

THEATER, REPRESENTATION, TYPES, AND INTERPRETATION

John Dilworth

In the performing arts, including music, theater, dance, and so on, theoretical issues both about *artworks* and about *performances* of them must be dealt with, so that their theoretical analysis is inherently more complex and troublesome than that of non-performing arts such as painting or film, in which primarily only *artworks* need to be discussed. Thus it is especially desirable in the case of the performing arts to look for defensible broad theoretical simplifications or generalizations that could serve to unify and potentially comprehensively explain these difficult cases.

We have attempted one such generalization in a recent article,¹ in which we argue that the concept of representation can be used to explain the nature both of plays involving narrative fictions, and of performances of such plays. In this paper we shall further characterize and defend this account, and also give some reasons as to why it might be preferable to a leading alternative account of such plays and their performances, according to which a play is a *type*, whose performances are *tokens* of that type.²

We shall also briefly discuss the related and generally accepted view that performances are *interpretations* of plays,³ and

show how our representational account introduces some new considerations into the discussion, that serve to undermine some common assumptions as to why that view is plausible.

I. A MINIMALIST ARGUMENT FOR THE REPRESENTATIONALITY OF PLAYS

Rather than merely summarizing our previous account, we shall proceed by briefly reconstructing and extending it, making use of a relatively independent, and theoretically eliminative or minimalist, line of argument for it.

It is generally agreed that at least some artworks are representational rather than non-representational or abstract in nature, in that in some way they represent commonly recognizable entities or events. Thus we distinguish representational from abstract painting, broadly representational narrative works of fiction—including narrative plays—from formalist literary exercises, with similar distinctions being made for other art forms.

Thus it might be thought that a claim that fictional narrative plays, or performances thereof, are *representational* in nature is merely to state the obvious—and thus not to give a *theory* about the nature of such

plays or performances, but merely to clarify the kind or *category* of play, about which genuine theories of plays or performances might be developed. (Henceforth any unqualified mention of plays or performances will be about fictional narrative plays, or performances thereof).

However, this is where the previous point about the desirability of theoretical simplification comes in: since we cannot avoid giving *some* kind of representational analysis of narrative fictional plays, since by definition such plays are representational, why not try to *extend* whatever is the minimum core of required representational analysis in such cases, so as to include the whole range of issues about the nature and interrelations of such plays and their performances?

Next, what would be the simplest way in which this could be done? Since the concept of representation is a relational one, which relates representing objects to that which they represent, an account of optimum simplicity would be one which assigned plays as a group, and performances as a group, to one or the other side of the representing relation.

In the case of performances, the choice is easy: a performance already has to represent the characters and events involved in a narrative fictional play, so presumably performances must be representations, that is, be on the *representing* side of the relation.

However, in the case of plays themselves, the choice is not so immediately clear. Kendall Walton has argued that artworks in general, including plays, are “props” or representations,⁴ but there are—among other issues—significant epistemic reasons for thinking that choice to be unsatisfactory as a core theoretical position.⁵ Another difficulty is that paradigm cases of representational entities are concrete particulars such as paintings, or concrete events such as performances of plays. But whatever

plays are, it seems clear enough that they could not be concrete particulars or events, because of the multiplicity of performances associated with them, so that a claim that plays are representations would be immediately saddled with theoretical difficulties about how non-paradigm, non-concrete entities could nevertheless serve as representations.

Also, such a theory could not simplify the theoretical complexity of the relations of plays and performances, for it would be forced to maintain that complexity via its regarding each such category as being associated with a distinct basic category or kind of representing object.⁶

On the other hand, if plays are instead regarded as entities that are all *represented* by other entities, then such difficulties vanish, and a significant simplification can be achieved as well, as follows.

First, recall that we cannot avoid giving *some* kind of representational analysis of narrative fictional plays, since by definition such plays are representational. It is common to regard such a play more specifically as representing in some way *a fictional world*, which world is made up of the fictional characters and events which that play is about.⁷

But second, if the play in question is *identified with* the relevant fictional world⁸—at least as initial theoretical approximation—then a very economical theoretical structure results, since it is no longer necessary to postulate the existence of plays as distinct entities existing independently of the relevant fictional world whose postulation is minimally required in any case.

