

Green War Banners in Central Copenhagen: A Recent Political Struggle Over Interpretation—And Some Implications for Art Interpretation as Such

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Abstract This paper addresses the issue of the role of Quasi-Urteile—Quasi-Propositions—in the arts. Stemming from Ingarden’s Aesthetics, the notion of Quasi-Propositions addresses the idea that artworks employ proposition-like structures even if their reference deviates—to larger or lesser degrees—from that of propositions in non-arts contexts. Here, the Peircean doctrine of Dicisigns—propositions—is introduced, with a much wider range of sign vehicle types able to instantiate propositional content, such as signs involving pictures, diagrams, gestures, etc. Taking a particular Danish controversy—that of a military “cartouche” at a Copenhagen barracks—as an analytical example, the chapter argues that filling-in is constrained by context, genre as well as aspects of the work itself, making it possible to categorize certain filling-ins as wrong, going against the potentialities of the work. The case, simultaneously, makes necessary a softening up of Ingarden’s rigid distinction between fictions and non-fictions.

Keywords Semiotics • Art • Indeterminacy • Quasi-propositions • Filling-out • Cartouche

A classic stance in the philosophy of art and fiction is that fictional artworks take the character of quasi-propositions. That terminology is due to Roman Ingarden’s influential *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (1931)—his notion of “Quasi-Urteile.”¹

¹Peirce also uses the term “quasi-proposition,” albeit for quite another purpose also relevant for this paper. In him, quasi-propositions are propositions simpler than full, symbolic propositions; his examples include fossils, weathercocks, and paintings with legends, and many cross-over propositions mixing different means of expression. The upshot is that the range of signs able to

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209

Being a philosophical realist (cf. Ingarden 1955–1974), he took a strong interest in distinguishing real objects from fictive objects, and, consequently, real propositions from quasi-propositions. The work of fiction includes seeming propositions that, however, only have the status of make-believe as both author and reader realize they do not directly refer to the real world nor to facts in any more restricted universe of discourse subset of that world. This does not imply, however, that fictions may not involve real propositions as well, referring, e.g. to established knowledge about the topography, period, persons of the universe of discourse etc. where the fictional narrative takes place. It also does not imply, moreover, that artworks in general are fictions; many artworks, poetry, essays, paintings, photographs, movies, etc. involve propositions in the literal, non-quasi sense of the word, and need not involve any fictional propositions at all.

An orthogonal, independent issue in Ingarden’s aesthetics and linguistics is that of filling-out, of concretization. Propositions, in art as elsewhere, are schematic and involve ideal elements—in Ingarden’s terminology: “Unbestimmtheitsstellen,” loci of indeterminacy. That implies that art—as human representations at large—consists of schematic, general (that is, underdetermined) expressions to various degrees. In consuming an artwork, however, the observer to some degree fills in these gaps, as it were, with the result that his or her experience may approach that of real-world perception. Not any old filling-out is appropriate, however; some may go against the genre, against real-world information, against information or hints already given by the artwork, while others are free for the reader to specify while still others filling-outs are motivated or supported in more or less explicit ways by the genre or artwork itself—realizing “schematized aspects” which are contained, as potentialities, in the work itself. Beginning his investigation with the literary work of art in his eponymous classic of 1931, Ingarden continued to generalize these insights to arts as such, and, late in life, concisely summed up these groundbreaking ideas as follows:

Every work of art of whatever kind has the distinguishing feature that it is not the sort of thing which is completely determined in every respect by the primary level varieties of its qualities, in other words it contains within itself characteristic lacunae in definition, areas of indeterminateness: it is a schematic creation. Furthermore not all its determinants, components or qualities are in a state of actuality, but some of them are potential only. In consequence of this a work of art requires an agent existing outside itself, that is an observer, in order—as I express it—to render it concrete. Through his co-creative activity in appreciation the observer sets himself as is commonly said to ‘interpret’ the work or, as I prefer to say, to reconstruct it in its effective characteristics, and in doing this as it were under the influence of suggestions coming from the work itself he fills out its schematic structure, plenishing at least in part the areas of indeterminacy and actualizing various elements which are as yet only in a state of potentiality. In this way there comes about what I have called a ‘concretion’ of the work of art. (Ingarden 1964, p. 199)

express truth—definitory for Peircean propositions, called *Dicisigns*—is much broader than the mainstream idea that the expression of proposition is confined to human language (see Peirce 1998, Chap. 20; Stjernfelt 2014). With its mixed-media combination of sculpture and symbols (monogram, dates), the cartouche forms a quasi-proposition in this sense.

