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The Lure of Disillusion

Toward a Reappraisal of Realism in Religious Understanding

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
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figure 1 *Crucifixion* (Ernst Fuchs, 1957)

Eheu! paupertina philosophia in paupertinam religionem ducit.--A hunger-bitten and idea-less philosophy naturally produces a starveling and comfortless religion. It is among the miseries of the present age that it recognizes no medium between literal and metaphorical. Faith is either to be buried in the dead letter, or its name and honors usurped by a counterfeit product of the mechanical understanding, which in the blindness of self-complacency confounds symbols with allegories.

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Statesman's Manual, 1839

* * * * * * * * * * *

[R]eligious discourse can be understood in any depth only by understanding the form of life to which it belongs. What characterizes that form of life is not the expressions of belief that accompany it, but a way--a way that includes words and pictures, but is far from consisting in just words and pictures--of living one's life, of regulating all of one's decisions.

- Hilary Putnam, Renewing Philosophy, 1992

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ABSTRACT / RÉSUMÉ

This Master's thesis examines the status of myth and symbol in postmodern religious discourse, and proposes a new way of understanding representation in religion. The first chapter deals with the sense of symbol as it emerged out of literary and philosophical romanticism, and explores several divergent interpretations of the meaning of the symbol according to modernist and structuralist criticism. The second chapter, after analysing the function of myth and history in religious understanding, connects the romantic symbol to a contemporary hermeneutics based on the aesthetic and epistemological tenets of magic realism. It is my contention in this thesis that magic realism, in its conflation (and deconstruction) of the ideologically charged dichotomy of myth and reality, provides a hermeneutical tool with which to critique demythologization; and that, in its dual aspect as heir to both romanticism and realism, magic realism may be a more fertile source than either neo-romanticism or post-structuralism for a truly postmodern religious criticism.

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Ce mémoire de maîtrise examine le mythe et le symbole dans le discours religieux postmoderne et propose une nouvelle façon de comprendre la représentation religieuse. Le premier chapître discute des racines romantiques du symbole et explore plusieurs interprétations des critiques modernistes et structuralistes du symbole. Le deuxième chapître analysé le rôle du mythe et de l'histoire dans la pensée religieuse, en reliant le symbole romantique à l'herméneutique contemporaine inspirée par la philosophie et l'esthétique du «réalisme magique». Ce mémoire prétend que le «réalisme magique» est un outil d'analyse herméneutique qui permet de dévoiler le mythe et le symbole sans leur préjugés politiques qui ont été acquir au couer de l'histoire. Le «réalisme magique», l'héritier du romantisme et du réalisme, est un outil d'analyse herméneutique indispensable pour critiquer la démythologisation. En fait, «réalisme magique» pourrait représenter une perspective plus pertinente dans la critique religieuse postmoderne que ne peuvent être le néo-romantisme ou le post-structuralisme.

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical void which has been left by the bankruptcy of post-structuralist theory is necessarily also a spiritual void. The French-based literary-cultural theorizing of post-Saussureanism, with its callow and philosophically incoherent anti-metaphysical posturings, has tried to disengage literature from its troublesome spiritual dimension altogether—by simply denying the existence of that dimension.

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My suspicion that theology is now an entirely sterile subject...has been strengthened by the absence of any sensible responses or reviews from that particular quarter. For the most part it seems to me that more religious sense has come out of New Guinea or the jungles of South America in recent decades than out of the combined lucubrations of the world's churches.

-- Colin Falck, *Myth, Truth and Literature*

"What is today more boring," asks Frederick Turner, in a recent essay published in *Harper's Magazine*, "than the up-to-date?" All of our arts, all of what we call "culture," including sculpture, music, painting, performance art and fiction, "tread the same postmodern circle," in which the following alchemical formula is applied:

> first, the subversion of the traditional means of representation, which are held to serve the interests of the power elite; next, what post-structuralist critics call the 'play of the signifiers', designed to undermine the expectations of the public; finally, the reminder that the sucker who buys the thing is complicit in the fraud described by the fashion magazines as the late capitalist commodification of desire. (Turner 1995, 59)

The problem with this circle, as Turner sees it, is that there is no escape; it is an endless loop, in which the reality of anything "outside" ("the text," in postmodern parlance) is not only bracketed, but forgotten—denied. Spinning out of control, like the child's hula hoop in the crowded fairground, the process nonetheless makes a return, the "joke" (if it is a joke) "always turns in upon itself," and the perpetrators find themselves "trapped in the present, in a narrow little moving box of power struggle and injured self-esteem" (59).

Turner's remarks reflect a "backlash" which has been brewing in scholarly circles for some time now. The past decade, in particular, has witnessed a polyphonic reaction to the hegemony of so-called "postmodern" modes, models, and methods; particularly those going by the labels "poststructuralism" and "deconstruction." These are not, of course, completely synonymous terms (though many, pro as well as contra, might have it so), yet deconstruction, as a catchword for the programme of one of post-structuralism's patriarchs, Jacques Derrida, became, in the 1960s and 1970s, the archetypal instance of post-Saussurean criticism; and, as such, left its indelible stamp upon continental and Anglo-American academies.

Turner's skepticism notwithstanding, his formula for postmodernism is an apt summation of the deconstructive process: subversion of traditional means of representation; resultant play of the signifiers, liberated from the shackles of "Western metaphysics"—from the shadows of Plato's caves; and "finally," the deconstruction of textual "meaning," which serves to undermine (dualistic) expectations and challenges traditional hierarchies. It is the first "stage" in this process which will be most crucial to the purposes of the present examination, and it is this first assumption that Colin Falck questions most vociferously: Why, he asks, *do we feel the need to subvert traditional means of representation?* What, exactly, is the problem with the *metaphysics of presence*; and what are the implications of subverting the sense of presence, while proclaiming the dawn of a new, freer world, where unchained signifiers float languidly in the matinal breeze?

Though this is all to be done, "without positive terms"—that is, without setting up new dichotomies to replace the old—it is obvious upon which side deconstruction stands, and how it thus falls prey to the myth of liberation so ensconced in modern Occidental culture. "Traditional metaphysics" and "means of representation" are clearly falsehoods to be attacked, or, to speak Heideggerian, "overcome." Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of effective "criticism" without a certain sense of this—what I shall be calling the *lure of disillusion*: the "curious tendency" (Frye) in humans, and particularly modern Western humans, to believe in the revelation of truth *negatively*, through the progressive unveiling of falsehood and illusion.

Yet deconstruction, and "post-Saussurean" criticism more generally, hides its concern for "values" behind a veneer of detachment, playfulness, irony.[1] For all its aspirations to "answerable style" (Hartman), poststructuralist theory has been taken to task for its ivory-tower posturing, its sterility, its blindnesses, and its "crypto-Stalinism."[2]

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[1] Several recent works have attacked deconstructionist "detachment": John Fekete's *Life After Post-modernism* (1988), Newton Garver's *Derrida and Wittgenstein* (1994), and Hilary Putnam's *Renewing Philosophy* (1994), to name a few. For all the deconstructionist paeans to Nietzsche, they seem to forget that his life's work was based on a new understanding and concern for, above all else—*values*.

[2] Camille Paglia, in *Sex, Art and American Culture* (1992) and *Vamps & Tramps: New Essays* (1994).

Within continental thought, Jürgen Habermas has questioned postmodernism's *prima facie* rejection of "the Enlightenment project," while Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer have developed alternative methodologies of interpretation (hermeneutics). On the Anglo-American scene, where analytical philosophy long reigned supreme, thinkers like Hilary Putnam, Nelson Goodman, and Richard Rorty are suggesting syncretic alternatives to (or emendations of) poststructuralism and hermeneutics, often based in a reworking of Deweyan pragmatism. But the most vociferous attacks on the work of Derrida, Lacan, and Kristeva have come from a loose group of cultural critics (or *Kulturkritiker,* to use George Steiner's term) interested in retrieving alternative ways of understanding, and, moreover, of *coming to terms with,* the "postmodern condition" (*postmodernity*), without resorting to what they perceive as the hyper-relativism/nihilism/apathy of *postmodernism*—typified by the (misapplied and much-abused) premise that "there is nothing outside the text." For the *Kulturkritiker*, poststructuralists are heirs of the Pedant in Goethe's *Faust, Part Two*, who, upon seeing the beautiful Helen in the flesh, can only stick his nose back into his Homeric annotations, while stammering "Above all I must stick to the text" (§6536-40). Beauty, feeling, love, are lost.

Traditional theories of language understand its function as mimesis, as an attempt to indicate the reality of the given (extralinguistic) world. Poststructuralists turn this around, and, in the words of Paul de Man, philosophy becomes "an endless reflection on its own destruction at the hands of literature" (Norris 1982, 21). The critique of mimetic, or naturalist "representationalism" in aesthetics and epistemology and the "designative" (Lockeian-Condillacan) theory of language, coupled with the retrieval of "rhetoric" as philosophical and expressive tool, are, to my mind, the most important aspects of post-Saussurean criticism. Yet, critics of poststructuralism are correct in suggesting that these particular ideas are not new, but have in fact been (intensively, if not always systematically) explored in the past, by other movements reacting, like postmodernism,

against the philosophical and aesthetic orthodoxy of their times. One such movement, whose legacy lingers today, is Romanticism.

Colin Falck's *Myth, Truth and Literature* was (to vary the overused and misopaedic trope) a depth-charge sunk in the wading-pool of academics: it sent waves cascading across disciplinary ramparts—aesthetics, philosophy, literary and cultural theory—in its call for a "true postmodernism." Falck's work is a sustained critique of post-Saussurean theory's "abolition of reality." The linguistic turn taken by twentieth-century thought in the wake of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis has, according to Falck, been extended (and thus reduced) to absurd extremes, as "meaning" revolves, endlessly, entrapped and useless, in a web of free (i.e., limitless) signification. As such, to borrow a term from Fredric Jameson, language becomes a "prison house" indeed, as it is severed from life; from extratextual reality.[3] This, for Falck, is an unnecessary and unwarranted (even, he suggests, along with Hilary Putnam, a dangerous) leap in the dark.[4] Post-Saussureanism fails to fulfil its *critical* rôle, and merely legitimizes the condition of fracturation and apathy; rather than engaging, or, as I put it above, *coming to terms* with postmodernity, postmodern criticism tends to accept, and even revel in our "bad faith": the "metaphysical or ontological void which existed at the heart of our culture already" (Falck 1994, 9). Thus does the *cure* show itself as *lure*, or perhaps, even, as *symptom.* Deconstruction, in particular, which in practice rarely approaches the quality, fineness and exactitude of Derrida's pioneering work, proves itself not only philosophically and aesthetically sterile (or, as Frederick Turner would have it, "boring"), but culturally and politically problematic.