Thus the initial picture coming out of this preliminary investigation is one in which a *performance* of a play is (one kind of) *representation* of that play. This view also allows a unified account to be given of the various other significant kinds of entities

associated with a play, such as the author's original manuscript of the play, printed copies of it, a stage director's enhanced or marked-up version of the script as used in rehearsals of her specific interpretation or production of the play, video or movie versions of a performance of such a production, and so on: all of them are, on this account, differing kinds of *representations* of one and the same play, whose differences can be explained as differences in the *specific mode* of representation of that play by each such kind of representation.

At the same time, the narrative fictional play itself is regarded as being *inseparable* from the fictional world associated with it. Thus our initial view could appropriately be described as that of the *fictionality* of plays.⁹

Now clearly this account requires much more elaboration and defense, much of which has already been provided in our previous article. But to explicitly address an obvious initial concern, this account has a ready reply to the objection that on such a view, plays don't exist to any greater degree than do fictional worlds themselves—that is, not at all. The reply is that strictly speaking this is true, but that nevertheless the various ways in which plays plainly do exist as cultural institutions can be explained in terms of the fully acknowledged existence of the many different kinds of *representations* of such a play, as discussed in our previous paper.

II. HAVING AND EATING ONE'S REPRESENTATIONAL CAKE

We mentioned in the previous section that our identification of a play with its corresponding fictional world—the “fictionality of plays” thesis—was an “initial theoretical approximation,” rather than the final word on the topic. We also said that in this section we would recover some of the

attractiveness of a “representing” view of plays, without incurring the theoretical costs discussed in the previous section.

The key to thus recovering a “representing” view of plays, in which a play would *represent* a fictional world rather than strictly being *identical* with it, is based on a realization that that claim is completely consistent with our main claim, namely that plays themselves, as objects of reference, occur only *as represented* by relevant concrete performances, texts and so on. Or in other words, our more complete or refined theoretical picture of talk about plays is one in which such talk is about the play *as represented* by some concrete representing entity, but which represented play is, in its turn, itself *a representation of something else*, namely its own fictional world.¹⁰

Thus the theoretical situation is analogous to that occurring in the case of a representational painting A, in which one of the items B represented by A is *itself* a representational painting, which in turn represents some other item or “representational content” C: a play is analogous to the painting B, as represented by the main painting A, while a fictional world is analogous to *what is in turn represented* by painting B, namely its representational content C.¹¹

This more refined account is also compatible with our claim in the previous section that on our account, a narrative fictional play is not *independent* of, but rather *inseparable* from, the fictional world associated with it—where the relevant concept of inseparability is that of *necessary co-occurrence*, that is, that one could not occur without the other.

This compatibility is possible because the logical features of a representational object are significantly different, depending on whether it occurs as an independent concrete object in its own right, or instead

as *represented by*, i.e., as the *representational content*, of such a concrete object.

In the case of a *concrete* object A that is a representation of B, it is *not* the case that A is logically inseparable from B, in that if A is specifically a *representation* of B, rather than itself being an *instance* or *token* of B, then there is no necessary connection of co-occurrence between A and B.¹²

Example: there is no necessary connection between a physical painting A of a cow B, and the cow B that it represents, because contingent changes could be made to the properties of A which would result in its *no longer* representing B (such as by removal or alteration of A's paint layer), yet which changes would nevertheless preserve the identity of object A itself.

On the other hand, in the case of some *represented* object B (as represented by some concrete object A), which in turn represents object C, arguably B and C *are* logically inseparable from each other.¹³

In the case of a play, the inseparability issue is about the relations of the *play*—as represented by a text or performance—and the *fictional world* that the play in turn represents. Here is a brief demonstration of their inseparability. First, it is clear that a play such as “Hamlet” would *lose its identity* if any alterations were made in its fictional world, in that the play could not be *identified as* the play “Hamlet” independently of its being the play which represents *that particular “Hamlet” fictional world*. Thus it is not the case that the play “Hamlet” could be associated with, or represent, several *distinct* fictional worlds.