In this paper, I shall discuss central issues in this field indicated by (quasi-) propositions, real propositions, filling-out, and work potentialities with outset in a small case-study of a particular work of art and an interpretation feud evolving around it. In 2008, a minor political and aesthetic media fuss broke out in Denmark, prompted by the public presentation of a classic, standard piece of military art in Copenhagen. It concerned the unveiling on June 30th, 2008 of a bronze monument at a barracks in Rosenborg Gardens, located in central Copenhagen as part of the architectural complex around the 1606 royal castle of Rosenborg, during the celebration events of the 350th anniversary of the Danish queen's household regiment—The Royal Life Guard; in Danish: "Dronningens Livregiment." The artwork presented to the public was a so-called "cartouche" in cast bronze, created by Sven Erik Sjøtlow and gilded by Evelyn Iversen, donated to the barracks for the occasion by the Association of Guardsmen, and presented, at the celebration event, by the queen herself (Figs. 1 and 2).

Already before the unveiling ceremony, however, a protracted game of protest had been taking place over years. In March 2008, a retired officer, Peter Horsten of the Royal Life Guard, filed a protest against the donation and the mounting of the cartouche on the barracks roof. Horsten claimed that the cartouche "celebrated Islam" and thus constituted an "insult" to Danish troops at the time serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.² This was not Horsten's first appearance with this claim. Horsten, in fact, had protested to a variegated range of authorities ever since the first airings of the plans pertaining to the cartouche—as early as 5 years before, in 2003. He claimed that the bronze flags of the monument would, over the years, turn green with age and thus come to represent the standards of victorious Islamist armies rather than flags associated with the Royal Life Guard. His protests, however, had not gained much support, despite being aimed at several Danish Ministers of Defense and even sent to the queen herself. Only now, in 2008, his protests finally gained momentum. Horsten explained that "All of the time I have found that it looked hideous. But the worst thing is that I discovered, with horror, that the casting has the green color of Islam."³ Then the Danish MP Søren Krarup of the right-wing "Danish People's Party" entered the picture. Krarup is a local celebrity, a nationalist right-wing Lutheran theologian, clergyman, and author, a leading proponent of a Barthist theological movement known as "Tidehverv" (meaning roughly "Epoch"). Krarup took up the protest of Horsten and filed, in Parliament, an official inquiry to the Minister of Defence Søren Gade of the governing Danish liberal party Venstre. His analysis of the cartouche was as follows: "It would rouse disgust in me. It is ugly, and it could not avoid appearing as an Islamic symbol with the green color of

²http://www.avisen.dk/pensioneret-garder-anklager-livgarden-hylder-islam_8694.aspx

³"Jeg har hele tiden syntes, at den så hæsleg ud. Men det værste er, at jeg til min store rædsel opdagede, at støbningen har islams grønne farve," (my translation to English; Malacinski 2008), http://www.avisen.dk/pensioneret-garder-anklager-livgarden-hylder-islam_8694.aspx, 7 April 2008.



Figs. 1 and 2 The cartouche on the roof of the Rosenborg barracks, in two different stages of patination (Fig. 1 copyright Evelyn Iversen)

the banners,”⁴ he told the press. Instead, Krarup claimed, the traditional red-white colors of the Danish national flag ought to dominate the cartouche. The Minister of Defence, however, evaded the question in the Danish Parliament, but Krarup’s intervention proved important in terms of media coverage. Thus, the interpretation of an artwork became an official parliamentary issue and turned into a minor press scandal covered in many Danish media.

