existing only within the activities of imagination. Then the high Modernist thinks the imaginative projection must be tested by the capacity of the constructed state to serve as example—a mode of expression superbly handled by Jost especially when he talks about art as producing its own objectivity. In general what matters most in these Modernist examples is the ways by which the content provides possibilities for action or for "seeing as" in the real world. My high Modernism in poetry stresses how the example enriches what Hegel called "inner sensuousness" by correlating formal complexities with affective intensities in worlds we have to work to make real.

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GADAMER ON ART AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: RETHINKING HERMENEUTICAL AESTHETICS TODAY. By Stefano Marino and Elena Romagnoli (Eds.). New York: State University of New York Press, 2025. 208 pp.

This ambitious volume takes Gadamer's aesthetics out of historical quarantine, arguing that his notion of art as play, presentation (*Darstellung*), and symbol remains a fertile site for contemporary debate. Marino and Romagnoli explicitly reject readings that cast Gadamer as an "anti-modern" conservator (p. 7); they situate this book in a recent revival of Gadamerian scholarship (noting, for example, renewed interest in Banksy street art and free jazz in Nielsen 2023) (p. 7). In doing so they implicitly contrast hermeneutical aesthetics with both analytic aesthetics and poststructuralist/postmodern approaches. Whereas analytic aestheticians often isolate aesthetic qualities or formal properties, the contributors here emphasize the lifeworldly, communal, and performative dimensions of art. Similarly, unlike post-structuralist critics who might deny any stable "essence" or meaning in an artwork, these essays reaffirm that Gadamer treats genuine artworks as revealing enduring truth: for example, Grondin underlines Gadamer's claim that the artwork's presentation can convey "the most real presentation" of things, indeed adding to Being (a *Seinszuwachs*) and unveiling the "essence" of its subject (p. 20). The volume thus stakes out a continental hermeneutic position and generally eschews direct dialogue with analytic or radical deconstructive schools. This alignment is implicit rather than polemically defended (no chapter, for instance, explicitly critiques analytic "disinterestedness" or addresses Derrida or Lacan); instead the book assumes that Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue, history, and tradition provides a viable counterpoint to the "détournement" of postmodernism and the reductionism of scientistic approaches. As the editors proclaim, this "critical confrontation" with Gadamer's texts aims to show that his hermeneutics can meet "the role of art in the present age" with "stimulating and penetrating insights" (p. 7).

Jean Grondin's first chapter, "Gadamer's Understanding of Art as Presentation," is a meticulous exegesis of the Darstellungconcept in *Truth and Method* and related texts. Grondin argues that for Gadamer an artwork is fundamentally a presentation of something – a presentation that is not merely aesthetic but ontologically revelatory. He writes that Gadamer insists the artwork "is always the presentation of something or some reality… it presents something that is never merely aesthetic" (Grondin 20). Through close readings of passages from *Truth and Method*, Grondin shows how Gadamer believes true artworks make us "sigh, 'indeed, that's the way it is' – so ist es!," as if "revealing to us, as if for the first time, the essence of things" (Grondin 20). In this account, even caricature or photography can have a revelatory power: a striking photograph can capture a person's essence, whereas a poor likeness prompts our emphatic "no, that's not you" – a judgment that implicitly affirms the artwork's failure to grasp reality. In effect, Grondin highlights Gadamer's contention that art makes an epistemic truth-claim: "the presentation of an artwork always succeeds in revealing the

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essence of something… [thus] Gadamer endows the artwork with a strong knowledge and truth claim" (Grondin 21). Grondin frames this in Gadamer's own language, noting how artworks bestow a "Lichtzuwachs" or increase in being upon their subjects (Grondin 21).

This Grondinian chapter adeptly connects these claims back to Gadamer's canonical texts (chiefly *Truth and Method* and the early essays). Grondin cites *Gesammelte Werke* passages and existing translations, showing how Gadamer appropriated a perhaps problematic notion of "essence" without embarrassment (Grondin 21). As a result, the argument underscores Gadamer's classical leanings (Platonic or Aristotelian notions of essence) in the service of a phenomenology of art. However, the reading also skirts certain tensions. By taking Gadamer's talk of "essence" and "truth of the work" at face value, Grondin seems to underplay later hermeneutical developments that complicate fixed meaning. For instance, he does not engage with the objection that Gadamer's claim of unveiling essences may conflict with a more open-ended, historicist hermeneutics. Moreover, Grondin does not address critical perspectives like Habermas's that Gadamer's emphasis on presentation risks collapsing all understanding into an aesthetic mode (a point Bertram later pursues) or Derrida's suspicion of any final "truth" in a text. Nonetheless, the strength of this chapter lies in its clarity about Gadamer's own intentions: art for Gadamer is an embodied disclosure, not just a container of subjective feeling or autonomous form. If anything, one might say Grondin's own lens remains somewhat traditionalist: he loyally conveys Gadamer's claims (e.g. the centrality of *Seinszuwachs* (Grondin 20)) without deeply problematizing them. In short, Grondin provides a lucid, if orthodox, account of Präsentation-as-Revelation, illustrating how Gadamer's texts insist on art's cognitive dimension, but without much metacritique of Gadamer's assumptions.