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[3] "Saussurean theory has given us a suitable object of study only by giving us an object of study which is incoherently abstracted from the nature of language as a living process and which is therefore without any real philosophical or human significance"; like logic, philosophy becomes "an artificial or dead object" (Falck 1994, 10).

[4] In *Renewing Philosophy*, Putnam gives some credit to Derrida, or at least to his good intentions: "Derrida, I repeat, is not an extremist. His own political pronouncements are, in my view, generally admirable." And yet—"the philosophical irresponsibility of one decade can become the real world political tragedy of a few decades later. And deconstruction without reconstruction is irresponsibility" (1992, 133).

At the same time, Falck recognizes the positive aspects of the linguistic turn to which poststructuralism is heir, as well as the attempts made by poststructuralists to reverse the biases against: a) literature and fiction as "legitimate" forms of expression and understanding; and b) rhetoric as a significant tool in philosophy and criticism. However, Falck sees this latter attempt as, ultimately, a failure, given poststructuralism's refusal to ascribe or delimit "meaning" in the morass of freed significations that the unshackled "text" lets loose. It is from the side of literature itself that Falck builds his own propadeutic counterproposal, based on a re-examination of literary Romanticism, a "movement" which, it can be argued, has played not only a significant but a determinant rôle in the shaping of modern Occidental personae.

Romanticism is, as we shall see, many things to many people, but for the time being we will let it stand as the reaction, in the mid to late eighteenth century, against the Enlightenment vision of the world, the self, and the "reality" which lies somewhere between these. For Falck, it is Romanticism's understanding of the distinction between *allegory* and *symbol*, developed to buttress a critique of traditional representationalism in language ("designative") and the arts ("mimesis")—in short, Romanticism's full-scale critique of a *realist* understanding of the world—which serves as a catalyst for a reappraisal of "truth" and "myth" in our Occidental intellectual, cultural, and religious heritage. *Reconnecting with the literary past in order to throw some fresh light upon the blind assumptions of the philosophical present.* (As we shall see, though the Romantics have remained a popular foil for critics of the metaphysics of presence, poststructuralist understandings of the past, and of Romanticism in particular, frequently suffer from stereotyping and appropriation—blindnesses which may, as Paul de Man suggests, be an essential aspect of rhetorical insight, but which nonetheless must themselves be put into question as potentially egregious misreadings.)

But Falck's challenge does not end there—if it did there would be no need for the present undertaking. While *Myth, Truth and Literature* is largely concerned with deconstructing postmodernism as generally conceived (as poststructuralism or post-Saussureanism), in the "Preface" to this work the author slips in, almost as an aside, a

cursory dismissal of twentieth-century religion, suggesting that, not only the study of religion, but the (Occidental Christian) faith itself—by *demythologizing* and *internalizing*—has become "inauthentic" for postmoderns. Traditional faiths, in Falck's analysis, have little to offer to any "true postmodernism"; the necessary *remythologization* can only take place with the imaginative insights of poetry and literature—*Romantic* poetry and literature in particular. Other *Kulturkritiker* of our times, in trying to get beyond the "stranglehold" of poststructuralist orthodoxy, have neglected or disdained recent theological thinking, in giving short shrift to the place of religion more generally. This, I think, is a serious lacuna, as is the obverse neglect of culture criticism by theology and philosophy.

Falck's second challenge is the one I would like to address in this paper, but in so doing I must first counter his primary thrust: the counterposition of neo-Romanticism to deconstruction as "true postmodernism"; the two cannot be disengaged. It is my contention that Falck's dismissal of contemporary religious faith reveals an incomplete analysis of Romantic aesthetics, in which we can discern elements which nuance, and may even subvert, such a critique of religious demythologization. Thus, after a brief excursus on the foundations of Romanticism and its key concepts, Chapter One will consist of an analysis of Romanticism as a revolutionary movement in language, aesthetics, ethics, epistemology, focusing on the Romantic symbol and the ambiguities of temporal "presence." After connecting the Romantic legacy with modernism and twentieth-century theology, I propose, in Chapter Two, to delimit the particular problem of *myth* in relation to Romantic and Christian theories of time and representation, culminating in a discussion of *magic realism* as a *style of reading and expressing truth in religion.* Using these findings, I will present a re-reading of *demythologization* under the auspices of a magic realist hermeneutic, with regard, specifically, to the work of Rudolf Bultmann, the father of *Entmythologisierung.*

Excursus One: Romanticism—A Sense of Symbol

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), Neapolitan jurist, philosopher, and Renaissance Man, is best known today for his metahistorical speculations regarding the cycles of social history: the division of time into distinct epochs [*corsi*]—Anarchic, Theocratic, Aristocratic, Democratic—which eternally recur. Vico's cycles are not merely "political," however, they involve radical changes in the dominant or hegemonic "mood"—the *Zeitgeist*. In developing this cyclical theory of history Vico was the first "modern" to give voice to a notion of "poetic logic" or "poetic wisdom," a style of thinking in contradistinction to classical ways: one that attempts a conflation of imagination and reason. Poetic wisdom, in the Viconian sense, is not necessarily irrational, unreasonable, or "divine" (in the strict, simplified and direct causal sense of divinely given or ordained): it is an alternative (and divinely inspired or sanctioned) mode of conceptualization, of knowing and understanding the rhythms of the world; an alternative to the rational understanding so beloved of the Enlightenment. With Vico, the jug of religion, safely contained for a time by the renascence of reason, was upended, and the seeds of Romanticism sown.

In "primitive" times, Vico argues in *The New Science* (*La scienza nuova*, 1725) human beings did not need to invoke the imagination in order to give utterance to their understanding of the spiritual realm; they did not have to clothe the transcendent in *images* (which become "diminutive signs"); they "did the opposite and more sublime thing: they attributed senses and passions...to bodies...as vast as sky, sea, and earth" (Vico 1984, 128). Whatever the historical accuracy of such a picture, Vico resurrects and refashions the proverbial distinction between various types of thinking: knowledge and wisdom; the former "scientific," the latter poetic, but, in spite of, or rather *because* of this, eminently practical. "[T]hose who excel in knowledge seek a single cause to explain many natural effects, but those who excel in practical wisdom seek as many causes as possible for a single deed" (248).

Thus Vico evokes the possibility of a wisdom, a *spirit* of reality comprehension which is not split into a conceptual or abstract *meaning* and a concrete—but (merely) "allegorical"—*image* or illustration. In his *Ancient Wisdom* (*De antiquissima Italorum sapienta*, 1710) Vico contrasts this wisdom—popular, poetic, and practical—with (modern) knowledge that is sophisticated, philosophical, and theoretical, and therefore *less* grounded in human reality. This early work, an explicit attack on Descartes, states Vico's famous principle of *verum et factum convertuntur* (the convertibility of the true and the made). Here we see the key to Viconian theory: his notion of "imaginative universals" [*universale fantastico*: the form of thought that characterizes the religio-mythic or poetic mood] as well as his more general thesis that "[t]here is no fixed human nature that remains identical regardless of time, place, and circumstance; human nature develops in accordance with self-knowledge and with insight into the essences of things" (1984, 247).

However, lest we forget, Vico was, among his other "trades," a theologian—and one deeply committed to the exposition of religious truths. It is Divine Providence which grants to human nature these nonrational (not *irrational*) creative capacities, even if it is they themselves which, operating on associative principles, produce "false" (not verifiable or demonstrable) beliefs from which will emerge greater truths. Yet, as stated above, this is not a direct imposition of transcendent whim; it is not Divine Providence which *itself* provides wisdom, but which inspires, literally, *gives breath* to such—acting as a first cause, from which the poetic nonrational wisdom springs.

Another important contribution of Vico was his "discovery" of the unity between philosophy and philology, a connection exploited in our own day where philosophy has taken a "linguistic turn." Johann Gottfried Herder, protégé of Hamann and mentor of Goethe, picked up on this Viconian connection and extended it, emphasizing (and this is critical when we look at the disembodied state of the linguistic "extremism" of deconstructionist and poststructuralist thought) not only the linguistic constitution of thought but the concomitant *embodiment* of thought and language: "Thought," Herder proclaims, "being necessarily linguistic, can take place only as an expressive activity and in a behavioural medium, and must necessarily be physically embodied, located, and concrete" (Falck 1994, 186). This last notion makes Herder, in some sense, a father of pluralism, given his recognition of the embeddedness of language, and therefore of thought (and truth?) within people(s), cultures, and epochs. Colin Falck sees in the Herderian view a warning: while acknowledging the centrality of language in our thinking and being, it raises questions about the *adequacy* of our concepts *vis-à-vis* the "previously unarticulated awareness which we make use of them to express" (187).

Thus was Romanticism born, begat from a) the recognition of a mode of knowing and experiencing that is neither rationalistic nor empiricist, and which cannot be easily (if at all) reduced to these; b) the replacement of mechanistic with biologistic and organic metaphors for thinking of art and life; c) a sense of the importance of language—*embodied, expressive language*—in shaping human (social) being; d) a commitment to the transformation of "reality," often through socio-political revolution or reform, or (in the case of the Lake poets) a "popular" poetry. Most importantly, for our purposes here, the Romantic revolution, as with the Christian "revolution" of the first centuries of the Common Era, overturned conventional epistemological and aesthetic modes of apprehension—ways of thinking as well as of living—by throwing light upon the mimetic and designative traditions: setting realism, as it were, *in the balance*. The impetus of Vico and the extenuations of such by Herder, in terms of historical consciousness, the relevance of language, and the sense of pluralism, set the stage for the Romantic explosion at the close of the eighteenth century, exemplified—in its breadth, power, and complications—by Germany's two foremost poet-sages: Goethe and Schiller.