⁴“Det ville vække afsky hos mig. Den er grim, og den kan ikke undgå at fremstå som et islamisk symbol med de der grønne farver på fjerne” (my translation to English; Ritzau 2008), <http://politiken.dk/indland/politik/ECE487301/df-til-kamp-mod-groenne-faner/>, 26 March 2008.

Fig. 3 Cartouche of Thutmosis III, from a glazed steatite scarab (between 1479 and 1425 BC) ([http:// commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Egyptian_Scarab_with_the_Cartouche_of_Thutmose_ III_-_Walters_4245_-_Impression_Detail.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egyptian_Scarab_with_the_Cartouche_of_Thutmose_III_-_Walters_4245_-_Impression_Detail.jpg))



Semiotics also entered the picture. As a newly appointed professor at the Center for Semiotics at the University of Aarhus, I was summoned to the national radio network “Danmarks Radio” in order to analyze the cartouche. I said, of course, that in bronze sculpture, metal color is generally not a carrier of meaning and, consequently, the protesting officer and, with him, his political supporter, were in the wrong. They argued against the potentialities indicated by the work itself (the monogram of the Danish Queen) as well as by its context (a centrally located, historical Danish barracks)—both of them pointing to the banners of the cartouche representing, in fact, Danish national flags. The protests, so I claimed, formed an example of overinterpretation on the part of the enraged officer, as it were. Or perhaps a “creative” interpretation; a “strong” interpretation as Nietzscheans used to say? In any case, his claim formed a filling-out going against the potentialities indicated by the schematic artwork itself. Of course, I only had few minutes to explain myself on the radio, so let me elaborate my argument a bit.

What is a cartouche, in the first place? Actually, its history goes back to Ancient Egypt where hieroglyphic practice was to indicate divine or royal names by inscribing them in an ovaline figurine closed by a tangent line at the bottom or at the side (Fig. 3).

In hieroglyphic writing, thus, the cartouche depicts a rope encircling the names elevated. The rope is said, in turn, to represent the circle of eternity, the so-called “shen ring.” The use of the cartouche to highlight divine or royal names proved important for Champollion’s famous interpretation of the hieroglyphs based on the three-language Rosetta stone, making it possible for him to locate the same names in the stone’s parallel texts in Hieroglyphic, Greek, and Demotic writing. Thus, a long western tradition of a more or less ornamented frame used to sacralize or celebrate a set of symbols, stylized icons, or letters took its beginning in Egyptian Antiquity.

From the Egyptian cartouche use, thus, a carved or cast ornamental tablet or panel in the form of a scroll or frame enclosing an inscription or symbol came to indicate the deification or holding in solemnity the reference objects of those signs. In ancient

Rome or Greece, the Egyptian custom of adorning graves and coffins with names of the deceased in a cartouche, so as to eternalize the deceased, was inherited and developed, now often in the shape of rectangular cartouches, losing their original motivation of depicting a sacred rope. Instead, the cutout, framed field came rather to be interpreted as a military shield. Already in the Roman army, the decoration of shields functioned as cartouches identifying the military unit wearing that shield. Later, in medieval Europe, shield cartouches were generalized to celebrate nobility and royal dynasties (in the European tradition of heraldry, originating in the time of Charlemagne and strongly developing after the tenth century), buildings, churches, etc. The heraldry of royal and noble families on the one side and military insignia on the other thus share a common point of origin in the attempts of medieval knights to distinguish themselves visually in the battle field—and, more peacefully, in tournaments. The military use of cartouches developed into formal insignia for military units on different levels, thus serving as visual predicates identifying them. The use of the word “cartouche” for such signs may have originated with Napoleon’s troops in Egypt where the visual similarity of the shape of hieroglyphic sign with that of paper cartridges (French: cartouches) may have prompted the name, first in French, later in English. The appearance of a cartouche on a soldier thus identifies him (or a weapon, a barracks, a vehicle, etc.) as belonging to a particular military unit, in effect serving as a proposition—a Peircean Dicsign—expressing a claim, e.g.: “This is a soldier of Edward VII’s Indian Army, Supply & Transport Regiment.”⁵