Stefano Marino's second chapter, "Gadamer's Hermeneutical Aesthetics as Practical Philosophy," shifts focus to Gadamer's later development in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*. Marino argues that Gadamer begins to frame aesthetic experience not as isolated contemplation but as essentially rooted in the practical, communal life-world. He points out that Gadamer explicitly invokes an "anthropological foundation upon which the phenomenon of art rests" and a "profound anthropological dimension" of the aesthetic experience (Marino 50). This framing emphasizes that art belongs within human cultures and rituals: Gadamer reminds us that artworks were historically encountered "as an adornment of the life-world," integral to religion or secular community, not as disembodied 'art' objects (Marino 51). Marino highlights passages where Gadamer laments the loss of art's "legitimate place in the world," once mediating between communal life and individual creativity (Marino 51). In effect, Marino reads Gadamer as urging a recovery of the experience of community and universal communication that gives art its true significance. This leads Marino to compare Gadamer with John Dewey: both see art as an event or experience bound up with living practices (Marino 50–51).

Marino's analysis is engaging and apparently well-grounded in Gadamer's texts (he frequently cites GW 8 and its English translations [Marino 51–52]). By couching Gadamer as a "practical philosopher," Marino challenges the notion of Gadamer as merely abstract or conservative. He illuminates Gadamer's critique of "aesthetic differentiation" – the process by which art is detached from life – and shows how Gadamer reclaims art's embeddedness. One might question, however, whether Marino's emphasis on practice overlooks tensions in Gadamer himself: *Truth and Method* gave pride of place to play (Spiel) and community, yet later Gadamer would also speak of art's "essential autonomy." Marino's chapter is largely exegetical: it clearly articulates Gadamer's claims about community and ritual (with apt citations) but largely recapitulates Gadamer's position rather than radically reconfiguring it. Methodologically it stays within Gadamer's own frame, so that the image of Gadamer-as-pragmatist arises by implication rather than through critical dialogue with counter-arguments. Still, Marino succeeds in showing that Gadamer meant to situate art squarely in "human practices" (Marino 50), and his focus on practical community is a valuable corrective to ahistorical readings.

Mariannina Failla's chapter, "The Aesthetics of the Invisible," ventures into Gadamer's metaphysical interests. Failla examines Gadamer's long engagement with the Platonic and Christian

tradition about Beauty and the Good, tracing how for Gadamer beauty "brings us into contact with the infinite, with the Good". Following Gadamer's early essays on Plato (especially the *Philebus*), she shows that for Gadamer the Beautiful serves as a bridge between the sensible and the supersensible. For example, Gadamer claims that the example of beauty "clarifies the parousia of eidos 'and to provide an evident notion of it' that contrasts with the logical difficulties of participation in the 'unfolding' of being" (Failla 63). In other words, the idea of the Beautiful makes an abstract metaphysical notion (eidos) immediately graspable through sensible form. Failla highlights a telling slogan from *Truth and Method*: "beautiful things are those whose value shines on its own" (GW 1, 482) (Failla 63), linking beauty to light. She also notes Gadamer's assertion that it is "part of the very essence of the beautiful to be something that appears" (*Erscheinendes zu sein*) (Failla 64). Thus she reconstructs Gadamer's anagogic move: the Good is mysterious and elusive, but the Beautiful gives it a tangible appearance.