Herder was nothing if not syncretic, catalysing—in his alchemical fusion of the Enlightenment, Vico, Rousseau, humanism and Christianity—both *die Romantik* and *der Klassizismus*, the German classical revival—and producing, from the cucurbit of such, a truly Mephistopholean homunculus: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe, the most "living" of all writers—indeed, a figure of such Olympian proportions that his literary work, however great, suffers in comparison with his biography—combines Vico's *poetic logic* and *imaginative universals* with Herderian linguistic embodiment. Yet Goethe, in his vitalistic hubris, was rather disdainful of the intellectual work required to lend substance to his intuitions of poetic wisdom and embodiment. His principle trope, the *Urphänomen*—"an archetypal phenomenon, a concrete thing to be discovered in the world of appearances in which 'significance' [*Bedeutung*] and appearance, word and thing, idea and experience, would coincide" (Goethe 1893, 12)—was never given sufficient elaboration, remaining a rather vague and nebulous concept, however suggestive. Elaboration was the domain of men like Kant, the Königsberg sage and intellectual anchorite, and Friedrich Schiller, Kant's foremost disciple (in terms of aesthetic theory) and Goethe's friend, acquaintance, and sometime rival. Indeed, Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790) can be seen as the foundation stone of modern aesthetics, the resurrection, as it were, of the place of art and beauty in philosophical inquiry after the early hatchet job of Plato and his epigones; this work inspired not only Herder and the *Frühromantiker*—despite Kant's own distaste for Romantic poetry—but also the German Idealist thinkers, from Schelling through the Schlegels to Hegel.

In *Judgment*, Kant speaks, (in)famously, about the fundamental "disinterestedness" of beauty, which is the effect of an "interplay" between our understanding and our imagination. Though based in subjectivity, the sense of beauty does not require conceptualization, and thus "pleases universally" (§9). Kant's idea of the convergence of perception and imagination echoes Vico's *fantasia*: the active power which forms or makes something "true" in human experience. In Kantian terms, the imagination "apprehends" what is given in intuition and "combines" the diversity of such so that it matches an already existing "concept"; thus the imagination "presents" (or "exhibits" [*darstellen*]) the concept, matching it with a "corresponding" intuition. (*COJ* §9, A.K. 217) This preliminary expression of aesthetic judgment and the relevance of beauty, though it opens up a separate realm for beauty, falls into the abstract disembodied trap of the Platonistic tradition of metaphysics. Nietzsche, here, as elsewhere, playing Goethe's bulldog, rages against Kantian "disinterestedness":

> Kant, like all philosophers, instead of viewing the esthetic issue from the side of the artist, envisaged art and beauty solely from the "spectator's" point of view, and so, without himself realizing it, smuggled the "spectator" into the concept of beauty..."That is beautiful," Kant proclaims, "which gives us disinterested pleasure." Disinterested! (*GM* III.VI)

However, Kant's vision in *Judgment* is not entirely consistent; at other times (as Falck points out), he posits an "aesthetic idea" which goes beyond the subjective—"strains" after "something lying beyond the confines of experience" (Falck 1994, 172; *COJ* §59, A.K. 351-354). This rhetoric of transcendence and transgression, of "going beyond," or "overcoming" the temporal and subjective (or even objective) realm is, of course, quite popular in these post-Nietzschean times, but Kant was either unwilling or unable to complete his rudimentary suggestions in this direction (though he does allude to the "symbol" as an "analogical" mode of representation later on in this work [§59, A.K. 352]). It was Schiller who was to take Kant's provisional work and develop its implications in several ways: namely, by "anthropologizing" the Kantian aesthetic, that is, relating it to lived human experience, while focusing on the Kantian *analogical* mode of representation expressed in the *symbol.* Thus was Schiller—with, to paraphrase Karl Barth, Kant's aesthetic Bible in one hand, and the living Goethe in the other—able to give philosophical buttress to Vico's *poetic wisdom* as well as the Kantian-Romantic intuition of a "deeper" symbolism.

Crucial to our examination of the development of Romantic poetics out of the Viconian impetus, besides the *incarnational* aspect of Goethe and the *anthropological* element of Schillerian aesthetics, is the distinction, to become a trope of Romantic and post-Romantic theory, between *symbol* and *allegory.* In Kantian terms, "judgment" is "the faculty of thinking the particular as being contained in the universal" (*COJ* A. K. 179). It is the power of judgment [*Urteilskraft*] which *subsumes* the particular under some universal (i.e., under some general principle) supplied by understanding, and thereby enables *reason* to make an inference from the universal to the particular. Goethe begs to differ: the particular, he argues, *contains the universal*—it is not merely an *illustration* of a general truth nor an immanent *pointer* to an inaccessible realm of ideas. From his *Maxims* (1822):

> It makes a great difference whether the poet seeks the particular for the universal or beholds the universal in the particular. From the first procedure originates allegory, where the particular is considered only as an illustration, as an example of the universal. The latter, however, is properly the nature of poetry: it expresses something particular without thinking of the universal or pointing to it. Whoever grasps this particular in a living way will simultaneously receive the universal too, without even becoming aware of it—or realize it later (121).

This distinction is a hub upon which early Romantic symbolism turns, and which distinguishes it from the highly Platonistic and allegorical effusions of many later Romantics and neo-Romantics. Goethe's is a Romanticism informed by the classic; in Nietzsche's terms, his Dionysianism is tempered by his Apollonianism; it is a "High" Romanticism in being less fully "Romantic" (i.e., not driven by nationalistic or patriotic sentiment; unmoved by a self-conscious cult of Beauty)—thus a vitalism closer to that of Walt Whitman or Nietzsche than of Keats, Wagner or the *poètes maudit* of France. *Grasping the particular in a living way*—in order to "receive the universal," through the back door—this is the forge in which was crafted the prototype of the Romantic Symbol.

It was another poet-philosopher, however, this time from across the Channel, who was to dwell upon the significance of the symbol for Romantic poetics, setting the criteria for "true" and "false" art which typifies not only Romantic but much of post-Romantic aesthetic theory and literary criticism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his late work *The Statesman's Manual* (1839), gives explicit definition to Goethe's terms, connecting them to the appropriate forms, or faculties, in which they are made use: fancy (for the allegory) and imagination—the latter being the realm of the Symbol, and as such the only true source of art and poetry. Coleridge, as well-versed in German metaphysics as in English poetics, saw allegory as "a translation of abstract notions into a picture language, which is nothing itself but an abstraction from objects of the senses" (Coleridge 1839, 437). As a move from abstraction to abstraction, allegorization is (like art for Plato) the phantom of a phantom—"both alike are unsubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot." Contrariwise stands the Symbol, which "is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general"; a poetic form which is revelatory in its concrete particularity, which *shows* much more than it *says*. Moreover, Coleridge adds to this the all-important temporal aspect: the symbol is characterized, above all, "by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal" (437). It is a "signifier" ineluctably fused with its "signified," partaking of "the reality which it renders intelligible" (437). Notice: the symbol does not "illuminate" a given reality, but *renders a (novel, or encroaching) reality intelligible*. For "[t]he possibility of perceiving a coherent representation of the world does not alter the fact that the world as it is in itself is not the world as reflected in the human mind" (Claudon 1980, 21). Facts are *facta*, as much *created* as *discovered*, "and made in part by the analogies through which we look at the world as through a lens" (Abrams 1953, 31). Or, through a glass...

The symbolic faculty, suchwise, is the *imagination*; in Coleridgean terms: "that reconciling and mediating power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors" (1839, 436). Thus the imagination, in this organic and monistic schema, is, in a sense, *embodied reason*. The imaginative capacity, by way of the production of symbols, provides the essential mediary, or bridge, between the literal and the metaphorical; between the "real"/historical and the fictive/mythical; it is "the modifying and coadunating faculty" (Abrams 1953, 295). It is from the imagination, and only from the imagination, which involves both the ability to distinguish allegory from symbol, and the capacity, or grace, to use the latter "appropriately," that great art is born—whether the art is that of Shakespeare, or the Hebrew poets of our Scriptural heritage—where "each thing has a life of its own, and yet they are all our life" (Abrams 1953, 295).

CHAPTER ONE

Romanticism and (Post-)Modernity

Dudkin: "Nikolai Apollonovich, it's just your sensations that appear strange to you; it's just that you've been sitting too long with Kant in an unaired room; you've been struck by a tornado—and you've started to notice things about yourself..."

Nikolai: "*That everything is what is, and yet different?*"

Dudkin: "That is, a kind of symbolic sensation that does not correspond to the stimulus of a sensation [...] a modernist would call this sensation the sensation of the abyss—that is to say, he would look for an image that corresponds to a symbolic sensation that is not normally experienced."

Nikolai: "So there's an allegory here."

Dudkin: "Don't confuse allegory with symbol; an allegory is a symbol that has become current usage...while a symbol is your appeal to what you have experienced there...; an invitation to experience artificially something that you experienced *for real*.

-- Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*

I. Romancing the Postmodern

A. The Forge and the Flame

If it is true, as M. H. Abrams,[5] Harold Bloom, Colin Falck, and Frank Kermode have suggested, that we can date the birth of the modern sensibility—our inherited version of the Occidental critical and affective persona—to the lifetime of Coleridge (whether we place its genesis with Rousseau, Herder, Kant, Hegel, Goethe, or the Lake Poets), then we would do well to re-examine the most innovative and provocative ideas of this era, ideas which, under various transmutations, supply us with much of our present *Weltanschauung*.[6] Since, as Abrams and René Wellek attest, Romanticism is "defined," in large part, by the pervasive elements of "symbolism, animism and mythopeia," (Abrams 1953, 296)[7] it may be time to reassess the Romantic sense of symbol and myth, now that the mimetic ideal (in art and theory, if not in "common-sense") has fallen so decisively asunder, setting realism once more in the balance. Indeed, the "symbol" retained enough ambiguity in the days of the early Romantics to be employed fruitfully, if somewhat vaguely, in their aesthetics; it "presented itself as a term that, while it did derive dignity from the sacral phase of its history, had not acquired any additional meaning that would be important where it was now needed—except perhaps for the spread of indefiniteness, which continues to the present day to make the 'symbol' the terror of the struggling interpreter" (Blumenberg 1982, 112). With a nod to Blumenberg's warning, we will avoid the ambiguity[8] as much as possible, by limiting ourselves herein

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[5] In *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), and *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971).

[6] Northrop Frye, like Bloom and Kermode, but contra Abrams, considers Romanticism "unfinished"—"The Romantic movement in English literature seems to me now to be a small part of one of the most decisive changes in the history of culture, so decisive as to make everything that has been written since post-Romantic, including, of course, everything that is regarded by its producers as anti-Romantic [i.e., Modernism, Futurism, Surrealism]" (Frye 1963, 3).