At the same time, arguments in our previous article on plays¹⁴ establish—in concert with the refinements introduced in the current paper—that the “Hamlet” fictional world itself is not simply a series of *generic* characters and events, which could serve as a common fictional world for *several distinct plays*, but that instead it has

certain *external relational properties*, such as having been initiated as an object of reference by its author Shakespeare at a particular time and place, that tie it uniquely to the *play* “Hamlet,” which has similar external relational properties, so that the “Hamlet” fictional world occurs only *as represented by* the play “Hamlet.”¹⁵

III. ADVANTAGES OF THE REFINED ACCOUNT

Now that the basic “inseparability” theoretical credentials of the more refined account have been provisionally established, here briefly are some of its advantages over the initial conception. First, intuitively it does seem appropriate to say that a play such as “Hamlet” *represents* (rather than its simply being identical with) the fictional world associated with it, even though, as just shown, that does not prevent a strong case being made for the *inseparability* of a play and its associated fictional world.¹⁶

And more generally, the refined account can potentially explain whatever intuitive plausibility there is to accounts such as that of Walton, which views plays primarily as being representations, without having to incur the theoretical costs of such views as discussed in Section 1 and in our previous article.¹⁷

But perhaps a more significant theoretical advantage of the refined account is that it leaves theoretical room for a representational theory of *non-representational* arts, including performing arts such as plays.¹⁸ For on the refined account, performances of a narrative fictional play themselves represent the play, which in turn—since such narrative fictional plays are “representational” in the conventional sense—represents the appropriate fictional world. But then an account of *non-representational* plays can simply appeal to the first

part of this analysis: in such a case, a performance or other concrete representation of the artwork in question still does *represent* the relevant play, but there is of course no need to postulate that such a play in turn represents something else, since by definition such plays are themselves *non-representational*.

To be sure, this theoretical extension to non-representational plays does show that our initial line of argument in this paper, which drew heavily on conventionally representational plays, was indeed in need of refinement—but that did not prevent it from being a useful initial or first approximation to the more refined theory.

Since the refined theory, or thesis, thus applies to non-representational as well as representational plays, so that it no longer has any integral connection with fictional worlds or fictionality, its initial description as the “*fictionality of plays*” thesis needs to be generalized. But since both the initial and refined views hold that plays only occur *as represented by*, or as the *representational content of*, certain representing objects, the thesis may appropriately be described as the *representational content* or *RC* view of plays and other artworks, though we shall continue to describe our view also as a “representational” approach to plays when that would not be misleading.

IV. THE NON-TYPEHOOD OF REPRESENTATION

There is a fairly common view concerning the performing arts that pieces of music, plays, dances and so on are *types*, and that particular *performances* of such works are *tokens* of those types.¹⁹ Of course, such “type” views are also common for non-performing arts such as literature and film, and even as applied to apparently particular artworks such as paintings.²⁰

We shall now show why the current “representational content” approach to the arts, including the performing arts, must reject such a type-token view. The reason is simple: it is that if an object A represents an X, then object A is by definition *not itself* an X. For if A were itself an X, then that would automatically debar it from representing an X.

For example, a *picture* of a cow—one kind of representation of a cow—is not itself a cow, whereas in genuine cases of a type-token or kind-instance relationship, the token or instance must, of course, itself be an *instance* of the type or kind in question. Thus an individual cow is a token of the type “cow,” because such an individual cow is indeed an *instance* of the *kind* “cow,” that is, it is itself a cow. But in thus *being* a cow, it is debarred from simultaneously being a *representation* of a cow, since, as noted, a representation of a cow cannot itself be a cow.

The outcome of this conceptual argument is that a representation of X cannot be a token of X, so that type-token and representational explanations of artistic cases are inevitably theoretically immiscible or conflicting. Some implications of this difference will serve as important elements in contrasting the two approaches in succeeding sections.

To be sure, these points by themselves do not show that type-token approaches to the arts are wrong. But there is some independent evidence of the wrongness of type-token views in non-theatrical arts,²¹ and we shall in the remainder of this paper provide new examples specifically demonstrating the failure of “type” views in *theatrical* contexts—which failures, in sum, show a need to replace type-token theory, as applied to plays and the other arts, with some other kind of theoretical model that has a comparable level of generality or comprehensiveness.²² We would

claim that something like the current representational theory is the only plausible potential replacement that is available in the theoretical landscape.