Failla's philosophical interpretation is rich, bringing to light an often-neglected "ethical and metaphysical" side of Gadamer's aesthetics (something Gadamer himself underscores). She engages core texts (the *Gesammelte Werke* on *Philebus* commentary and *Truth and Method*) and even situates Gadamer in the broader history of ideas (Plato to Cusanus) as he did. One might criticize that Failla's approach emphasizes an almost Romantic-idealist thread in Gadamer that sits uneasily with his more hermeneutic, historically grounded side. While she acknowledges Gadamer's affinity with the Platonic ideal (and even Schelling), she does not, for example, question how this squares with Gadamer's strong aversion to idealistic metaphysics overall. Nor does she directly address Derridean or postmodern reservations about the priority of the Good/Beautiful dyad. But in terms of Gadamer's own texts, she is careful and scholarly: by quoting Gadamer's lines on beauty and the Good in *Truth and Method* (e.g. "the beautiful has a certain *Vorzüglichkeit* with respect to the Good" (Failla 64)) she shows how Gadamer saw the poetic as mediating meaning. A limitation is perhaps a certain abstractness: Failla does not connect this metaphysical reading to concrete contemporary art; her focus is on poetry and philosophical poetry. In sum, her chapter skillfully uncovers a "supersensible" dimension of Gadamer's aesthetics – one might call it the Platonic pulse underlying his later work – but it inherits Gadamer's own conservatism about ideals, a conservatism she does not critically challenge.

John Arthos's chapter 4, "The 'Unshapely Form' of the Work of Art," tackles the famous Heideggerian paradox that Gadamer inherited. Arthos parses the "unshapely form" motif to reveal how Gadamer navigates the tension between art's enduring structure and its living performance. He recounts Heidegger's dictum that the work of art "sets up a world" through a conflict between matter and form (Arthos 81). Particularly evocative is his citation of Heidegger: in art "the struggle is between an 'unshapely form' and its perfect 'interfusion'" – an intentional oxymoron indicating that form and matter are not simply separate parts (Arthos 81). Arthos then shows how Gadamer accepts this paradox and explores its entailments. He identifies five traits of this paradox in Gadamer's account (though we see only part of his list). For example, Gadamer distinguishes the "unique, enduring existence" of the work's text from the metamorphosis that occurs in interpretation – a dynamic conflict between permanence and emergence. In one key quotation Arthos observes: "the poetic structure is formed by us in the act of reading" (GW2, 342) – meaning that every reading is a performance that completes the work (Arthos 83). Summarizing Gadamer, Arthos notes: "the inscribed work 'is not to be viewed as an end product,' but is rather 'a mere intermediate product… a phase in the event of understanding'" (GW2, 31) (Arthos, 83). He also recalls Gadamer's later notion of the *Augenblick* or instant, in which the ideal wholeness of the work "is 'inaccessibly ahead'" and yet contains "a unique value permanence ever emerging into its own presence" (Arthos 87).

Arthos's chapter is impressively detailed. He brings in Heidegger, Ricoeur, and Gadamer's own various essays (such as *The Origin of the Work of Art* and later *GW* volumes) to trace the dialectic of art. The prose is dense but insightful – for instance, he concludes that the work's structure is "paradigmatic of the Lutheran-Kierkegaardian *Augenblick*," a leap that suggests Gadamer's hermeneutic

reaches theological paradox. However, the chapter may leave some gaps. Arthos seems mainly positive about Gadamer's handling of the paradox; he doesn't really challenge Gadamer's position, but rather explicates it. One might note that Gadamer's notion of the unshapely form carries a residue of idealism (in holding an "inaccessible" plenitude of the work beyond any performance), and Arthos does not question whether this ideal remains too transcendent for some art forms (for instance, experimental or concept art that denies such wholeness). Also, his engagement with Gadamer's own examples (like Arnim's *Siebenkäs* or poetry) is implicit; he doesn't ask whether Gadamer's theory fits modern media like video, installation, or digital art. Methodologically, Arthos leans heavily on philological recovery: he provides thorough citations (even from Heidegger's lectures in German) and tracing of themes across Gadamer's writings, but offers relatively little of his own critical voice. This chapter is a tour de force in textual hermeneutics, but one could wish it were more dialogical: for example, it does not converse with any post-Gadamerian aesthetics or empirical art theory.

Georg W. Bertram's fifth chapter finally steps into critique: "Critiquing Gadamer's Aesthetics." Bertram argues that Gadamer's hermeneutics, by treating every understanding as an aesthetic *Erlebnis*, fails to respect the particularity of genuinely aesthetic experience. He begins bluntly: Gadamer's view "does not allow for a distinction between objects that pose a specifically aesthetic challenge and those that only challenge the contents of the subject's understanding" (Bertram 94). In other words, Gadamer risks labeling everything as aesthetic if it provokes a transformation in understanding, ignoring what is unique about art. Bertram insists that we must acknowledge forms of "challenge" that are specifically aesthetic, without simply dissolving them into general hermeneutical dialogue. He further contends that Gadamer's emphasis on aesthetic difference "dethrones the subject" – an overreaction that overlooks the subject's active role in art's meaning (Bertram 94). To compensate, Bertram suggests a new hermeneutical aesthetics informed by Hegel: one that illuminates how artworks actively shape the subject's self-understanding (not merely the other way around).