Correspondingly, cartouche insignia often appear on signs of military honor such as medals, decorations, etc. This long and complicated history of the cartouche, however, is not our main concern here; suffice it to say that the cartouche is an old genre with certain stable characteristics. It aims at *identifying* some person, group of persons, item, building, etc. as having a certain proper name or belonging to

⁵<http://www.victorianwars.com/viewtopic.php?f=19&t=1896>. A cartouche pouch in itself contains cartridges, that is, cartouches. Peirce’s broad notion of propositions is functionally defined and thus transgresses linguistically expressed propositions, involving signs which make truth claims using pictures, diagrams, gestures, etc.—like the cartouche serving as a predicate in a proposition involving as its subject the soldier wearing it, cf. Stjernfelt (2014).

a certain unit, stock, or institution, often additionally describing the entity defined and granting the relevant entity some authority, sacrality, or other elevated status. As such, the cartouche is intrinsically propositional (or quasi-propositional in Peirce's sense of the word)—it forms a syntactical unit whose function is to claim that the entity to which it is attached is, in fact, the one indicated by the name indicated, given by a linguistic or pictorial index presented inside the framework of the cartouche.⁶ Simultaneously, the cartouche celebrates the entity given that name—the very application of the cartouche serves to ennoble the bearer of the name of the cartouche, supported by the artful, aesthetic elaboration of the cartouche and in many cases by the use of expensive materials. Thus, the cartouche is explicitly propositional rather than quasi-propositional in the Ingardenian sense of the word—of course, fictional cartouches can be made and have indeed been made but the prototypical, traditional cartouche actually does function as an artwork that is simultaneously a proposition with a real reference—it refers to, identifies, and to some degree celebrates its bearer.

To return to the particular Danish Rosenborg Barracks cartouche, it thus functions as piece of applied art claiming a proposition. The structure of the cartouche as a whole contains three elements: a basic plinth with the time indication of “1658–2008;” the central cartouche shield endowed with the queen's monogram, headed by the iconic crown of the Danish royal house⁷; surrounded by ten standards protruding from behind the shield, five pointing obliquely fan-like upwards to each side. This is a common structure for military cartouches—and not far from some of the heraldic traditions also possessing a central shield with various codified support structures around, behind and over it. The overall appearance of the cartouche is bronze; three partial components of the cartouche, however, are emphasized, gilded with gold leaf: the queen's monogram, the crown over the shield, and the detailed, individual tips of the ten banners identifying them as referring to the ten standards which the Guard has received as gifts from different Danish monarchs during its existence.⁸

The proposition held forward by the cartouche thus refers to several entities, explicitly and implicitly. It explicitly makes reference (1) to the present Danish queen Margrethe II whose monogram appears centrally in the cartouche, just like (2) the timespan 1658–2008 is explicitly presented on the cartouche, and (3) ten existing flags in the ownership of the Guard, indicated by means of the individual banner tips, identifying which regent donated the single flag.

⁶The proposition involving the cartouche and the object or person to which it is attached is thus not a proposition primarily *describing* that entity, but rather one *naming* it. To that extent the proposition is of the type that Peirce called “Dicent Indexical Legisign” to distinguish it from proper propositions with a general, descriptive predicate; see Stjernfelt (2014, ch. 3).

⁷This crown, in turn, is a stylized version of a real, Danish crown: that of Christian V, forged 1670–1671 and subsequently used by absolutist Danish monarchs—currently on display in the Rosenborg Castle close to the barracks.

⁸Thanks to Svend Erik Sjøtlow for information as to the banner tips.