[7] See René Wellek, "The Concept of 'Romanticism' in Literary History," Part II, *Comparative Literature I* (1949), pp. 147-72.

[8] Suzanne K. Langer, in *Feeling and Form* (1953), provides a detailed review of the manifold meanings of "symbol" for contemporary critics. For Langer herself, a symbol is "any device whereby we are enabled to make an abstraction" (x)—an interesting divergence from the standard Romantic vision of the symbol as

to the concept of the Symbol as developed by Goethe and Coleridge, later connecting such with the ideas of Schiller, Herder,, and the Modernists.

Abrams entitled the first of his two seminal works *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953)—after the antithetical metaphors of the classical mimetic "mirror" and the Romantic creative/expressive "lamp"; and the second *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971)—after a phrase out of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, referring to the mediating aspect of Romanticism, where "salvation" is sought not solely in the creative capacities of the mind, but just as much in the creative *inspiritus* of Nature, a mix which justifies T. E. Hulme's (derisory) apellation of Romanticism as "spilt religion." My argument will limn these two titles. In analysing the Romantic critique of realism, of the classical *mirror*, I will nuance the contrasting alternative, the *lamp*, with two more specific illuminatory devices: the *forge*, and the *flame*. With these *Leitwörter*, I will proceed to discuss several variations on the Romantic theme in terms of the Symbol and its implications in representation, language, knowledge, and belief. Natural supernaturalism implies not only a re-supernaturalization of the natural world, but also, a concomitant rejection of traditional supernaturalism, as embodied in "classical" Christian theism.

What makes Coleridge of particular interest to us is his lifelong struggle with a commitment to the truths of the Christian religion.[9] Not only did he stand, thus, between poetry and philosophy, but even more precariously did he ride the line of balance between Christian orthodoxy and Romanticism. For Colin Falck, this is a limitation to Coleridge's work, and perhaps the reason he stopped writing poetry at such an early age, devoting his time to metaphysics and religious and literary criticism. But Coleridge's Christianity cannot be made marginal—it led him to rethink certain aspects of Romantic symbolism, particularly its lapses into the blind worship of the moment, and its corresponding conviction that all symbols are, *prima facie*, "successes." The histories of

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"concrete" particularity versus the "abstraction" of allegory. However, it does reflect the "semblance" or "artifice" of the Symbol as per Schiller (and Bely).

[9] Of course, Schleiermacher, Blake, and to some extent Schelling, were also caught between "religion" and "poetry"—but the former, by the time of his *Glaubenslehre* (1822), had reneged much of the Romanticism of his *Speeches to the Cultured Despisers* (1800), and Blake and Schelling frequently drifted well beyond the pale of orthodoxy, and thus were not, as Coleridge was, pressured to create a meeting-place for religion and poetry.

the Scriptures, he says in *The Statesman's Manual,* are not just "histories" in the "objective" sense, nor mere stories, but are *myths*, in the fullest *symbolic* sense. They are,

> the living educts of the imagination, of that reconciling and mediating power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors. (1839, 438)

One of the principal components of natural supernaturalism is the rejection of the habitual, of custom, and a retrieval of "wonder," of the "miraculousness of daily-recurring miracles" (Abrams 1971, 384). Yet Coleridge recognized that a commitment to the Symbol and the Imagination meant a revocation of "clarity"—a risk, a leap into the dark river of time and eternity: to forsake the mirror, to oust a realistic understanding of the world, is not without consequences. "To him who is compelled to pace to and fro within the high walls and the narrow courtyard of a prison," he suggests, "all objects may appear clear and distinct"; yet even from the look-out of the prison (the word for which in Latin, *speculum,* is the same as mirror), one's horizon is limited. Extending the Romantic trope of the questing pilgrim, Coleridge suggests that it is the traveler journeying onward, "full of heart and hope, with an ever-varying horizon, on the boundless plain, who is liable to mistake clouds for mountains, and the mirage of drouth for an expanse of refreshing water" (Falck 1994, 34). An ambiguous legacy indeed.

B. A "True" Postmodernism

I have spent considerable time outlining the development of Romanticism, and its most recognizable *Leitmotif*—the distinction between Symbol and allegory—because it is Romantic poetics upon which Colin Falck seeks to build a "true" postmodernism: a propadeutic for scholarship (and, it would seem, a heuristic for life more generally) in our postmodern situation/condition.[10] In the next section, I will try to explain the importance

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[10] In the second edition of *Myth, Truth and Literature* (1994) the author felt compelled to include an Appendix on Romantic poetics, where he extrapolates the roots of his own ideas. In the "Preface" to this second edition, Falck gleefully relates the "collapse" of Anglo-American literary poststructuralism shortly after the original publication of his book in 1989, due, he admits, not so much to his own work, as its own

of Romanticism in Falck's thesis—particularly in its aspect as the "successor" of traditional religion and doctrinal faith; as (fortuitously) "spilt religion." At the same time, I will argue that, in his efforts to re-evoke the Romantic ideal, Falck errs in too-readily conflating divergent (and sometimes antipathetic) facets of this complex and multiform movement, which results in a facile distinction between Romantic and Christian modes of conceptualization and perception, centered in the (mis)use and (mis)understanding of the *symbol* vis-à-vis *presence*. As buttress to my critique, I will briefly examine structuralist and deconstructionist arguments against Romantic "presence" and the cult of immediacy; while recognizing that these critiques also suffer from a misunderstanding of the breadth and polyphony of Romanticism, and particularly its *realism*.

As we have seen above, Falck plays Kant to Derrida's Hume—though dogmatic rationalism, traditional metaphysics, and classical theism may have failed, skepticism can be equally dogmatic, and just as implausible. Moreover, poststructuralism throws the real baby out with the metaphysical bathwater—in large part because it fails to acknowledge previous departures, heresies, and schisms from the orthodox metaphysical tradition (Plato's bastard progeny, beginning with his first begotten son—Aristotle). Though poststructuralist theory claims to be making a radical break with traditional philosophical method, by emulating and looking towards literature as a model, Falck argues that what postmodern theories need is a *real commitment* to integrating "the sometimes competing claims of literature, theology, and positive knowledge" (1994, xv).[11]

Falck's thesis, in summa: Poststructuralist (or, as he calls it, "post-Saussurean") theory is moribund, largely because it cannot adequately come to terms with, or even recognize, the "spiritual void" of postmodernity; it serves as an *apology for*, rather than a *critical interpretation of* our age. In fact, the "philosophically incoherent anti-

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internal contradictions, i.e., "its inability to appeal to any but the most aesthetically insensitive and theoretically obsessed of readers" (xi).

[11] It is important to note, however, that Falck does not insist on a conflation of literature, religion and philosophy (he cites Coleridge's maxim: "I hope philosophy and poetry will not neutralise each other" [1994, xv]); rather, he sees them as supplementary, if distinct, *modes* which may yet be understood in similar and related ways; and out of this better understanding may jointly and equally contribute to the "creation of values" and act as "tools for liberation." Yet it is clear that, for Falck, poetry is, ultimately, the final arbiter of values.

metaphysical posturings" of post-Saussureanism *contribute* to this spiritual void, by masking or denying the real presence of the spiritual dimension in (Occidental) human lives; by, in effect *abolishing reality.* Falck makes a plea for a more aesthetic evaluation of postmodernity, one which falls prey neither to the anti-metaphysical biases of post-structuralism nor the "politicization" of critical and so-called multicultural theory—in which everything is subsumed under the auspices of cultural-political criticism (1994, xii). In short, what is needed already exists—in the legacy (inescapable, however under-acknowledged) of Vico, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Blake and Coleridge. In particular, Falck cites the innovations of Kant, who in his work on aesthetic judgment gives us some suggestions on the function of the imagination—its world-making capacity, and its transgressive, "going beyond" element—which "provide us with the basis of a philosophically coherent account of the function of...creative insight or intuition—in every area of our experiential life" (35-6). Only from such can we gain "some aesthetically non-sterile critical ways in which we might at last once again begin to move forward" (xi).[12]

Thus, in reaction to the spiritual void of our days, Colin Falck retrieves the much-abused and much-neglected legacy of Romantic poetics as the natural and inevitable successor to traditional religious faith, which itself has followed philosophy into abstraction, internalization, and demythologization. It is not so much that religion and theology are to be replaced, as "subsumed" within the neo-Romantic paradigm; only "within" the bounds of such can they "discover or...rediscover their own spiritual meanings" (Falck 1994, xvi). It is my task in this dissertation to (critically) develop the Falckian thesis; in this first chapter I will nuance the neo-Romantic heuristic by suggesting some limitations of the allegory-symbol distinction upon which Romantic poetics rests, and I will also provide a counterweight to a pertinent critique (coming from the post-Saussurean theory so despised by Falck) of the atemporal and epiphanic tendencies of Romanticism more generally.

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[12] This phrase "at last once again move forward"—wondrously encapsulates the beauty, somehow both vacuous and profound, of Romantic theorizing at its best (or worst): the invocation of a lost ideality of origins as a spur to future "success." The spirit of Pater redux.

C. The Two Faces of Romanticism

Of course, attempting to give definition to Romanticism is a formidable task. Instead of providing a comprehensive summary of Romanticism, I will rely upon the four elements outlined above: the priorities of (artistic/creative/poetic) *imagination*; of organicist, or vitalist *imagery*; of *expressive* language-use; and of (socio-political/cultural/ personal) transformation or *transfiguration*. The Romantic Symbol is the trope which draws these facets together, and is what distinguishes Romantic art, Romantic style, from other forms of creation, representation and understanding.

Falck sees "Two Faces of Romanticism": the first, and most recognizable visage being that of the Byronic or Faustian rebel, the heroic vitalist—Prometheus stealing fire from the gods and bringing it to earth. "Even more than the rather mechanical atheism which preceded it, Romanticism made possible a realistic engagement with humanity's problems, because it was with Romanticism that men began to grasp the seriousness of what they were doing in questioning their long-sacred beliefs—and yet remained determined to go on doing it" (1994, 1). This is an auspicious remark, given its stress on the "realistic" engagement of Romanticism, and its aspect of rebellion against the "sacred truths;"[13] and not only those of religion, but also of the scientistic and materialistic assumptions of the European *Aufklärung*. Here a determined hope for the future (an "idealism," to employ the less technical sense of this term) mixes with a practical "realism" concerning the situation of the present. Perhaps the key to Romanticism, and to its lingering presence in our Occidental atmosphere, is its Janus-face: as a force at once *conservative* (hoping to preserve the sacred yearnings, sense of wonder, and humanism of religious faith against mechanical atheism and materialistic scientism) and *radical* (questioning the status quo, the traditional historical roots of religious stagnation and political conservatism).