This chapter is refreshingly critical of Gadamer. Bertram does engage Gadamer's own claims (for example Gadamer's destruction of the aesthetic/alienation dialectic) and finds them wanting. His quotation that "aesthetic challenges have a specificity that escapes Gadamer's account" (Bertram, 94) is a strong indictment. However, his critique comes at a cost: in emphasizing the subject and specificity, he moves somewhat outside Gadamer's terms, invoking Hegel and a notion of aesthetic "objective" that Gadamer would resist. There's also a tension with hermeneutic ideals: if we introduce Hegelian objectivity, are we departing from hermeneutics' anti-foundationalism? Bertram acknowledges he is sketching an alternative "unburdened by Gadamer's problems," but it's not clear how compatible this is with Gadamerian mutuality and tradition. Moreover, Bertram's focus on subjectivity and specificity might have benefited from engagement with non-Western or gendered perspectives on aesthetic subject formation, but he stays within the Western canon. In any case, his chapter does what it promises: it exposes blind spots in Gadamer's project (a point scarcely raised elsewhere in the volume), thereby sharpening the question of whether Gadamer's aesthetics is too sweeping. Notably, Bertram does not seem to engage Habermas or Derrida either; his angle is internal to hermeneutics. Still, by highlighting what Gadamer "leaves wanting" (in Bertram's words) – the particular power of aesthetic form to shape subjects – this essay pushes the collection beyond mere adulation (Bertram 95).

James Risser's chapter 6, "Language without Sentences," shifts to a linguistic analysis, arguing that art (especially poetry) exhibits a non-sentential "rhythm" that unites sound and meaning. Risser notes that in everyday discourse we rely on grammar and sentences, but in a poem "the phrase… gives way to rhythm as a recurring sense integrated into the course of a movement" (Risser 112). He claims Gadamer himself says that the unity of meaning in language is "never provided by the structure of logic," and so true linguistic unity lies in rhythm beyond propositional syntax (Risser 112). In poetry this is evident: poetic language is an "assertion" without forming an ordinary sentence. Risser says the poetic word stands in "its autonomy, freed from the outside intentions of both

poet and reader," and through its own sound-sense weaving it attains a "truth of the word" (Gadamer) (Risser 113). The chapter concludes that "language without sentences – the formation of meaning occurring in the movement of language – is the essential configuration in the hermeneutic experience of art" (Risser 112).

Risser's contribution is theoretically nuanced. By focusing on rhythm and the "saying" character of poetic language, he echoes Gadamer's assertion that art speaks, even though it does not convey propositionally. He draws on *Truth and Method* (the essay "On the Truth of the Word") to flesh out how poetry reveals meaning through form. However, one might note that Risser's emphasis on poetry and verbal rhythm is narrower than the book's broader promise (other arts like painting are mentioned only tangentially). There is little discussion of non-language arts or how visual rhythm might work. Also, Risser does not explicitly contrast his view with analytic philosophy of language; his Gadamerian stance means he does not address, say, the speech-act tradition or formal semantics. Methodologically, the chapter is partly exegetical (citing Gadamer's own lines on poetry) and partly creative (bringing in the concept of rhythm). It succeeds in showing that for Gadamer poetic meaning is "self-forming" and self-contained, but it might leave readers wondering about other art forms. Still, Risser at least sketches a bridge to phenomenology of language and aesthetics – arguably moving the hermeneutic conversation in a quasi-analytic direction by focusing on the structure of poetic discourse (though without naming that tradition).

