that all interpretation should depart from the `thing itself`, the physical artwork, already leaving room for subjective interpretation. The profound disgust with historicism that occurred during this time became acute as a result of the disillusionment with the cult of historical consciousness accompanied by a scientific world view.

The phenomenological position becomes radicalised in twentieth century with, for instance, the Heideggerian thesis (during the fifties) maintains that the interpreter/artist's situation, the occupied horizon, has its own past and future. Heidegger postulates an ontological difference in Being, a concept extended in the theories of Derrida, especially in *Of Grammatology* (1977) and *Writing and Difference* (1978)⁶.

Deconstructionists attack the notion of unified subjectivity as contended by theoreticians such as Gadamer (during the sixties) who foresees a fusion of horizons (Howard 1982: 151), for instance, when great art is experienced. The attainment of understanding then becomes an `event` during which frontiers and boundaries vanish.

⁶ Ontology is a philosophical term which attempts to describe the grounds or the nature of Being: it describes what exists, what there is.

A phenomenological stance in deconstruction is not impossible. If interpretation is premised by difference and subjectivity, such differences can be consolidated in the phenomenological act of looking so that the viewer becomes a “synthesiser who unifies the plurality of impressions, whether he does this at the moment of creating a work ... or at the moment of its viewing” (Howard 1982: 135). Staton (1987: 62) argues that, in the phenomenological position as encountered in deconstruction, there is an attempt to dissolve divisions between the outside (object) and inside self (subject) via consciousness. Such dissolution of boundaries recalls the deconstructionists' break with authority and historicism and points to a position in which the rupture between viewer and artist (the latter maybe the `body` in Derrida's coffin) is healed, considering their mutual experiences as human beings. Then the “unified `is-ness` of existence is experienced” (Staton 1987: 62), an existence which enters the realms of the poetic. Staton (1987: 12) sees a poem:

... as a unified linguistic object, ontologically independent (having its own Being), with laws of its own. These laws, usually in the forms of metaphor, paradox, and irony, structure the poem's language. Through the complex organisation of these analogical structures, ... a poem works to resolve tensions and ambiguities.

Metaphor

The freedom that is experienced in creative work, such as making art or writing poetry, that is, in dealing with metaphor, may be described as play. According to Evans, discourse as *parergon* can also be described as a metaphor or a condition of play, a sort of play which makes play possible, and a sort of play which produces “the play in any playing” (Evans 1991: 177). Decoding these points, it means that discourse is possible in the first instance, because there are differences of opinion. Secondly, because there are such differences, discourse is non-final or a type of `play` of alternatives. The fundamental difference further induces the production of alternative discourses on any text or poetic work.

Since *parergon* is imaginatively postulated, it must be considered in relation to

metaphor, that is, to contexts of inflected meanings⁷. The figurative language of metaphor displays an essential open-endedness which is relevant for both literary works and artworks. An artwork, however, does not function in the same way that a literary work does, since the visual experience is of special importance in the artwork. The meaning of an artwork is not constituted via discourse alone; it is also `viewed`, `recognised` or `experienced`, leading to different semiotic inflections of metaphor. Artworks are therefore "surrounded" by a fragmented plethora of possible metaphoric meanings and the `voice` of an artwork/*ergon* becomes a fragmented complex of different mutations of metaphor (since different viewers are involved), alternatively phrased as *parerga*.

Derrida's definition of discourse as the meeting point of `families` of opinion is relevant here: it is the locus of gathering of both "*Riss* (*Aurriss*, broaching, *Umriss*, the contour, the frame ...) and that of *Zug*, of *Ziehen*, *Entziehen* ... (*trait*, to draw, to attract, to withdraw ...)" (Derrida 1987: 193). The different *parerga* suggest these inflected meanings which artworks seem to assimilate, if such meanings are concurrent with the coffins of imperturbable information. This does not mean, however, that such `coffins` are absolute:

... there is no pure `given` - ... the language of `givenness` or even `pregivenness` is heuristic. It is a means of creating a different perspective from which to view things, a deliberate forcing of issues such that current sediments are stirred up in order to

7 The new emphasis on the importance of metaphoric and poetic language grew with New Criticism. New Criticism, which appeared in the 1930s but only made its presence felt in the 1950s, used metaphorical and ambiguous language, rather than literal and univocal expressions (Abrams 1986: 141). New Criticism, as a method of literary criticism with strong impact on Anglo-American philosophy, dominated literary discourse until the sixties (Staton 1987: 12). The group, which included John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, W.K. Wimsatt, and others, aimed at raising the status quo of the poetry, seen as a cover term for all literature, by establishing it as an independent linguistic object (Staton (1987: 12). Such endeavours were aimed at counteracting logical positivism which have dominated criticism since the nineteenth-century. It is Abrams's viewpoint (1986: 141) that the European influence of Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and others, injected New Criticism with radicality. Some American deconstruction critics such as Houtman and Bloom completely reject New Criticism and see it as grounded in Neo-Kantian or Neo-Idealist philosophy.

discover *other possibilities*. [Ricoeur 1974: xix, editor's introduction]

The notion of imperturbable information in an artwork is a metaphoric given, that is open to interpretation⁸. Just as the Symbolist, Baudelaire, was opposed to the realistic and scientific concepts of art (Weinberg 1969: 13), deconstructionists argue for an annihilation of structures constituted by rational thinking and display a preference for poetic form as something which does not inform, but suggest and evoke; it tries to ambiguously tries to "show exactitude where there is none" (Weinberg 1969: 13)⁹. These words also describe the nature of *parergon* which is suggested via the form of the *ergon*, including, for instance, images and materials.