V. THE VARIETY OF REPRESENTATIONS OF PLAYS

We mentioned in Section 1 that on our view there are a variety of kinds of representation of a play, including texts, performances and recordings of the play. Here is a brief supporting argument for that view.

First, it is a commonplace that in general there can be a great variety of representations of anything whatsoever, including many kinds of conventional symbolic representations, relatively non-conventional pictorial representations of various kinds, and so on. So one would expect that plays too would be representable in a correspondingly broad variety of ways. This much presumably could be agreed on by all, including those with differing views as to the nature of plays and performances, since the current approach is distinctive only in claiming that plays occur, or are referred to, *solely* as thus represented.

Second, in the case specifically of narrative fictional plays, which are in the conventional sense “representational” plays, any kind of representation of the *fictional world* associated with a play will—if our inseparability thesis is correct for plays and their fictional worlds—result in that representation also counting as a representation of the corresponding *play*.

Thus for example, an *initial outline* by a playwright of the *plot* or *story* of a play she intends to write will, at least minimally, count as a *schematic* or *generic* representation of the relevant play, even before the play is written out in full, because of the hard-to-deny fact that the outline does indeed (schematically) represent the relevant fictional world. And hence the final textual

version of the playwright’s play, which undeniably represents the fictional world of the play to whatever greater degree of specificity is desired by the playwright, is also undeniably an equally specific representation of *the play itself*.

We take it that even that claim need not necessarily be disputed by theoretical opponents, because it might be held by them to be irrelevant to issues concerning the logic and ontology of plays and performances. On the other hand, a view specifically claiming that a play is a *type*, of which the text is a *token*, is inconsistent with the claim, since, as noted in the previous Section, a token of a type X cannot also be a representation of X.

In the case of *performances* of a play whose text thus represents the play, it seems equally undeniable that they do represent the fictional world of the play, and hence represent the play itself.

As for auditory or visual recordings of performances of the play, there are two possible senses in which these might be “copies” of a performance. First, they might in some unusual cases count as genuine performances in their own right, if the director of the production of the play in question *intended* her performance primarily to be viewed via a recording of it, in which case such recordings might count as direct representations of the play, as with any other performances of it. On the other hand, any recording or copy that is not itself a genuine performance will at least be a *representation* of such a performance, and if it has a sufficiently high degree of fidelity or accuracy such a representation *of* a representation of the play will, at least for all practical purposes, be *usable as* a representation of the play.

VI. TYPES, TOKENS, AND INTERPRETATIONS

After the foregoing theoretical extensions and clarifications of the “representational content” or RC view of plays, we shall now proceed to give some reasons as to why that view might be preferable to other accounts of plays and their performances. As previously noted, we shall concentrate on two related common assumptions about plays: first that a play is a *type*, performances of which are *tokens*, and second, that performances are *interpretations* of plays. Some well-known views of Richard Wollheim will provide a useful source of entry into the issues.

Wollheim introduced the type-token distinction into discussions of artworks, including plays and performances,²³ and generic forms of his views on the topic have become commonly accepted presuppositions about plays. A critical issue about types and tokens is that of the properties belonging to each, and of their relations. In Wollheim’s view, types and tokens may not only share properties, but also “*transmit*” them, in the sense that one of them may “transmit” or “pass” a property to the other *because* the former has the property.²⁴

Wollheim then makes three “observations” about, or conditions on, the relations of tokens and types, two of which we shall discuss in some detail.

The first of these is that “there are no properties or sets of properties that cannot pass from token to type,”²⁵ which we shall call the “*property transfer*” condition.

Wollheim justifies his property transfer condition as follows.