Implicitly, moreover, the cartouche refers to (1) the building upon which it is placed—the Rosenborg barracks—and (2) by metonymy, to the institution housed in that building: the queen’s household troops (regularly marching the streets of Copenhagen, a sight sought by some tourists). It may surprise that the military entity celebrated by the cartouche—the queen’s life guard—is not itself named and only indirectly referred to in the cartouche by means of the banner tips which are scarcely identifiable from below; it is primarily contextually indicated by the placement of the cartouche on the building (a barracks, however, that is widely known to be the base of exactly this military unit). All of these references are not quasi-propositions in Ingarden’s sense—they refer to real entities. So, the cartouche as a whole is a complex proposition which might be linguistically paraphrased as follows: “These are the barracks of the Danish Royal Life Guard which came into being 1658, received royal celebration at ten occasions over centuries in the shape of particular flags and was celebrated in the year 2008 in the reign of Margrethe 2nd.” This is not to say there are no Ingardenian quasi-propositions involved—the shield itself does not refer to any existing entity, but rather has a general, fictive status. The same goes for the arrangement as a whole—it does not refer to an existing shield behind which the ten flags have actually been so positioned. The flags thus involve both real reference—to the ten standards in the ownership of the Guard, several of them still in daily use—and quasi-reference, namely to their arrangement. Thus, the reference to those flags is made in a general way, involving spots of indeterminacy. The tips of the banners are gilded, thus actually depicting the color of the real tips while the flags themselves are left in bronze without such explicit reference. It was exactly the closer interpretation of some of these *Unbestimmtheitsstellen*—those presented by the flags—which became the focus of the bitter strife over the monument.

The public conflict over the cartouche addresses the content of these slots of indeterminacy. The protesting officer and his parliamentary support claimed that the (supposedly) increasingly green color of those flags due to the corrosion of bronze constituted an emerging meaning, running counter to the intended, patriotic celebration of the Royal Guard in the monument. The green color, so they argued, would appear, over time, as that of Islamic flags, celebrating victorious Muslim armies—thus implicitly attacking Danish troops at the time serving in Afghanistan and Iraq by giving the victory to their enemies, stabbing the Danish army in the back, even at a central and symbolic location in Copenhagen. This interpretation builds, it is true, on potentialities implicit in the genre of the artwork: the cartouche as a celebration of particular military units. In the absence of any direct reference to the Danish royal guard—so it seems—the empty slot of reference would instead be occupied by Islamist forces via the green color sometimes displayed in the banners of such forces (black being another color often used by Islamic armies).

Why, however, is such an interpretation wrong? It has several reasons, one of which is very general, going beyond genre rules of cartouches, pertaining to conventions for interpreting bronze sculpture as such. The greenish or light turquoise colors of bronze or copper statues, sculptures, figurines, artwork, jewelry, etc. are generally *not* interpreted as referring to the colors of the objects depicted by those artworks. This, of course, is conspicuously evident in many bronze statues

depicting persons, real or imagined. Take as an example the iconic Statue of Liberty, originally French and mostly known for the large copy in the harbor of New York, presented to the US by France at the centenary celebration of the American Revolution in 1876⁹:



Here, it would seem pretty strange to assume that the light green-bluish color of the exposed body parts of this female deity should be taken to depict her actual skin color. If we should not assume she was a Martian, that she suffered from a severe hangover or indulged in body paint, we have no reason to assume that her complexion is green, and she is generally not interpreted in such a way. This holds, in general, for bronze artworks. The gradual green verdigris (literally: “green-gray”) corrosion color assumed by bronze objects exposed to changing weather, covering the bronze surface by a thin layer of copper carbonates and other copper salts,¹⁰ does not pertain to the color of the object portrayed. This is an example of the very general regularity that certain parts or aspects of the artwork as a material object may enter into the (quasi-)propositions that it claims to hold about certain indicated and depicted objects—while other parts or aspects of the art object do not so participate. As noted, this distinction, in the single case, has several sources—one is the very genre of the artwork, another is indications provided by the particular artwork itself.

⁹Originally titled *La Liberté éclairant le monde*, designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi who also made a smaller copy at the Pont de Quenelle in Paris 1875. The large New York version was inaugurated in 1886.

¹⁰Pure water supposedly results in copper carbonate making up the main part of the chemical substance of patination; dependent upon the character and pollution of rain, copper sulfides, chlorides, etc. may add to the corrosion, sulphur giving a more brownish hue while chlorides will result in a more green hue.