In short, like Nietzsche's madman, the Romantics *lament* the so-called Death of God, for it is *we*, they intuit, who have killed Him. Yet if the "old God" has fallen, the power of deity lingers, even if it now resides, as for Blake, in the human breast. Blake's gods are strange deities, however, and not easy to see, face to face. This, according to

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[13] See Harold Bloom's *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* (1989).

Falck, is the second face of Romanticism—the side which most closely links it with traditional religious belief, and which (in his eyes) makes it the necessary "heir" to Christianity—that is, its realization of human imperfectibility in the face of mystery and divinity: its *sense of wonder*.[14] This is at once the lighter and the darker side of Romanticism: the sense of the discrepancy between what is and what could be; or rather, the refusal—by (naïvely) assuming a fluid barrier between the ideal and the real, and the eternal and the temporal—to hypostasize the gap between is and ought; between, as Schiller would have it, *what is real and what is necessary*. Coleridge felt this keenly, more so than those Romantics less intent on building a bridge for Christianity across the churning waters of modernity.

These could be called the political and the spiritual sides of Romanticism, if one were not afraid of being overly vague, and somewhat imprecise—for both faces involve political and spiritual elements. Rather I shall term the first the recognition of *agency* (which will be discussed below vis-à-vis the use of expressive language) and the second of *temporality* or *relativity* (which will be discussed in terms of an understanding of history and memory). It is Falck's thesis (following Goethe, Blake, and Keats) that these two faces can co-exist, not in the "vulgar superstitions" of Christianity, nor the disembodied pronouncements of materialistic/mechanistic science or metaphysics—but only in the type of imaginative and creative understanding known as Romanticism. It will be my task now to deconstruct the two-faced mask of Romanticism, to "think the decoy" of this Janus.

D. Worldmaking: Romanticism as Reality-Inscription

The most promising aspect of Romanticism, or, of literature and art when understood and created or performed under Romantic auspices, is the capacity of *world-making*. Romanticism bequeathed—or perhaps, revivified—the magic of words: the potentiality

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[14] Cf. Keats's *"negative capability"*—"when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact or reason [concupiscence?]". As Chesterton (hereafter GKC) says, only madmen and materialists are sure of themselves (*Orthodoxy*). According to Falck, this submissive aspect contributes to the darker side of Romanticism, and given the horrors of mytho-political Romanticism (i.e., Nazism, fascism) this is evident. But I wonder whether the other side, the "lighter" side, cannot be just as dark—Faustian (non-tragic) hubris is an evil that the modern world (and earth) knows all too well.

of words to beget worlds. Particularly at this stage in our history, when, according to the tenets of postmodernity, our "reality" (or "realities") has been fractured and dispersed, what is needed is a new understanding of reality and "truth"— or, perhaps, of the "truth of reality." It might be that, as Falck suggests, it will be literature which "gives us our purest and most essential way of grasping reality or truth" (1994, xvi). The abyss of uncertainty and relativism in which we have been plunged after the Death of God, as proclaimed a century ago by Nietzsche and corroborated by Marx, Darwin, and Freud, can be, not covered over or patched up, but made *livable*, by the insights of art and literature: aesthetics as a propadeutic for postmodern life. The problem with postmodernisms is that, by and large, they have only dug the abyss more deeply, by abolishing not only God and the subject, but (our felt sense of) "reality"—by eliminating, with the critique of the metaphysics of presence, any possibility of extra-linguistic, or even extra-textual presence or reality that is worth discussing. "How hollow and empty did we feel in this melancholy, atheistic half-night, in which Earth vanished with all its images, Heaven with all its stars" (Goethe, *DW* [III, 11]).

Taking the cue from the Kantian theory of perception, Falck understands human "reality" to be a confluence of "outside" and "inside" (he judiciously avoids the terms "objective" and "subjective"). That is to say, the "world" in which we live is the creation, in large part, of our pre-conceptual ("animal," Santayana would say) awareness, or "sympathy." The minute we perceive, we create.[15] Furthermore, it is this "sympathy," and not knowledge, "which *links* our own experiencing and other people's experiencing into a single world of human apprehension and agency" (Falck 1994, 14). This pre-conceptual "faith" does not imply that reality is *solely* the creation (*ex nihilo*) of our perceiving/conceiving/imagining minds—for just as reality is inscribed in our apprehension, the "soul" (Falck reappropriates this very un-modern term) is also inscribed in our subsequent linguistic or poetic expression. There is no *a priori* "self"; poetry is, as

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[15] Octavio Paz, in *The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism* (1995) dwells upon this at some length, making note that though such a theory has a long pedigree, stretching back to the Greeks, it has recently been strengthened by findings in neurological science (237ff). See also Gerald Edelman, *Bright Air, Bright Fire. On the Matter of the Mind* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1993), and the work of Nelson Goodman, whose constructivist philosophy is developed in *Ways of Worldmaking* and *Of Mind and Other Matters*.

Keats suggested, a "vale of soul-making" as much as it is the locus for a recognition and exhibition—*presentation*—of reality or truth.

The "true" Romanticism of Goethe, as previously discussed, where the symbol is the meeting-place—the locus or nexus of the particular and the general; the transcendent within the infinite; the eternal as temporal—is a Romanticism tempered by a certain "classical" impulse. These terms are, of course, hardly less vague than realism and idealism, but here I shall follow Walter Pater, as heir to the Romantics, father and priest of the British Symbolists—the so-called Aesthetic Movement—and grandfather, by way of Woolf, Proust, Yeats, and Joyce, of Modernism. In an essay on Coleridge, Pater alludes to the poet's epitomization of the *autre façon* of Romanticism, suggesting that it is in fact Coleridge's "inexhaustible discontent, languor, and home-sickness," chords which "ring all through our modern literature" (Pater 1987, 104) that signifies our romantic legacy. This homesickness, so evident in Heidegger's favorite *Frühromantiker* Hölderlin, is, for Pater, what characterizes "the Romantic" best; on the other hand, the "classic" is, not a mere longing for the solidity of the past, as it is often characterized by false Romantics, but is rather the "forgetting of the distant horizon" in order to take stock, or "be content with" (239) the present situation. In other words, to re-evoke a metaphor, it is to remain, at least for a time, within the prison walls of the immediate and the present.

And yet, within the classic sensibility Pater includes the "charm" of the well-known tale, the *Märchenlust* so loved by another Romantic Classicist, Heine, with its melodic beauty of repetition and familiarity, its universalist "welcome." "The classic comes to us out of the cool quiet of the times, as the measure of what a long experience has shown will at least never displease us"—"*the essentially classical element is that quality of order in beauty*" (Pater 1987, 245). True Romanticism *is* classical, in this (realistic) sense, retrieving the past as a path towards the blinding horizon—*heritage made task*. It is the "romantic," however, that adds "strangeness to beauty"—"it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty, that constitutes the romantic temper" (246).[16] *Welcome and wonder*.

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[16] These connections I draw find a voice in the seminal fictive philosophical tome of the 1970s—Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974)—an acknowledged spur for the work of Colin Falck (see his final acknowledgment, p. 170, n. 43).

For the Romantic classicists, Goethe, Byron and Wincklemann (beloved of Pater), like the Renaissance humanists but unlike the polite classicism of the Age of Reason—Greece was less a past civilization, to be studied scientifically, than a *living idea*: "a summons to new forms of art and sentiment" (Santayana 1955, 159). Weimar classicism was, indeed, a reaction to the didactic naturalism of the *Stürmer und Dränger*, not to the ideals of the *Frühromantiker*. For Schiller, art's rôle is vital, but not directly so, rather it affects (often imperceptibly) the totality of our humanness, our cosmos (*AE* XXI & XXII). Like Goethe, Schiller "was never so romantic as when he was classical."[17] Romantic classicism is, in some ways, the vision of Nietzsche's Dionysus, who, in Nietzsche's later works, is really a Dionysus who has sublated or "transvalued" Apollo, his rival and antipode. At the end of Part One of *Faust*, as his beloved Gretchen dies, our hero resolves to pursue no longer *experience* as such, but rather the "best" experience [*Du, Erde...regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschliesen zum höchsten Dasein immerfort zu sturben*]—to streamline, as it were, his energies, in order to explore the externality of human life, to encounter more fully the world outside. For experience alone is superficial; experience in its particularities opens up vistas—"objects, ideals, and unanimities that cannot be experienced but may only be conceived" (Santayana 1955, 178). Santayana points to the power of Romanticism as "methodology," and to its limitations, namely, its blind obedience to the moment, never "learning" (like Faust, even the mature Faust of Part Two) from his experiences.

The classic and the Romantic, Pater insists, define two very real tendencies in the history of art and literature, but two tendencies not always easy to distinguish, and not always in open battle in what Salman Rushdie has called "the war over the nature of reality."[18] Just as the former cannot be equated with mere traditionalism, neither can the

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[17] Herbert Read, the foremost English expositor of Surrealism, suggests that it was this movement which resolved the "conflict" between Romanticism and classicism by temporizing the classical impetus. (Read, 1936, 17-91). Walter Benjamin disagrees: "Romanticism [was] the last movement that once more saved tradition" (Benjamin 1969, 39).

[18] In *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Rushdie speaks of his own attempts to "inform" reality by way of the promulgation of "imaginative truth(s)"—which, he admits, along with Coleridge, is a risky venture, "simultaneously honourable and suspect" (10-11), given, one assumes, the misuse of myth and history in our century alone. The procedure Rushdie is describing is akin to the everyday creative and informative

latter be exhausted by the various poetic movements which have flown its banner—the *Romantische Schule* of Germany (criticized by Heine); the Lake Poets (satirized, mercilessly, by Goethe's friend Byron); or the French Romantics (lambasted by Gautier and the Parnassians). Romanticism is not a school or a tradition so much as a *spirit,*[19] which can be found well before the eighteenth century and well after its supposed demise at the hands of first Symbolism, then Modernism, and finally postmodernism.