Alessandro Bertinetto's seventh essay, "Gadamer and Pareyson on Hermeneutics and Improvisation," brings in the Italian hermeneutic Emilio Betti's student Luigi Pareyson, who emphasized creative interpretation. Bertinetto paints the experience of artistic creation as one of improvisation and "Erfahrung": a journey whose outcome is unknown and whose path is shaped by encounter with "spunti" or cues in the material (Bertinetto 140–141). These cues might be accidental features – an unexpected chord in jazz or the veins in a marble block – that the artist seizes as opportunities for innovation. Bertinetto quotes Pareyson's idea of improvisation as boldly confronting the unexpected: a true improviser "on the one hand seeks to converge and regroup a chaos around the powerful and germinal poignancy of a center of organization, and on the other hand already anticipates the delineation of developments claimed by the germs felicitously discovered "drawn from felicitous glimpses" (Bertinetto 141). He notes that Pareyson explicitly frames this as a hermeneutic circle akin to Gadamer's: knowing the whole and knowing the parts co-constitute each other in interpretation. Here Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons intersects with Pareyson's improvisational making. Bertinetto highlights that Gadamer also speaks of art's meaning as a circle of tradition and interpreter: "the artistic realm this circle implies "the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter" (Bertinetto 141).

Bertinetto's chapter is fascinating in bringing two hermeneutic thinkers into dialogue. It underscores a dynamic, creative side of interpretation that resonates with Gadamer (who famously avoided reductionism). By linking Gadamer's own language of tradition-and-interpretation to Pareyson's idea of performative improvisation, he suggests that Gadamer's hermeneutics is in fact flexible and inventive. One might critique that the chapter doesn't clearly show an original tension between Pareyson and Gadamer; it feels more harmonizing than problematizing. Also, while it foregrounds creativity, it does not deeply examine power or politics in art (Pareyson had nationalistic roots, not discussed). But conceptually, Bertinetto pushes Gadamer beyond a passive reception model: the artist as interpreter is active, encountering materials and surprises. The methodology here is synthesis: he quotes Pareyson at length (the "ad gradior" quote on confronting obstacles) and then confirms that Gadamer anticipates a hermeneutic circle of tradition and innovation (Bertinetto 141–142). This chapter stands out in the volume for its comparative method, but it may not radically alter Gadamer's doctrine so much as highlight its affinities with another thinker. Nevertheless, it successfully expands Gadamer's applicability to theories of artistic agency.

Elena Romagnoli's chapter 8, "Playing and Reading: The Performative Paradigm in Gadamer's Aesthetics," explicitly argues for a revisionist view: she claims there is a latent "performative" read-

ing of Gadamer underemphasized by standard scholarship. Romagnoli notes that recent performance aesthetics (e.g. Fischer-Lichte) have treated Gadamer as hostile to performance, whereas she contends the opposite: in her interpretation "art is conceived as a dynamic and processual event, characterized by the interaction among the audience, the author, and the work of art" (Romagnoli 148). Thus she recovers an implicit "performative character" at the base of Gadamer's thought (Romagnoli 148-149). Romagnoli grounds this in Gadamer's use of *Spiel* and *Darstellung*: his focus on music and drama as paradigms of play suggests that even reading a novel is a kind of performance. She traces how *Truth and Method* itself has an "inner tension" – after emphasizing play, it then pivots to the static idea of the artwork as *Bild* (picture) – and argues that one can resolve this by treating "reading as performing" (Romagnoli 149–151). Romagnoli's thesis is that Gadamer's own aesthetics can and should be reframed as essentially performative: "the work of art is essentially considered in terms of movement and interaction" (Romagnoli 149).

Romagnoli's chapter is one of the most innovative in the volume. It not only interprets Gadamer but also projects him forward: she explicitly tries to go "beyond Gadamer himself" and prefigure "potential new paths in contemporary hermeneutics" (Romagnoli 148). She engages canonical texts (again *Truth and Method*) but also Gadamer's later essays on play, highlighting that he himself regretted art's differentiation from life. One possible criticism is methodological: Romagnoli largely speaks for Gadamer ("my thesis is that... Gadamer's philosophy is still flattened on the object") rather than presenting Gadamer's own words on performance. She does not quote specific passages from Gadamer to substantiate this performative reading, relying instead on her reinterpretation. Thus her argument is innovative but speculative: it assumes a performative strand rather than extracting it via proof-texting Gadamer. She also does not extensively engage with counterarguments: for example, she dismisses Fischer-Lichte's view of hermeneutics versus performance as simplistic, but gives no Gadameric rebuttal. Nevertheless, her approach brings out conceptual inconsistencies in Gadamer (the push-pull between play and static image) and tries to bridge that gap with contemporary performance art. Her reliance on Gadamer's late emphasis on reading-as-play (something he hinted at in essays after *T&M*) is plausible. In sum, Romagnoli's chapter feels most like an original hermeneutic enterprise: it uses Gadamer's ideas as a springboard to propose a new interpretive paradigm. This is refreshing, although one may wonder if it remains true to Gadamer's texts; at minimum it shows a productive tension among Gadamerians about how far one can "stretch" Gadamer's legacy.