With the usual reservations [excluding properties pertaining only to tokens, such as location in space and time, and others pertaining only to types, such as being invented by some person], there is nothing that can be predicated of a performance of a piece of

music that could not also be predicated of that piece of music itself. This point is vital. For it is this that ensures what we have called the harmlessness of denying the physical-object hypothesis in the domain of those arts where the denial consists in saying that works of art are not physical *objects*. For though they may not be objects but types, this does not prevent them from having physical properties. There is nothing that prevents us from saying that Donne’s *Satires* are harsh on the ear, or that Durer’s engraving of St. Anthony has a very differentiated texture, or that the conclusion of “*Celeste Aida*” is *pianissimo*.²⁶

We have quoted Wollheim at length on this point because we agree with his assumption that any adequate theory of art, including a theory of plays, must have *some* way of explaining apparent attributions of physical properties to artworks,²⁷ and that, given the specific theoretical resources of a type theory, his property transfer condition is an unavoidable, core feature of such a theory.

However, we shall show in the next Section that it, in conjunction with a very plausible view about the relations of plays, texts and performances, leads either to the theoretical collapse, or to the inconsistency, of type theory as applied to plays.

VII. HOW THE PROPERTY TRANSFER CONDITION ENSURES THE FAILURE OF TYPE THEORY

Now we shall show, as announced, that the first of Wollheim’s observations, his “property transfer” condition that “there are no properties or sets of properties that cannot pass from token to type,” has the effect of ensuring that a type theory of plays and performances must fail. As a preliminary, it will be helpful to quote some prior remarks of his about the genesis and identification of artistic types:

In the case of any work of art that it is plausible to think of as a type, there is what we have called a piece of human invention: and these pieces of invention fall along the whole spectrum of cases. . . . At one end of the scale, there is the case of a poem, which comes into being when certain words are set down on paper. . . . At the other end of the scale is an opera which comes into being when a certain set of instructions, i.e., the score, is written down, in accordance with which performances can be produced.²⁸

These remarks so far concern only the *genesis*, or coming into being, of the works, not the identification of any relevant types. However, Wollheim goes on to recognize that any relevant types and tokens might be identified in different ways:

There is little difficulty in all this, so long as we bear in mind from the beginning the variety of ways in which the different types can be identified, or (to put it another way) in which the tokens can be generated from the initial piece of invention. . . . For instance, it might be argued that, if the tokens of a certain poem are the many different inscriptions that occur in books . . . then “strictly speaking” the tokens of an opera must be the various pieces of sheet music or printed scores. Alternatively, if we insist that it is the performances of the opera that are the tokens, then . . . it must be the many readings or “voicings” of the poem that are its tokens.²⁹

To be sure, it is clear enough that Wollheim has his own preferences among these “arguments” as applied to plays and their performances, but our first point is that he is surely correct that the identifications *could* reasonably be done in those different ways.

Noel Carroll makes a related point about “considering” different ways of identification as follows:

The difference [of plays from film] is partly a function of the fact that plays may be considered either as literary works or performance works. When a play, like the dramatic text of

Strange Interlude, is considered as a literary work, then our copy of *Strange Interlude* is a token of the art-type *Strange Interlude*. . . . But when regarded from the perspective of theatrical performance, a token of *Strange Interlude* is a particular performance. . . .³⁰

Thus both Wollheim and Carroll agree that in the case of performance arts such as music or theater, identifications of relevant types and tokens are (what could be called) *attitude-relative*: it depends on how some particular person wishes to argue a case, or alternatively how one wishes to “consider” it.

But surely this position serves only to show the *total ineffectiveness* or *collapse* of type theory as applied to plays: the initial appearance of presenting an objective, ontological theory about the nature of plays and performances has given way in each case to a tepid “it all depends on how you look at it” view.

However, without that attitude-relative view, type-token theories would be unable to cope with the plain fact (as Wollheim and Carroll in effect acknowledge by asserting their attitude-relative views) that there are good reasons for regarding *both* texts *and* performances as having the same relation to plays—which relation cannot be that of token to type, on pain of contradiction. For either plays are types that have *texts* as tokens, or they are types that have *performances* as tokens—but not both, because of Wollheim’s *property transfer* condition (namely that “there are no properties or sets of properties that cannot pass from token to type”), which entails that a single type would have *contradictory* properties if both texts and performances were its tokens.