Of course, the classic-romantic split is another example in the long temptation of Occidentalism towards dichotomy—the temptation to make of two things dissociative binaries—carried over, in this case, into twentieth-century thinking in terms of Nietzsche's division of art (and life) into extremes of pure feeling (Dionysus) and pure form (Apollo). Yet, as Suzanne Langer points out, these dualisms, even in Nietzsche's own work, are easily obscured by nuance and caricature. By "slipshod thinking," she asserts, the conception of polarity "intriguing though is be, is really an unfortunate metaphor whereby a logical middle is raised to the dignity of a fundamental principle" (Langer 17). Thus, I am not, in discussing the classic-romantic divide, trying to suggest a *media res* between these two verities; rather I am suggesting that they are facile and ultimately useless polarities—"true" Romantics will recognize the fluidity of these terms. Here we see the muddiness of "realism" when framed in terms of the Romantic and the classic, but also, perhaps, the translucency which will prove its "redemption."

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capacity of human memory, which, given the fragmentary nature of reminiscence, constructs and refashions the reality of the past—in coming to terms with what is most *evocative* about certain past events. (Cf. Proust's aesthetic of "lost" and "regained" time.)

[19] "The romantic spirit is, in reality, an everpresent, an enduring principle, in the artistic temperament; and the qualities of thought and style which that, and other similar uses of the word *romantic* really indicate, are indeed but symptoms of a very continuous and widely working influence" (Pater 1987, 243). Pater connects a "true romanticism" with the spirit of the Renaissance, calling (with Molière) Dante the pre-eminent Romantic poet. (256)

E. Romantic Realism

I have brought up this classic-Romantic dialectic in order to introduce the temporal aspect of Romanticism, as well as its corresponding political component. Romanticism, as much as it is critical of mimetic representation in art and the designative theory of language, is supremely "realistic" in its commitment to the battle over the nature of truth and reality, framed in historical, temporal terms. The Romantic commitment to particulars comes out of a recognition of the disjunction of the "is" and the "ought"—one might say, the seeming gap between the Herderian body and the Kantian mind; but it also involves a refusal to allow this gap to remain unbridged. This is, in essence, Romantic Realism.

We have come then, to a working definition of the Romantic, which involves the four elements cited above: a) the recognition of a mode of knowing and experiencing that is neither rationalistic nor empiricist; b) the replacement of mechanistic with biologistic and organic metaphors for thinking of art and life; c) a sense of the importance of language in shaping human personality and the self; d) a commitment to the transformation of "reality" through socio-political revolution or reform; and which, as a way of "informing" or "presenting" reality, contains both the Romantic yearning for transformation, and the "classic" desire for present accountability.[20] It is "an existential program, according to which man posits his existence in a historical situation and indicates to himself how he is going to deal with the reality surrounding him and what use he will make of the possibilities open to him"—the past being a storehouse of these possibilities (Blumenberg 1983, 138). Romanticism is thus an archetypal "modern" instance, and can be fruitfully conceived as the capacity for transformation (or, more suggestively, *transfiguration*) in and out of the imaginative, redescriptive, or expressive use of language. This points to a possible convergence of the aesthetic and the ethical, to a *feeling for* [*Sorge*] the world *as it is for contemporary humans in the midst of a particular culture*—an understanding, as Goethe would have it, "in time."

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[20] This interconnection might be fruitful in investigating Richard Rorty's dichotomy, raised in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), of "public liberal hope" and "private self-expression."

II. Allegory Run Amok

> The whole subject has been confused by the failure to recognize the *gap* between the regions of vital and human feelings, and that of the *absolute* values of ethics and religion. We introduce into human things the *Perfection* that properly belongs only to the divine, and thus confuse both human and divine things by not clearly separating them...This is the essence of all Romanticism.
>
> -- T. E. Hulme, *Speculations*

A. Structuralism's Revenge

Romanticism has suffered the fate of many of the most crucial concepts in our history—the banality of overexposure. Indeed, the heady days of Goethe, Hugo, and Coleridge, were not long past before the inevitable reactions set in. Yet the direct heirs to Romanticism in literature and aesthetics—Symbolism, the Aesthetic Movement, and Modernism (in its various manifestations)—kept, for the most part, to the high status given to the Symbol. On the other hand, the most explicit denunciations of Romanticism, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were often based on a misreading of the Romantic Symbol (or, to be fair, on a proper reading of the "degenerate" Romanticism of Goethe's ire). The most famous Modernist characterization of Romanticism is that of the critic T. E. Hulme, who, as mentioned, dismissed the movement as "spilt religion": as the last feeble gasp of Renaissance humanism, founded on an undignified yearning for perfection, in strictly human terms. In short, Hulme saw in Romanticism the Pelagian heresy of the early Church, striving to resurrect itself on the cadaver of a decayed orthodoxy and a moribund rationalism. Most "modernists" wanted to distance themselves entirely from the taint of religious faith; thus did this label stick as a defense mechanism, despite the fact that Hulme's reading of Romanticism is based on a narrowly rigid (Burkean) distinction between romantic and classic (whereby the former is little more than utopianism, the latter a staunch commitment to order and stability).[21] The Modernists' desire to break with the past, coupled with the phenomena Harold Bloom

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[21] See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958, 190-2).

calls "the anxiety of influence," worked together to cause this fundamental blindness to the Romantic legacy, a blindness which lingers, even in postmodernism.

Structuralists, justifiably suspicious of the Romantic slide into subjectivism and the solipsistic sensationism of Pater's children, found in Romanticism a useful foil for their own theories of language and poetics. In particular, the Romantic celebration of the Symbol, the vehicle of transcendence-in-immanence, over the purely signatory or referential allegory, came under direct attack. Structuralists sought to redress the balance, as it were, against the allegory, and they succeeded to such an extent that the allegory once again became (in theory, at any rate) the primary mode of poetic representation. Walter Benjamin, in his seminal remarks on Baudelaire,[22] may have been the first to reclaim allegory's ground, but it was structuralist critics Jonathan Culler and Paul de Man, followed by Schlaffer and Kruse (on Goethe) who, in re-reading the Romantic legacy, proclaimed allegory "the *poetic figure of modernity*."[23]

Culler points to the ambiguities within the classic characterization of allegory, particularly Coleridge's suggestion that we define "allegoric writing" as,

> the employment of one set of agents and images with actions and accompaniments correspondent, so as to convey, while in disguise, either moral qualities or conceptions of the mind that are not in themselves objects of the senses, or other images, agents, actions, fortunes, and circumstances, so that the difference is everywhere permitted to the eye or imagination while the likeness is suggested to the mind. (Culler 1975, 229)

In some ways this is familiar: the allegory as *abstraction*. Yet Coleridge, despite himself, could not help but appreciate, in some way, "the artificiality of commentary, the difference between apparent and ultimate meaning" (229) which lies latent in all allegorical writing. That is, allegory is not a ruse, but is quite "honest" in its revelation of the "gap" between signifier and signified; in fact, *allegory confronts representation itself as a ruse, a decoy*. It is not so simple as some Romantics, like Goethe, might have

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22 "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations* (1969). Though see below on Benjamin's thoughts on metaphor, which sound remarkably Coleridgean.

23 A claim supported, though with certain idiosyncratic emendations, by Franco Moretti, in his recent expansive work on *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to García Márquez* (1996).

wished; allegory is not only a propadeutic form of writing, a form which "demands commentary and goes some way toward providing its own" (229)—it is also a vehicle for irony, for self-reflection, for the play of difference and the dissolution of set, settled meaning. If symbol absorbs (or "incarnates") meaning, allegory destroys, or at least renders meaning problematic, and is thus the prime vehicle of polysemy.

Whereas the Romantic Symbol is a "natural" sign, in which there is an indissoluble fusion of *significant* and *signifié,* the allegory is a locus for "arbitrary or conventional signification," wherein the signifier and signified are linked, precariously, by "authority or habit" (Culler 1975, 229). Symbols claim a self-revealing totality of signification; allegory bows to its own lack of power, its servile and manipulable status, its *rhetorical* capacities. Thus, according to Culler, does allegory bespeak a certain honesty—or, an honest duplicity, a tell-tale mask—laying bare the ruse perpetrated by the monistic, univocal, self-aggrandizing, totalitarian symbol. "Allegory," says Culler, his commentary reaching apotheosis,

> is the mode which recognizes the impossibility of fusing the empirical and the eternal and thus demystifies the symbolic relation by stressing the separateness of the two levels, the impossibility of bringing them together except momentarily and against a background of disassociation, and the importance of protecting each level and the potential link between them by making it arbitrary. (230)

As if this were not enough to damn the symbol to the dustbin of history—it is, he suggests, allegory and *only allegory* which "can make [this] connection in a self-conscious and *demystifying* way" (Culler 1975, 230, my emphasis). Yet, one might wonder in reading Culler's defense of allegory, what of "*the importance of protecting each level and the potential link between them*"? One wonders where this imperative arises; if the connection is itself an "impossibility," then why the desire for fusion in the face of demystification? I will postpone further remarks on Culler for the moment, in order to examine Paul de Man's more nuanced critique of the Romantic symbol, one also based on (post-)structuralist premises.

B. The Rhetoric of Atemporality

> Humanity seems destined to oscillate forever between devotion to the world of dreams and adherence to the world of reality. And really, if this breathing rhythm of history were to cease, it might signal the death of the spirit.
>
> — Franz Roh, "Magical Realism: Post-Expressionism"

Paul de Man's essay on "The Rhetoric of Temporality," once described by Culler as "the most photocopied essay in literary criticism," forms a part of his collection entitled *Blindness and Insight* (1983), in which the author explores the blindnesses of various rhetorical strategies in contemporary and Romantic criticism—blindnesses which, as often as not, provide much in the way of illumination, even as they "misread" texts. To deploy de Man's image: the lightning flash provides a moment of great clarity, even as it renders one's vision fuzzy. Interested in "the problematical nature of reading itself," de Man explores the "gaps" between the words of contemporary critics and the "results", the effect, of their practical criticism. One could say that de Man turns the deconstructive eye-glass upon his peers (and ultimately, himself).[24]

In "The Rhetoric of Temporality," de Man seeks, like Culler, to redress the anathema against allegory. The lure of the symbol, its power, he insists, lies in its "religious ineffability"; its "appeal to the infinity of a totality" of meaning. (de Man 1983, 188) As Gadamer notes, in *Truth and Method*, the opposition of symbol and allegory is based on the assumption that "the former seems endlessly suggestive in the indefiniteness of it meaning, whereas the latter, as soon as its meaning is reached, has run its full course" (1988, 67). Paradoxically, given Culler's claims for symbolic univocity and single-mindedness, de Man following Gadamer sees in the symbol a slightly different form of "control"—that of an omnivorous (and omniscient?) totality of signification, a claim to an inexhaustible font of "meaning." Not *one* meaning, but *all* meaning, he suggests, is claimed under the Symbol's auspices.