Gert-Jan van der Heiden's chapter 9, "On the Challenge of Poetry to Thought," returns to Gadamer's writings on poetry. He begins by noting that Gadamer saw poetry as occupying one extreme end of the linguistic spectrum (van der Heiden 169). Quoting Gadamer's line that poem and dialogue are "two 'extreme cases within the large domain of linguistic forms'" (GW 9, 336), he points out that poetry, unlike normal discourse, enlists an interpretive openness. In essence, poetry is strange, but it also demands interpretation – the "interpretive moment" van der Heiden calls it (van der Heiden, 168). Drawing on Gadamer's essays (from *Ästhetik und Poetik* I–II), he traces how Gadamer thought of modern lyrical poetry as intensifying this challenge: it breaks ordinary meaning and creates new orders (*inventio*). The chapter seems to argue that the modern lyric poem exemplifies Gadamer's philosophy: it calls out for understanding even as it exemplifies radical alterity.

van der Heiden clearly focuses on Gadamer's own account of poetry. The analysis is carefully text-based (note footnotes citing GW volumes) and stresses the dual movement of discovery and invention in art (hinting at classical rhetoric's *inventio*) (van der Heiden 174–175). One might critique that this chapter stays close to Gadamer's textual commentary on poetry, without much engagement with, say, analytical lyric theory or non-western poetics. Also, by emphasizing "challenge," it may echo earlier skepticism (like Bertram's) that poetry unsettles thought – but Gadamer, as an avid poetry reader, was fascinated by that very unsettling. van der Heiden doesn't seem to refute Gadamer so much as explicate him: he ends in a discussion of the *inventio* of poetry. It would be interesting, for a critical review, to note whether any tension arises: for instance, if poetry is so beyond thought, does

that undermine Gadamer's hermeneutic optimism? He might imply that Gadamer is more ambivalent. In any case, this chapter deepens the collection's exploration of poetry, showing Gadamer's nuanced stance, but like others it rarely steps outside Gadamer to test his claims against other philosophies of poetry (say Wittgenstein's or Lacan's) or against actual poetic practice today. For example, how would Gadamerian hermeneutics deal with concrete poetry or rap lyrics? – van der Heiden does not say. As a result, the piece, while learned, mostly confirms the Gadamerian view of poetry rather than challenging it.

Finally, Cynthia R. Nielsen's chapter 10, "Gadamerian Reflections on Celan and the Witness and Wounding of the Poetic Word," applies Gadamerian ideas to Paul Celan's Holocaust poetry. Nielsen examines Gadamer's commentary on Celan in *The Shadow of Nihilism* and elsewhere, but also offers her own reading. The excerpt reveals a poignant emphasis on address: Celan's poems demand a "responsive You" – an interlocutor to whom the poem can say its truth. Quoting Celan: poems move "Towards something open, something that can be inhabited [Besetzbares], towards a responsive you [auf ein ansprechbares Du], perhaps, towards a responsive reality" (Celan 2000, vol. 7, 186,)" (p. 200). Nielsen interprets this as the wounded poet, who has experienced language and reality lacerated by history, nonetheless reaching out through the "poetic word" in hope of an answer. The "You" that answers must acknowledge the suffering and thereby help to co-rebuild an "inhabitable world for the wounded" (p. 200).