At this point the RC theory shows its strength. According to the RC theory both texts and performances *do* have the same relation to plays, namely that of *representation*: texts and performances can *both*

represent plays, each in their own characteristically different ways, without any contradiction. Thus an RC theory of plays has a fundamental advantage over a type theory in handling such basic relations of texts, performances and plays.

VIII. INTERPRETATION AND WOLLHEIM'S INCOMPLETENESS CONDITION

Wollheim's second condition is that "though any single property may be transmitted from token to type, it does not follow that all will be: or to put it another way, a token will have some of its properties necessarily, but it need not have all of them necessarily."³¹

That second condition serves as a preamble to a third, "*incompleteness*" condition on token-type relations, on which we shall concentrate our comments.

Wollheim observes that

in the case of *some* arts it is necessary that not all properties should be transmitted from token to type. . . . The reference here is, of course, to the performing arts—to operas, plays, symphonies, ballet. . . . [I]n such cases there is essentially an element of *interpretation*, where for these purposes interpretation may be regarded as the production of a token that has properties in excess of those of the type.

"Essentially" is a word that needs to be taken very seriously here. For there are certain factors that might disguise from us the fact that every performance of a work of art involves, or is, an interpretation.³²

Thus, in Wollheim's view a play is a type that has performances as its tokens, but those tokens are *essentially* interpretations of the type, in the sense that they *must* have additional properties not possessed by the type itself. Thus Wollheim's view is that a play itself is *logically incomplete*, in the sense that, in order to achieve a genuine token or instance of the

play, the play itself—the type—must be *interpreted*, in the sense of *supplemented* or *augmented*, with extra properties. Call this the "*incompleteness condition*."³³

A sign of how influential this incompleteness condition has become is that, in a recent symposium on "Staging Interpretations,"³⁴ none of the three participants (Saltz, Hamilton, and Carroll) directly disputes either it, or its type-theoretic basis—and the same goes for Wollheim's other conditions as well. To be sure, both Saltz and Hamilton deny that performances have to involve interpretations, but their denials apply only to richer and more intuitively natural concepts of "interpretation" that go beyond Wollheim's bare-bones "logical incompleteness" thesis. Indeed, all of the discussants seem to take it for granted that performances possess various properties over and above those belonging to the play itself.

However, from the point of view of a representational content or RC theory, both Wollheim's incompleteness condition, and much of the content of such ensuing debates about interpretation, are confused or misdirected from the start by their acceptance of type theory, as we shall now briefly show.

First, on the RC view, Wollheim's issues about sharing or passing of properties from tokens to types are only applicable *within a type-token framework*. To be sure, his "observations" may be legitimate conditions as applied to *genuine* tokens or instances of *genuine* types, but they are simply *inapplicable* to the entities invoked by a rival RC theory, since it is a commonplace of representational theory that a representing object need not significantly resemble, or be similar to, that which it represents.³⁵ Also relevant is the previous section 4 discussion of how a representation of X, by definition, is not itself an X that has all the necessary properties of an X.

Another commonplace of representational theory is that there can be a great variety of *different kinds* of representation, or ways of representing of, one and the same object or entity. Thus, from the point of view of an RC theory, it is an obvious *non sequitur* to argue from the fact of the *variety* of possible performances of a given play—which performances are representations of the play on an RC theory—to a conclusion that therefore those various performances must in some way be representing or “interpreting” *the play itself* differently. Clearly that would involve a significant confusion of properties of a *representing event*—a performance—with properties of *what* is thus represented by that performance-event, namely the *relevant play itself*.

To be sure, these points do not preclude that some putative performance of a given play might, because of ways in which its own properties differ from those of other performances, *fail* to represent exactly the same play as is represented by the other performances—or, otherwise put, that it might thereby *succeed* in instead representing a distinct, “interpreted play” whose differences from the original play have some indirect connection to that performance’s own idiosyncratic properties. Our point is rather that such a case would have to be *specifically argued for*, since mere differences in properties *as such* between performances have no implications as to precisely what is consequently *represented by* those performances.