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[24] Though perhaps de Man's mirror did not give an adequate reflection of his own "practice": to the unfeigned glee of Camille Paglia, de Man was posthumously "exposed" as a neo-Nazi sympathizer. Though this does not dismiss his work, it raises some serious questions about his talk of "blindness" in rhetoric and philosophy. *Der Fall des Heideggers* (or *des Pounds, des Lawrences, des Célines*) rears its ugly head once again, in *Der Fall des de Man*. And if this were not enough, de Man praises Rousseau, as being a "non-blinded" author, yet Rousseau is notorious for his questionable behaviour towards his loved ones.

In Coleridge, the symbol is synecdoche, it is always part and parcel of the totality that it feigns to represent. Yet de Man, like Culler, points to the ambiguities in the Coleridgean analysis: the "solidity" or incarnational (concrete) "reality" of the Symbol dissolves, in Coleridge's own terms, into "translucence"—the Symbol is still a "dark glass," a chiaroscuro. Thus the synthetic power of the Symbol, so important for the Symbolist heirs of Romanticism, is put into question. (de Man 1983, 193) Yet this does not, necessarily, counteract the incarnational aspect of the Symbol, which does not claim to exhaust the relationship between the terms, but rather to bring these into dissociative contact. As Jorge Luis Borges said of the Spanish bard Quevedo, he "forgot that the metaphor is the momentary contact of two images, not the methodical linking of two things" (1988, 39). To assume that the Symbol creates a static, atemporal (eternal) connection between signifier and signified, is to grossly misinterpret its function; it is to interpret the symbol, or metaphor, in a much too "literal" fashion. *Symbolic realism is not, nor does it attempt to replace, mimetic naturalism.*

The Symbol must be reconceived as mirror, not merely reflecting the world, *as it is, now*, but also revealing the agent in the process of attempting the connection. The Greek *symbolon* signifies a token, a coming into relation, a pact of sorts, thus connecting the word with metaphor [*metapherein*=to transfer, exchange]. As the French poet Léon Bloy proclaims, "Everything is a symbol, even the most tortuous pain"—but the "meaning" of our pain is not present, for (again, to re-evoke I Corinthians 13:12) "[w]e see now...*per speculum in aenigmate,* literally: 'in enigma by means of a mirror'" (Borges 1988, 127). The Now, our sense of the reality of the present moment, is mired in the opacity of the mirror. Yet this is as it must be, for only in the prison, only as spectators, do we see things with absolute clarity. The "real" world on the horizon is always partly a dream.[25] Bloy's contemporary, the Symbolist Valéry, gives us a definition for beauty, suggesting that it "may require the servile imitation of what is indefinable in objects" (Benjamin 1969, 199). Conjoining this with Nietzsche's "Only that which has no history can be defined," a syllogism results, whereby the only proper "mimesis" is a mirroring of the historical, the temporal, in the guise of the present.

But de Man's main argument rests on "the Rhetoric of Temporality"—that is, the *a*-temporality of symbolic, as opposed to allegorical, writing and signification. "In the

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[25] Novalis: "Our life is no dream but it should and perhaps will become one." Or, as per the more cynical Marx (and Joyce's Stephen Dedalus), a nightmare from which we must persistently strive to awaken.

world of the symbol," he suggests, "it would be possible for the image to coincide with the substance, since the substance and its representation do not differ in their being but only in their extension: they are part and whole of the same set of categories." But here is the crux: "Their relationship is one of simultaneity, which, in truth, is spatial in kind, and in which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency, whereas in the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category" (1983, 207). Contingency!

De Man insists that, in the case of two paradigm Romantics, Rousseau and Wordsworth, the allegorical sign distances itself from meaning—this relation becomes "secondary," and the (structural) relations *between* signs, between signs *across time,* becomes of primary importance. "The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the repetition (in the Kierkegaardian sense) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority" (1983, 207). "Secularized allegory" of this sort contains the so-called "negative moment"—the tragic sense of life that encompasses the Romantic sense of homelessness. The Symbol, contrariwise, eschews temporality by glossing over the necessary temporal relations between the sign and its (anterior) other.

Once again, the Symbol becomes a ruse, a (self-)delusion, an opiate; in short, an attempt to "hide from this negative self-knowledge"—the knowledge of the inescapability of time, of the temporal predicament of human being. (de Man 1983, 208) Romanticism's "second face" is covered with a mask, one that resembles its primary visage, its positive desire for transformation and transfiguration in the face of the past. To sum, in post-structuralese:

> Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin; and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this 'temporal difference'. (207)

Culler and de Man are attempting to demystify the Romantic Symbol, "thinking the decoy" as Derrida would have it, of the post-Christian nostalgia for the absolute;[26] for the Real Presence; for the lost ideality of origins.[27]

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[26] *Nostalgia for the Absolute* is the title of a book by George Steiner (Massey Lectures, 1974), on the lure of contemporary totalizing "myths" such as Freudianism and Marxism.

[27] A phrase used by Michel Foucault in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," (in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, 1977) to characterize the study of "history" (vs. "genealogy").

Yet, for all the insight de Man brings in this work, his attack on the Romantic Symbol and its supposed atemporality suffers from its own blind spots. First, his characterization of the Symbol seems rather monolithic—a caricature—based on an uncritical reading of Coleridge, and bypassing the contributions of Herder and Schiller. "Translucence"[28] is a necessary aspect, one which connects the Romantic Symbol to its status as "spilt religion"—and not a confusion on the part of Coleridge, the one-time opium eater. The Symbol, when understood in terms of Romantic expressivism, *Schein*, and the distinction between *kairos* and *chronos*, stands up to the challenge of "temporal" allegory. Second, de Man's "allegory" itself seems to be rather a description of "irony,"[29] which, as much as it might touch the former, is hardly an equivalent, and does not correspond with the Romantic sense of allegory. De Man speaks of Schlegel's trope of *Parekbase* (parabasis) in terms of the self-conscious aspect of irony—a recognition of "the continued implausibility of reconciling the world of fiction with the actual world" (de Man 1983, 218). For Schlegel, this results, not in a commitment to naturalism, but rather "serves to prevent the all too readily mystified reader from confusing fact and fiction and from forgetting the essential negativity of the fiction" (219). But this, as we shall see, is precisely the ruse of naturalism and realism as so conceived; the assumption, that is, of a single reality, out there, a world of facts, to which fiction either corresponds, or (in the case of Schlegelian irony) "negates." Once again do the prison doors remain locked. Finally, the de Manian critique of symbolic presence, his assumption that it is, "in truth," a *spatial presence*, fails to do justice to Goethe's "understanding in time," to the symbol as "foundational present," and to myth.

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[28] Falck, commenting on Culler's allegorocentrism, suggests that, for structuralists, "all mystery is mystification" (1994, 152)—that is, there is no room for translucence, or a sense of wonder: irony topples naïveté, and with it, sincerity. The poststructuralist "anxiety" over the mysterious may reflect a reaction to the New Critics, who inscribed mystery, and their own brand of Protestant orthodoxy, into literary analysis.

[29] Culler, as well, seems ready to make this conflation, suggesting of allegory that it "flaunts the gap we must leap to produce meaning" (1975, 229). Again, this may be attributing to much "self-awareness" to allegory, thus turning it into quite a different beast from Bunyan's lapdog.

III. Counterproposals

> [L]anguage itself possesses and is possessed by the dynamics of fiction. To speak, either to oneself or to another, is in the most naked, rigorous sense of that unfathomable banality, to invent, to re-invent being and the world. Voiced truth is, ontologically and logically, true fiction, where the etymology of fiction directs us immediately to that of making. Language creates...
>
> — George Steiner, *Real Presences*

A. Symbol and Semblance

Until now, we have not delved too deeply into the work of Friedrich Schiller, but it is he, more even than Goethe, Kant, or Coleridge, who provides a notion of the Symbol as Semblance [*Schein*], which enables a more nuanced reading of the working and meaning of the Romantic Symbol vis-à-vis "reality." It is upon a Schillerian sense of Symbol, I hope to show, that the magic realist critique of mimetic realism rests.

Romanticism perpetrated a shift away from a naturalistic understanding of poetry: from *le vrai*, the ideal came to be *le vraisemblance*—no longer verity but verisimilarity. The poet becomes a creator of the world, in analogy to the Creative Act of God. "The reality of things is the work of things themselves; the semblance of things is the work of men; and a nature which delights in semblance is no longer taking pleasure in what it receives, but in what it does" (*AE* XXVI.4). Yet this image entails a risk of hubris, as Schiller recognized; the poet is not a creator in the same sense that the deity is Creator; the poet transforms or illumines the world, and thus, in the use of the Symbol as Semblance, recreates the world from the materials at hand. Moreover, the "creator" must refrain from attempting to give "existence" to the world of illusion; that is, she must not claim for semblance a sovereignty of interpretation (*AE* XXVI.10). Here Schiller follows Aristotle over Plato: where both agree that art is, and must be "mimetic," for Plato this includes imitation, copying, impersonation, and representation, while for Aristotle mimesis involves a *re*-presentation of life, in the way that (for Aristotle) language *re*-presents ideas. Though this difference may seem subtle, its implications are significant:

where master Plato feels that art deceives us about reality (the Forms), his wayward student proclaims that art and poetry, through re-presentation *inform us about reality.*[30]

1. *Schein*

Schiller, in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), takes this further, following Wordsworth's dictum that "[i]f words be not an incarnation of the thought, but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift" (Abrams 1953, 291). He makes a distinction between true "aesthetic semblance" [*Schein*]—"which we love just because it is semblance" and which is equivalent to "play"; and the kind of (debased) semblance that belongs to the "realm of activity and truth" [*Betrug*, deception]—which tries to "represent" and therefore acts as an ostensible substitute for "truth," presumptively assuming a descriptive truth of an actual, empirical world. (XXVI.5) For "(o)nly inasmuch as it is honest (expressly renounces all claims to reality), and only inasmuch as it autonomous (dispenses with all support from reality) is semblance aesthetic" (XXVI.11). Yet, as Schiller is quick to add, "[t]his does not, of course, imply that an object in which we discover authentic semblance must be devoid of reality" (XXVI.11).