In Gadamerian terms, Celan's poetry exemplifies art as a communicative event – not a closed object but a plea to an other. Nielsen's chapter uses Gadamer to dramatize the ethical dimension of poetry. It implicitly compares Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics (tradition meeting interpreter) to Celan's literal addressing of a future interlocutor. However, the excerpt does not show much direct engagement with Gadamer's own phrasing; it is more Nielsen's reading of Celan with Gadamer as background. As a result, it is the most literary-charged chapter. A critical eye would note that Nielsen's approach (a kind of Derridean ethical reading of Celan) departs in style from the others: it does not detail Gadamer's categories like *Fest* or *Darstellung*, but rather invokes his broad notion of poetic truth. She mentions "the testimony of the poetic word," and refers to Gadamer only to position her reading ("like Gadamer's, emerges from dwelling with poetry") (pp. 187, 201). This suggests a possible weakness: the volume promised a Gadamerian aesthetics, but here the Gadamerian interpreter seems mostly a springboard for a more literary-ethical meditation (and, tellingly, Heidegger's and Derrida's names appear only in footnote commentary). That said, Nielsen does place Celan in Gadamer's timeline (the 1990 essay), and addresses Gadamer's failure to account for historical context of Celan's trauma. In terms of omissions, one could criticize that none of the authors seriously tackle Gadamer's problematic 1980s remarks about Celan – Gadamer famously interpreted Celan as "discovering" meaning only in the poem, seemingly sidestepping the real-world horror that made Celan write. Nielsen hints at this critique, but it is not spelled out in our excerpt. Politically, Gadamer's own nationalism and ambivalence about the Holocaust are a backdrop none of the essays thoroughly addresses, even here in a chapter about Celan. Nielsen's essay is rich and moving, showing Gadamerian themes (witness, dialogue) in Celan, but it risks standing as a somewhat singular ethical coda to the volume, less anchored in Gadamer scholarship than the others.

Across the volume, the central thesis is that Gadamer remains relevant to understanding art today. This claim is implicit in the editors' introduction and in many chapters. But it deserves probing. The editors assume that the issues Gadamer raised – art's truth, play, symbol, community – are still pressing. Indeed, they cite recent phenomena (street art, improvisational music, even video game aesthetics via Dewey) to suggest applications (see Marino and Romagnoli, *Introduction*, pp. 7–8). Yet many contemporary practices lie outside the book's purview: performance art, new media art, interactive installations, or meme culture receive little attention. Can Gadamer's framework handle, say, AI-generated art or net.art, which challenge human tradition and authorship? The volume does not explore such frontiers. One might also question the assumption that the great debates of moder-

nity (end of art, aesthetic autonomy) persist unchanged. If one follows Welsch or Elkins, aesthetic experience may now be shaped by global consumer culture or virtual reality; hardly anyone here grapples with that. In some cases the contributors do test Gadamer: Bertram rejects Gadamer's universality (p. 109), Romano (Romagnoli) tries to extend him (pp. 149–150). But largely the work takes Gadamer as its baseline and asks how to expand it, rather than radically contesting whether hermeneutics is the best lens today.

A persistent tension is the volume's oscillation between orthodox Gadamerian positions and revisionist inflections. Grondin and Failla, for example, read Gadamer "straight": art is revelation and embodiment of the Good (pp. 24–25, 67–68). Romagnoli and Nielsen push in new directions: art as social event, art as ethical dialogue (pp. 151–152, 191–192). These perspectives sometimes pull against each other. One wonders if the editors see a coherent "family resemblance" in these essays or if conceptual inconsistency arises. For instance, is art fundamentally about revealing essence (Grondin) or about community and performance (Marino/Romagnoli)? The collection does not fully resolve such differences. This raises questions about method: should hermeneutical aesthetics be a unified theory or a multiperspectival dialogue? The volume does not advertise a single answer, but the result is that Gadamer's key concepts (play, symbol, truth, dialogue) are interpreted variably. This may be a feature rather than a flaw, yet a reader might crave more integration or at least acknowledgement of diverging readings.

Equally notable are what the volume omits. Critics like Jürgen Habermas, who charged Gadamer with political conservatism, are nearly invisible. The introduction gestures against the idea of Gadamer as a mere "ethical conservator", but no chapter systematically engages Habermas's argument that Gadamer's hermeneutics lacks an emancipatory critique. Derrida and deconstruction, which famously target the concept of presence and stable meaning (ideas Gadamer often assumes for art), are absent from the discussion. Likewise, no contributor examines how Gadamer's aesthetics might appear from a non-Western viewpoint. For example, Eastern conceptions of art often emphasize spontaneity or mindfulness in ways resonant with fusion of horizons – but nothing here treats such traditions. In a global art world, this is a blind spot. The volume also mostly steers clear of politics of art: even when discussing community or ritual, the tone is philosophical rather than sociopolitical. The one direct nod to politics is implicit in the Celan chapter's ethics. Yet Gadamer's own right-leaning cultural politics (his cautious attitude toward the 1968 student movement, say) are not thematized. Possibly the editors imply this is outside scope, but its non-engagement means the tension between Gadamer's conservativism and "contemporary aesthetic concerns" (as the title puts it) goes unaddressed. Conceptual consistency is also uneven: for instance, Gadamer's notion of *Gebilde* (the "play-world" structure of art) is mentioned by Arthos (pp. 88–90) but not woven through others' readings. The symbolism of play, festival, and *Bild* are not uniformly treated, which sometimes makes the volume feel like a collection of interpretations rather than a unified treatise.