As to the former source, we already indicated how bronze sculpture is not generally supposed to refer to green or greenish objects. This, however, is not a law but rather a rule-of-thumb convention of tradition. Bronze artworks do exist which make special use of the green corrosion color for (quasi-)proposition aims. Take, e.g., a set of earrings such as those below, the accompanying sales text making this proposal to the potential customer: “Let your inner and outer beauty blossom by adding these fetching Apple Green Patinated Lily Pad Earrings to your look.”¹¹



The leaf-shaped trinkets evidently, in a general way refer to foliage (the text proposes lily pad, other internet texts propose geranium), the green color here assuming part of the work’s quasi-proposition, contrary to the general interpretation of bronzes and supported by the organic-looking shape of the objects.¹² The anti-cartouche protesters, however, did not go into such arguments—they simply assumed that green in the artwork immediately refers to green in the world.

There are, however, further constraints on the filling-out interpretation of artworks, those of indications given in the work itself or its immediate context, that which Ingarden calls “schematic aspects held-in-readiness.” The sources of such schematic aspects are several. Let us take such potentialities of the work one by one. A first observation here is that the green shade assumed over the years by bronze exposed to weather conditions is a very light, slightly bluish green—rather

¹¹Earrings by John S. Brana, <http://www.handcrafted-earrings.com/apple-green-patinated-lily-pad-handmade-earrings-small>.

¹²The character of the patination in the earrings is not indicated. The darker green seems to indicate patination may have involved ferric salts sometimes used for such effects.

far from the heraldic focal green used by some Muslim flags (e.g. the Saudi Arabian national flag depicting the prophet's sword and the Islamic declaration in white on green). So even in the case that the color of the bronze flags of the cartouche were in fact taken to form part of the artwork's proposition, it is by no means evident that these banners would resemble nor represent Islamic standards. This is connected to the cartouche forming a subgenre of heraldry. All of the world's official flags, in fact, use a rather small, selected amount of focal colors evolved out of the European heraldic tradition,¹³ and both the green and the blue allowed by that system lie far from the corrosion colors of copper and bronze. So the formal, heraldic character of the cartouche forms a genre constraint implying, as potentialities inherent in the artwork, only that small palette of focal colors, effectively ruling out the interpretation of the bronze verdigris hue as an actual flag coloring. This potentiality of the work, then, originates from its genre as a piece of heraldry.

Another potentiality stems from the fact that, in the work itself, clear indications are given of the Danish, patriotic character of the work—most conspicuously, of course, by the monogram of the Danish queen which firmly anchors the reference as the Danish royal dynasty and, by metonymy, its associated military units. This potentiality thus stems from the work read as involving a real proposition referring to the Danish queen. Such an object reference, then, involves the potentiality of the flags being filled-in as Danish national flags. For the militarily knowledgeable observer, furthermore, the individual tips of the ten banners form references to the ten royal banners owned by the Guard, in an even stronger way indicating the potentiality of them being Danish banners to be filled in with red and white.¹⁴

In the immediate context, finally, the very mounting of the cartouche on the roof of a centrally located and historically significant Danish barracks involves a potentiality pointing in the same direction: this artwork celebrates a specific Danish military regiment housed in that building, closely connected to the royal dynasty of Denmark.

All these aspects of the work thus perform the role of “aspects held-in-readiness” indicated by Ingarden. Moreover, all three point in the same direction: they clearly lead the observer in the direction of making a filling-out interpretation of the standards in the cartouche as Danish flags rather than Muslim war banners.

¹³The standard colors of European heraldry fall in two groups, so-called *metals*, named *or* and *argent* (yellow and white) and *colours*, comprising *azure*, *gules*, *purpure*, *sable*, and *vert* (blue, red, purple, black, and green), sometimes adding *tawny* (orange). The particular value of those colors are close to the focal colors (as prototypical or best examples of each linguistic color category) and have a large degree of universality, cf. Berlin and Kay (1969). Most world, state, regional, military, etc. flags obey variants of this color code, effectively ruling out the hue of verdigris as a possible flag shade.

¹⁴For the average observer standing on the ground, however, the detail of the ten banner tips is hardly visible to the degree that they can be individually identified as referring to really existing flags—despite the fact that the gilt of the tips draws attention to them. Furthermore, the expert knowledge of the banner tips is not immediately available to most average observers. Still, the other potentialities of the work should more than suffice to prevent the interpretation of them as Islamist war banners.