Thus, in sum, an RC theory will naturally reject Wollheim’s logical incompleteness condition for plays, along with any arguments for the “interpretive” nature of performances that are based on it; and indeed an RC theory will regard any such arguments, based as they are on the *mere variety* of possible performances of a play, as fallacious.

IX. PLAYS ARE PARTICULARS RATHER THAN TYPES

To conclude our current arguments against type theories, we shall now present a much simpler or more basic independent argument against the possibility of individual plays being types, which invokes some metaphysical first principles.

To begin, an important logical or metaphysical fact about either the type-token, or the kind-instance, relation is this: that a token or instance is the *lowest-level* or most *particular* element in a hierarchical, genus-species-individuals system of classification, so that a token or instance of a type or kind cannot *itself* be a type or kind that could in turn have its own tokens or instances. Thus tokens or instances are *particulars* or *individuals*.

Alternatively put, any *particular entities* to which a system of classification is applied, whether they be concrete or abstract particulars, have their particularity *absolutely*, in the sense that the concept of particularity applying to them is not relative to levels of classification (as if an item that was “particular” at one level might nevertheless itself be a kind or type relative to even lower levels of particularity).

A related point is that the distinction between universals and particulars does seem to be metaphysically fundamental, so that particulars cannot be analyzed away as mere bundles or structures of universals—and that metaphysical fact is arguably what undergirds the logical or classificatory facts just presented.

Next, given the fact that particulars or individuals such as tokens or instances cannot be types, if we can show that plays are *themselves* tokens or instances, this will suffice to prove that they cannot (also) be types. This we shall now do.

First, one thing that is definitely true of individual plays such as “Hamlet” or

“Othello” is that each of them is a *play*, or more explicitly, that each of them bears some relation to the *type* or *kind* “play.” But what is that relation?

The conclusion seems unavoidable that individual plays are *instances* or *tokens* of the type or kind “play”—which is in turn a subspecies of the more generic kind “art-work.” Now to be sure, there are *different kinds* of play, such as representational and non-representational plays, but that merely shows that the type or species of “play” itself has various *subspecies*; it does nothing to undercut the conclusion that individual plays are the particular, lowest-level members of each such subspecies. Hence we conclude that individual plays are indeed individuals or *particulars*, which hence cannot themselves in turn be types.

As for the RC approach to plays, it has no problem at all with plays being individuals or particulars, since some paradigm cases of representation are cases of representation of particulars, such as particular persons, objects or scenes, whether fictional or non-fictional.³⁶

X. CONCLUSION

We hope to have made some headway in this paper in showing that a representational approach to plays, texts and performances has at least the potential to be a significant competitor to more standard accounts of their relations—such as the type-theoretic views that have been the main focus of our criticisms here. But because of the complexity of the many issues about plays, it was only possible to briefly touch on such important topics as that of whether *performances* of plays are inevitably *interpretations* of them. But at least we hope to have set the stage for more thorough discussions of such issues elsewhere.

Also neglected for reasons of space in this paper have been issues about the generalizability of a representational account to other performing arts, such as music, and then to the arts generally.³⁷ But perhaps it is clear enough that if our criticisms of type-theoretic approaches to plays are successful, then similar or related arguments could be deployed against their application in other areas of the arts as well.³⁸

Western Michigan University

NOTES

1. See John Dilworth, “The Fictionality of Plays,” forthcoming in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 60, no. 4 (October 2002).

2. See the references in fn. 19.

3. E.g., see the recent symposium, David Z. Saltz, James R. Hamilton, and Noel Carroll, “Symposium: Staging Interpretations,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 59, no. 3 (2001), pp. 299–316, and the references contained therein.

4. Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe : On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

5. We discuss such issues in contrasting our account with that of Walton in our “The Fictionality of Plays.” See also fn. 6 below.

6. However, in the next Section we shall show how to recover some of the attractiveness of this “representing” view of plays, without incurring the theoretical costs just discussed.

7. Whether or not such talk of fictional worlds is a mere *façon de parler* is a matter for further debate, of course; see our discussion of this in “The Fictionality of Plays.”