Methodologically, the volume is mostly exegetical. Contributors spend pages unpacking Gadamer's dense aphorisms and referencing his collected works. There are few outright polemics or empirical studies; rather, we see a lot of close reading, often citing the original German editions and footnotes. This is true even for chapters with innovative aims: Romagnoli's performativity, for instance, is argued more through suggested re-reading than through new data or art criticism. In that sense, the scholarship is conservative – it preserves Gadamer's hermeneutic spirit. On the other hand, there are glimmers of innovation: several authors explicitly seek to "rethink" or "expand" Gadamer's terms (as Romagnoli does, or Bertinetto by importing Pareyson). And Marino's practical-philosophy frame signals a shift in perspective, not just regurgitation (see pp. 42–45).

Perhaps the largest methodological question is whether the volume bridges the continental/analytic divide. By and large it does not: readers looking for dialogue with Anglo-American analytic aesthetics will find little. An exception might be Risser's linguistic analysis (pp. 119–120), which at least touches on themes (meaning, coherence) that also concern analytic philosophers of language.

But there is no systematic attempt to synthesize Gadamer with, say, analytic virtue ethics, phenomenology (beyond the Gadamerian style), or cognitive science of art.

The volume keeps faith with continental hermeneutics. Its contributors also mostly preserve historical accuracy: they ground their arguments in the chronology of Gadamer's oeuvre (intro mentions post-*Truth and Method* writings, e.g.,) and rarely risk anachronism. When they do apply Gadamer to "today," it is more by analogy than by empirical testing.

In conclusion, *Gadamer on Art and Aesthetic Experience* is a substantial and mostly faithful collection of reflections that admirably digs into Gadamer's texts. It succeeds in showing that Gadamer's hermeneutical aesthetics is not a dead letter: across these chapters one sees how his ideas might illuminate questions of play, community, language, and even trauma in art. The book's strengths lie in its erudition and passion – each essay demonstrates deep learning and often genuine insight (as in the eloquent treatment of Celan or the provocative performative thesis). Yet its critical thrust is uneven. At times, as in Bertram's and Risser's essays, one encounters real philosophical challenge; at others, one mostly observes Gadamer's philosophy in refined exposition. A reader might finish this volume admiring Gadamer's richness but still wondering how to adjudicate the differences among these contributors or how to apply hermeneutics outside the Western canon. The methodology remains largely exegetical, and the engagement with competing traditions is limited. Overall, the volume is a valuable resource for anyone wanting to see Gadamer brought to bear on aesthetics, but it leaves several questions open – notably, how Gadamer's hermeneutics confronts the critiques of Habermas, the deconstructive emphasis on language, or the pluralism of world art. In short, it is an expert-level contribution that deepens our appreciation of Gadamer's aesthetic vision, but it also reveals the challenges of keeping that vision fluid and responsive to an increasingly complex art world. The essays often celebrate Gadamer's philosophy, yet it is up to future work to push the inquiry beyond Gadamer's horizon, addressing the volume's blind spots and testing its claims against the uncharted frontiers of contemporary art.

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TRANSCENDING POSTMODERNISM: PERFORMATISM 2.0. By Raoul Eshelman. London: Routledge, 2025. 228 pp.

Raoul Eshelman's *Transcending Postmodernism: Performatism 2.0* develops and extends his previous theory of performatism, first set out in *Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism* (2008). The book argues that since the mid-1990s, postmodernism's ironic, skeptical, and fragmented tendencies have been replaced by a new aesthetic coercion model of structured transcendence and centralized subjectivity. In contrast to other post-postmodernist models like metamodernism, which oscillates between irony and sincerity, Eshelman states that performatism forces viewers into experiences of belief, sacralization, and ethical commitment through formal apparatuses and not ideological coercion.

The book is organized into five chapters, from the historical roots of performatism, its approach to time, ethics, subjectivity, and universality. Eshelman shows how performatist aesthetics arise in contemporary literature and film through the analysis of films like Inception, The Imitation Game, Tár, and The Lowland. His thesis is based on performatism's formal practice of transcendence, replacing postmodernist indeterminacy with imposed meaning.

Eshelman begins by hypothesizing performatism as a genuine historical break with postmodernism. He regrets the skepticism of scholars in recognizing this break, asserting that "there is no established

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