Of course, expression is free, and nobody should be in a position to prevent the protesting officer and his political aide from freely associating the greenish-gray banners with whatever they may fancy. But simultaneously, structures both of the general genre character of the work, the particular qualities of it and references made by it, and its very contextual placement allow us to argue for an interpretation that is simply correct because in conformity with both conventions about bronzes, genre regularities—and in conformity with central aspects of the work itself. There is little doubt, however, that the claims of the enraged guardsman and his political supporter correspond to real psychological experiences with the artwork. This case then also goes to show the relativist dangers of psychologistic theories of art.¹⁵ For how could we argue against their—or any other—interpretation if psychology was really the last key to interpretation?

This particular case thus served to display the less than sensational lack of elementary aesthetic capability and sensibility in an ex-life guard officer and a prominent parliamentarian—but apart from that, the struggle also served to make publicly known an artwork that would, in all probability, have remained in comparative oblivion in the world outside particular military circles without the protest. Probably few if any would have wondered, at all, what were the more precise meanings of this pretty traditional piece of art.

This is exactly the reason why it may throw some light upon the interpretation of artworks also on a broader scale. The very traditional and non-spectacular character of the cartouche makes it clear what an elementary thing it is for an artwork to perform not only quasi-propositional but also ordinary propositional tasks proper, in a very unproblematic, even trivial way. The funny thing is that this seems to lie beyond—or below—the grasp of much contemporary theory of art to which it may seem to be decidedly below the dignity of art to perform simple, propositional acts of reference. But the cartouche case may make it obvious that for large parts of art history—and in most other sectors of society besides modern art, institutionally speaking—the combination of aesthetic elaboration and propositional reference is the rule rather than the exception.

It certainly seems to be a very basic issue in the filling-out in artworks that the saturation of fictive quasi-propositions goes hand in hand with that of real propositions. In Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*, the frequent references to actual existing New York landmarks, structures, and streets afford the filling-out with actual or mediated impressions of those cityscapes, and they form, in turn, the frame for the filling-out of quasi-propositions pertaining to the fictive characters of the work. In Peirce's theory of propositions, much emphasis is placed on what he calls collateral information or collateral observation. This concept refers to the fact that, in order to understand any proposition, the interpreter must have an already established source of reference to the object referred to by the proposition—for the Kantian reason that no description suffices to identify an object definitely. The

¹⁵I argue against the current renaissance of psychologism in ch. 2 of Stjernfelt (2014). Already in 1937, (Ingarden 1974) eloquently did the same thing with reference to aesthetics in particular.

subject term of a proposition refers to some object, but in order to identify that object, the interpreter must be able to refer that object to an already-known frame of reference independent of the proposition. If that were not the case, the proposition would not refer and hence degenerate to a mere predicate. Peirce:

Two men meet on a country road. One says to the other, "that house is on fire." "What house?" "Why, the house about a mile to my right." Let this speech be taken down and shown to anybody in the neighboring village, and it will appear that the language by itself does not fix the house. But the person addressed sees where the speaker is standing, recognises his right hand side (a word having a most singular mode of signification) estimates a mile (a length having no geometrical properties different from other lengths), and looking there, sees a house. It is not the language alone, with its mere associations of similarity, but the language taken in connection with the auditor's own experiential associations of contiguity, which determines for him what house is meant. It is requisite then, in order to show what we are talking or writing about, to put the hearer's or reader's mind into real, active connection with the concatenation of experience or of fiction with which we are dealing, and, further, to draw his attention to, and identify, a certain number of particular points in such concatenation. ("The Critic of Arguments," 1892, 3.418)

So, in understanding an Ingardenian quasi-proposition, we must be able to identify the fictive object to which it refers by the reference to some ordinary proposition given by the work, ultimately locating the fictive events in some connection to reality. It may be, indeed, in very general or vague terms ("Once upon a time in a land far away . . ."), or it may be in very particular, precise terms, indicating precise real world time and place-coordinates in relation to which the fictive object is located. This might not be so surprising; more important is it that those real propositions simultaneously and importantly contribute to the aspects-held-in-readiness which permit the interpreter, in many cases very easily, even automatically, to perform the filling-out of the spots of indeterminacy of the work, be they presented in quasi- or real propositions. As when the real propositions in the cartouche example pertaining to the Danish queen and Copenhagen barracks allows us to abduct that the standards involved are indeed Danish flags rather than Islamist war banners.