The notion of the *parergon* is essentially paradoxical, since frames and boundaries are not eliminated in deconstruction, but texts are seen as `unframable` in an absolute sense. A paradox is encountered in the fact that both the argument concerning the recognition of frames and boundaries and the one denying their absolute validity, are equally sound. Johnson (1987: 416) describes the total inclusion of the frame as both "mandatory and impossible". Such ambiguity encountered in deconstruction is propelled by irony which invests artworks with meaning within a fragmented context of undecidable and ever-changing signs.

8 An immanent influence on the poetic nature of *parergon* may be traced in Symbolism at the turn of the last century. The Symbolist manifesto, published in the *Figaro* in 1886, stated that the essential principle of art is to `clothe the idea in sensuous form` (O.C.A., s.v. "symbolism"). This perception closely resembles the notion of the *parergon*.

9 In the Symbolism of poets such as Baudelaire, the Neo-Kantian philosophies, and the art of, for instance, Puvis de Chavannes, Redon and Moreau, a Neo-Romantic revival started. Although twentieth-century New Romanticism has become manifest since the 1970s, Richard Foster, in *The New Romantics: A Reappraisal of the New Criticism* (1962), also interprets the new modes of critical thinking since the 1940s, as a version of Romanticism. (The designation, `Neo-Romantic`, is generally used to describe art and literature just before and after the turn of the century. Another designation, `New Romanticism`, is used in amongst other publications, *The New Romantics* (1988), edited by Andreas Papadakis, to describe the Romantic art of the twentieth century.) Foster (1962: 21) bases his view on the New Critic's preference for poetry; the mention of Truth and Knowledge without reference to observation, logic or clear dogmas; the notion of a `higher` reality; and the often fervid discourse. According to Foster, one of the few advocates of this viewpoint, the real identity of the New Criticism, as literary movement, is constituted by this Romantic sensibility (Foster 1962: 21). This interpretation is valid, since there are clear points of similarity between the more recent forms of New Criticism, already indicated as deconstruction, and the Romantic sensibility.

***Parergon* as flux**

In order to excavate *parerga* a fundamentally relativistic position is inevitable. Yet any viewpoint expressed or *parergon* constructed around artworks cannot be more than structures in themselves, without being terminated. As such, discourse relative to artworks continues and a fundamental undecidability is raised in the deconstructivistic aesthetic by opening up boundaries and creating a flow or a flux in interpretation.

Gadamer decodes the inviolable flux of Being in terms of *Spiel* (play), that is, a social praxis of self-presentation in which, as in the festive act/play, there is a constant dynamic state of becoming, "movement in and out of presence" (Schweiker 1990: 180)¹⁰. In the flux of the hermeneutic circle or spiral, another *parergon* becomes possible the moment the former interpretation is on the verge of closing. As such, the hermeneutic circle is carried out in the binary emergence of event (or artwork) and meaning, or `beginning` and `end`.

Postscript

Idealism seems to be present at all times in all forms of human activity, since humans beings make choices and choices are premised on viewpoint at least, if not on value systems. Idealism denotes measuring, but in its philosophic usage, idealism is distinct from its popular usage¹¹. Most commonly, in philosophical context, it has stood for a theory "to which physical objects can have no existence apart from a mind which is

10 Such a state recalls Greek theatre of fate and cruelty in which the audience was part of the `play`, participating to such an extent that their response sometimes influenced the outcome of the play. In a Dionysian culture of decadence, the notion of play is central as an arbitrary reason for foulplay.

11 In its narrower sense, Idealism originated in the eighteenth century with the postulates of, for instance, Berkeley and Kant.

conscious of them" (Urmson 1960: 134).

Since deconstruction denies permanent or fixed categorisations in arguments or interpretations, the possibility of deconstruction as a type of idealism is usually not argued. The *parergon* is nothing more than an approximation of what an artwork could mean and is not measurable as an `ideal` interpretation or an ultimate Truth. If there is nothing to measure the stance against, idealism is impossible. Derrida maintains that the answer to any question arrests an "abyss" which already presupposes that there is no decidable answer, that is, the answer is dragged down into the abyss in advance. The abyss in the Derridean sense is an infinite space filled with indefinite multiplication (*Of Grammatology* 1976: 163).

Deconstruction's innovation lies in its radically sceptic attitude to all forms of absolutism, yet, it can be demonstrated that deconstruction does reveal a form of idealism. Derrida, instead of measuring his text against the traditional standard, wants to measure it against itself (Evans 1991: xv), but still there is measuring:

Derrida has always being emphatic in his claim that deconstruction is not a simple *rejection* of traditional scholarship and rigor: critical, deconstructive reading [artmaking] has to pass *through* traditional rigor even if the ultimate effect is to show that such rigor is never as absolute and well founded as it claims to be:

... Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. [Evans 1991: xv, quoting from *Of Grammatology* 1976: 158]

With regard to artworks or any other text, such critical production or interpretation is constantly subjected to measuring against the `coffin` of imperturbable information of the artwork/text, alternatively formulated as *parerga* measured against themselves as texts. If the notion of measuring is negated, discourse becomes a futile and meaningless exercise in which the fundamental ability of human beings to understand and respond to artworks is denied.

The idealism surrounding *parergon* is thus not concerned with a total abrogation of traditional standards and methods, but it is an attempt, a project or a strategy to come closed to the meaning(s) of the *ergon*/artwork by allowing different interpretations and viewpoints and disallowing authoritativeness. Although this process is never

terminated, the will or wish to interpret or, in a sceptical sense, the act of doing so, remains.

Parerga seem to be driven by a motivating `desire` (a Romantic concept), a mutation of the metaphor of ideal.

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