8. Dilworth, “The Fictionality of Plays.”

9. Hence the title, “The Fictionality of Plays.”

10. In our previous article on plays (Dilworth, “The Fictionality of Plays”), the refinement in question was only obliquely and briefly discussed, in connection with the common distinction between “external” and “internal” views of the characters and events of a play: internally, a play, thought of as identified with its fictional world, is *made up of* its characters and events, while externally, the play is *about* that world.

We have also recently given a similar representational analysis of *visual* artworks such as paintings: see John Dilworth, “A Representational Theory of Artefacts and Artworks,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 41, no. 4 (October 2001), pp. 353–370.

11. The term “representational content” is useful because it is non-committal as to whether there actually *is* such an object thus represented. For example, clearly a picture of “a man” does *represent* a man, whether or not there was some *actual* man used by the artist as her subject, about whom one could say that *he* is the man represented by the picture.

12. Whereas if A *is* a B, there are familiar essentialist arguments to the effect that if B is a sortal or natural-kind term, then A is essentially, necessarily or inseparably a B. See also Section 4 on differences between representational and type-token or kind-instance views of artworks, and sections 6–8 on related topics.

13. Here is a brief argument for this view. First, any contingent change in object A that resulted in its no longer representing object B would *ipso facto* result in B’s no longer representing C; while second, any contingent change in A that resulted in B’s no longer representing C (but instead, either representing nothing, or some other object D) would *ipso facto* result in the destruction of B *as such*, since B *just is* that part of the representational content of A that represents C.

14. Dilworth, “The Fictionality of Plays.”

15. Also see another paper of ours, “Three Depictive Views Defended,” submitted for publication, for a more comprehensive inseparability argument for represented artworks and their own representational contents.

16. For example, as presented in our article “The Fictionality of Plays,” where the refinement in question was not explicitly introduced, both for reasons of space and because discussion of it would not easily fit into that article’s fairly tightly focused, and already sufficiently complex, line of argument.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Though for reasons of space we shall have to leave the exploration of this possibility for another occasion, including its generalization to other art forms.

Other theoretical advantages of the refined account as applied to various art forms are discussed in our article “A Representational Theory of Artefacts and Artworks.”

19. Support for a “type” view as applied to the performing arts is provided by (among others) Noel Carroll, *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1998); Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989); Joseph Margolis, *Art and Philosophy* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1980); and Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects : With Six Supplementary Essays* 2d ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

20. We have criticized such views in our article “Artworks Versus Designs,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 41, no. 2 (April 2001), pp. 162–177, where we show (among other things) that two distinct artworks could be associated with the same artifact, so that on a type view (*per impossibile*) a single artifact would have to be a token of two distinct types of the same general kind. We give some further criticisms of “type” views in various non-theatrical arts in our “A Representational Theory of Artefacts and Artworks,” though our criticisms in the present paper on plays are new.

21. See our two articles mentioned in fn. 20.

22. However, this is not to say that type-token concepts have no role whatsoever to play in discussions of the arts, but only that they should be confined to subsidiary or complementary roles. For example, in our article “Artworks Versus Designs,” we argue that designs, which indeed are types that have physical objects as their tokens, should be distinguished from artworks that may be associated with such tokens.

23. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, Secs. 35–38.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 81–82.

27. In our article “The Fictionality of Plays” we argue that fictional worlds may have *any* properties attributed to them—including physical properties—that could be attributed to items in the real world.

28. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, p.80.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Carroll, *A Philosophy of Mass Art*, p. 213.

31. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

33. However, Wollheim does deny that this logical incompleteness amounts to a *defect* in the types that are plays: see *ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

34. Saltz, Hamilton, and Carroll, “Symposium: Staging Interpretations.”

35. E.g., see Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1996), Ch. 1.

36. Of course, this is not to deny that there may be fundamentally different *kinds* of particulars that may be thus represented, with fictional entities perhaps having a different status than concrete particulars. Our point is merely that all of them are “particulars” in the inclusive sense of their *not being types or kinds*.

37. Though we do discuss this issue in our article “A Representational Theory of Artefacts and Artworks.”

38. We provide some independent arguments of these kinds for non-theatrical arts in our articles “Artworks Versus Designs” and “A Representational Theory of Artefacts and Artworks.”