This, however, does not seem to lie in Ingarden's original theory. Just like his theory suffers from a too sharp, dualist distinction between fully determinate perceptions and partially indeterminate artworks,¹⁶ his very sharp distinction between works consisting of quasi-propositions and those of real propositions must be softened up by a more continuous relation between the realms of the quasi and the real. Ingarden, when dealing with the literary work, actually did take a step in that direction by distinguishing between degrees of quasi-propositions. Thus, in *The Literary Work of Art*, he distinguished between three levels of quasi-propositions: (1) "in works which in *no* sense claim to be historical" (pp. 167–168), characterized by the "total absence of the intention of an exact matching" (p. 168); (2) works in

¹⁶In Stjernfelt (2007), I argued that perception is more schematic than assumed in Ingarden—making it more understandable how schematic filling-out of indeterminacy spots may achieve quasi-experience effects.

which “the represented objectivities refer in a totally different, and at the same time, if one may put it so, narrower manner to the real world” (p. 170) where the beginning “of the matching is already present” (ibid.), but aimed only towards “a general *type* of states of affairs and objects that would be ‘possible’ in a given time and milieu” (ibid.); and finally (3) works where the matching intention extends to “the strictly individual” as opposed to the general type, taken to be closest to genuine judicative propositions (Ingarden’s term for ordinary propositions with full truth claims). So: fictions involving no reality reference, general such reference, and individual such reference, respectively. Even in the latter case, however, propositions identical to real propositions will assume a different character as “simulating” or “duplicating” the real objectivities, which would be referred to by the very same proposition occurring in a scientific work, Ingarden maintains.¹⁷ The plastic ladder of quasi-propositions developed here suffers, from our point of view, from being based on the reference to the character of whole artworks such that it is taken to be the genre definition of the work that determines the reference of each of its sentences through and through. In an era of docu-drama and autofiction, such an insistence on the absolute generic difference between fiction and non-fiction appears as quite too rigid.¹⁸ This rigidity probably comes from the empirical bases of Ingarden’s theory being literature in the classic sense of *belles-lettres*, at the time safely conceived to be worlds apart from factual and non-fiction prose. In artworks like paintings and sculpture, however, very often used to celebrate and refer to real-life characters or objectivities, freely mixing or adorning these with fictitious figures and motifs, the general artistic possibility of blending propositions and quasi-propositions appears as a much more obvious possibility.

Moreover, this gives us another central source of aspect potentialities kept-in-readiness—those indicated by real propositions partaking in the work, as the example of the direct reference to the Danish queen in the Rosenborg cartouche. It is that very same reference that appears as one of the main potentialities of the

¹⁷This issue must be kept apart, again, from two different possible attitudes to the same work of art, the aesthetic and the extra-aesthetic:

There are two possible ways in which a work of art may be perceived. The act of perception may occur within the context of the aesthetic attitude in the pursuit of aesthetic experience or it may be performed in the service of some extraaesthetic preoccupation such as that of scientific research or a simple consumer’s concern, either with the object of obtaining the maximum of pleasure from commerce with the work or—as frequently happens in the reading of literature—with the object of informing oneself about the vicissitudes of the characters depicted in the work or some other matter of extra-literary fact about which a reader can obtain information on the basis of the work of art (as for example by reading Homer classical scholars seek to inform themselves about the life of the ancient Greeks, their customs, dress, etc.). (Ingarden 1964, p. 200)

Our focus here is how ordinary, real propositions, part of the artwork, may participate in yielding potentialities directing the filling-out concretizing the artwork into an aesthetic object.

¹⁸This is probably the reason why such potentialities are not considered in Ingarden’s account of the aesthetic cognition process (Ingarden 1968/1973a).

work, granting that the banners behind the royal monogram should not be interpreted after their metal surface—and that victorious Islamist standards do not wave over Copenhagen.

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