Paradoxically, or perhaps, ironically, it is the "realism" of Schiller's *Schein* which distinguishes it from the more Platonic Symbol of the later Romantics. Schiller, as we have noted, was very much concerned with the relation of art to life, not only to *das Leben* in the personal, but also, very much the "political" sense—what Henry James would call "the civic use of the imagination."[31] Schiller was no Paterian or Wildean aesthete (a follower of *l'art pour l'art*, the *reductio* of Kant's "disinterested" aesthetic);

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[30] Fiction," says Aristotle in the *Poetics*, "is truer and more universal than history." A fascinating study of the implications of the Renaissance "misreading" of Aristotle in terms of mimesis has been written by Brazilian scholar Luiz da Costa Lima. In *Control of the Imaginary* (1988) he speaks of the replacement of medieval Christian cosmological centering with a "cult of reason" which led to the "evacuation of *poesis* from the concept of *mimesis*"—"thus deforming the Aristotelian notion by restricting subjectivity to the imitation of an external reality in accordance with the precepts of hegemonic rational paradigms" (Chanady 125). It was the Romantics who would most forcibly challenge this "control of the imaginary."

[31] Wilkinson And Willoughby: "Schiller's treatise is not just one of the greatest works in the German language. It is also one of the few works in world literature...which seriously explores the relation between art and politics" (1982, viii). Schiller is thus closer to the early Wordsworth than to Coleridge; his *haute vulgarisation* echoes the "popular poetry" of the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*.

rather, he would side with Goethe, blending a certain skepticism about the power of art with a recognition of its potential.[32] For Schiller, "imagination" involves a healthy dose of reality—or rather, and this is crucial—a "sense of reality"; the poet is a "waking or rational dreamer"[33]: one able to recognize semblance as, not a representation of reality, but rather, *a presentation of reality in such a way that it is, in fact, a new reality.* A reality infused not only with "fantasy" but with political/communal sense—context as well as pretext. In other words, a new *sphere of attention*.[34]

Yet, it is precisely Schiller's *Schein*, along with the related "play-impulse," which has been the greatest stumbling-block to an understanding and acceptance of Weimar aesthetics. Why? Perhaps because, caught up as we Occidentals are in the myth of the given, we cannot escape the suspicion that *Schein* smacks of deception, ruse, *inauthenticity*—precisely the suspicions which led Our Father Plato to banish the Poet from the City. Max Bense in the first volume of his *Aesthetica* repudiates semblance in favour of the "richer, deeper, and more complex" sign or symbol (*Zeichen*), because "all suggestion of 'unworthiness' is thereby avoided and the theme of Being more clearly and impressively sounded" (1965, 39ff). In Letter XXVI, Schiller warns that "it sometimes happens that intelligence will carry its zeal for reality to such a pitch of intolerance, that it pronounces a disparaging judgement upon the whole art of aesthetic semblance, just because it is semblance" (XXVI.5) Indeed, two centuries after Schiller, *Zeichen* has fallen prey to Platonic prejudice—the truth of masks is denied in favour of a Symbol that is little more than a Sign in the sense of the Romantics' allegory and fancy.[35]

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[32] There is no more certain way," says Goethe, " of escaping the world than through art, and there is no more certain way of connecting with it than through art" (1893, 53).

[33] Cf. C. G. Jung on the "virtual character" of all "aesthetic objects." Jung uses Schiller's semblance to derive an exemplary case of illusion, not in the reflected image, but in the dream, which involves all the senses. (Langer 1953, 48) The Surrealists also picked up on this.

[34] One could see this as the transposition of Herder's *Besonnenheit* to the aesthetic realm more generally (see below).

[35] Wilkinson and Willoughby note, wryly, that Bense, by retrieving *Zeichen* from the "taint" of *Schein*, rendered it so "rich" and "complex" as to be virtually meaningless.

The very point of *Schein*, contra *Zeichen*, is its translucence, its blind(ing)ness; the truth of Semblance lies not in its capacity to mimic or reproduce, but to present reality, under the auspices of perception—both individual-temporal and social-historical. In short, the Symbol as so conceived liberates perception from seeking correspondence with a pre-given reality; it involves a (willing or unwilling) suspension of *belief,* as the "new world" revealed by the Symbol subverts our expectations of "truth." We create worlds in the act of seeing the world, but this is not an atemporal instance, a moment of clarity and creation, beyond time; rather it is a recognition of the temporal and cultural predicament of perception and reality. The artist, the "poet," "re-claims" (literally, *zurücknehmen*: re-takes or takes back) *Schein* from *Sein.*

As a verb, *scheinen* revels in ambiguity: it means "to shine" as well as "to appear or seem"—and the latter is still unclear, for a thing may *appear* to be what it "really" is, or "seem" to be what it is not. Yet this ambiguity, the refusal to ascribe within *Schein* a realist or non-realist element, is crucial to its use; Semblance can be (and has been) identified with both *Erscheinung* (appearance) and *Täuschung* (deception or illusion). Kant (not surprisingly) distinguished the two, making the latter an equivalent to his *phenomenon*—"a thing manifest in sensible experience and opposed to *noumenon*, and underlying suprasensible reality," or, in Kantonese: "our perception of an object according to the forms of our mind and sense-organs, not as it is in itself" (Wilkinson 1982, 328). *Schein* for Kant is that which leads us to take a false judgment of something for truth—an error in judgment, a deception [*Betrug*].

Schiller turns Kant's distinction around, distinguishing not between Semblance as *Täuschung* and *Erscheinung*, but only between *Schein* (as both *Erscheinung and Täuschung*) and the kind of (debased) semblance which, in his words, belongs to the realm of actuality and truth (i.e., which strains after univocity in mimesis). It is this latter that is *Betrug.* In short: semblance is only *aesthetic* when it is "honest"—that is, when it makes no claims to "represent" or depict the actual empirical "reality" of the world, whether such is sensuous or (as for Kant and Plato) supersensuous. Re-presentation in this sense is always a decoy, a ruse, a "moral prejudice,"[36] a "substitute truth" which relies upon a transcendent Reality for its status.

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[36] Nietzsche: "It is a moral prejudice to assert that truth is worth more than appearance [*Schein*]" (*BGE* [34]); and Schiller: "Only impotence and perversity will have recourse to dishonest and dependent

But the real innovation of the Schillerian *Schein* is that it suggests a connection of the Ideal and the Real, of Signifier and Signified, within a temporal sequence, such that in poetic semblance the sense of reality is enhanced, heightened, and intensified. For semblance is, in the words of Wallace Stevens, a revelation of "a partial similarity between two dissimilar things," (*propinquity*) which "complements and reinforces that which the two dissimilar things have in common. It makes it brilliant" (Stevens 1951, 77). This is the essence of "transfigurative" poetics.

2. *Der Stil: In-die-Welt-Schein*

What must be noted, last but by no means least, is the breadth of Schiller's use of "aesthetic," which he takes out of the realm of art and beauty, and applies to *das Leben.* As such, *Schein* is a linguistic and epistemological category as well as an "artistic" one; it can, and should, apply to any "real" phenomenon of life "when viewed after its aesthetic aspect" (Falck 1994, 175). If fact, Schiller consciously denies the aesthetic *any reference* to non-living reality; the "play-impulse," for instance, "is no sooner identified as the fount of all art than it is also claimed as the foundation for the much more difficult art of living, and illustrated by an example drawn from life, from the life of personal relationship: love" (Wilkinson 1982, xi). The Schillerian aesthetic is thus a "mode of apprehension" as much as of "representation"; perhaps even a "mode of being" or attunement/disposition (*Stimmung*). Certainly, like the linguistic realm of Herder and the historical sense of Nietzsche, the aesthetic realm of *semblance* is, first and foremost, an *existential phenomenon.*

Schiller's aesthetic realm is pre- (or extra-)linguistic, and pre- (or extra-) conceptual, touching on what Lucien Lévy-Bruhl would call the *participation mystique*, in which we are "more or less identified with the impacts the world makes upon us" (Wilkinson 1982, xii). But what Lévy-Bruhl and most "moderns" would call an error, or

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semblance; and single individuals, as well as whole peoples, who either 'eke out reality with semblance, or (aesthetic) semblance with reality'—the two often go together—give evidence alike of their moral worthlessness and of their aesthetic incapacity" (XXVI.12).

an act of "naïveté," Schiller would see as a fuller, aesthetic *awareness*, not involving the blind obedience to "reality," but neither an attempt to escape from the constantly impinging world around us. Like Kant before him, Schiller was indebted to Baumgarten's pioneering work on aesthetics (*Aesthetica*, 1750). As Cassirer, among others, has suggested, Baumgarten's work has been largely misunderstood, because of confusion over his use of the term "*confusa*" to describe the aesthetic "confluence" or "fusion" of elements of intuition and perception. Baumgarten did not imply, by this term, a "confusion" in the sense of disorder or chaos, as has been read by most of his interpreters. Rather, we are reminded the roots of Romanticism in Vico's *fantastica*, imaginative universals, and poetic wisdom. As we have seen, Kant gave philosophical voice to this *confusa*, but was unable to work it out adequately (perhaps because of his disdain/distance from Romantic poetics), and contented himself with the very un-Romantic "disinterested" thesis regarding aesthetic beauty and judgment.[37] The "disinterested" aesthetic creates too much distance between "observer" and "observed," and hypostasizes their separation, based, as it is, on a visually perceptive situation (and a corresponding transcendental subject), rather than a linguistic one. Coleridge, who was not one to question Kant's philosophical integrity, asked, with Schiller, what would become of love (as spontaneously outflowing sympathy) in a Kantian schema.[38]

In any case, Schiller, as a self-proclaimed *Zwittelart* (poet-philosopher), sought to bridge the hypersensual Goethe and the inordinately cerebral Kant.[39] Like the former, Schiller was wary of both the Idealists of Jena and the New School Romantics of the younger generation. Improperly classified a "romantic," in the sense in which the term

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[37] Though he awoke from his "dogmatic slumber" by reading Hume, later critics have seen in this awakening a dream within the prolonged slumber of onto-theological metaphysics. Carlyle, comparing Kant to Schiller, refers to the latter's break with the "Night of Kantism," and Nietzsche, ever pleasant, disdained "the great delayer," who eventually "became an idiot"—slobbering "all over his philosopher's gown."

[38] This same critique can be applied to the work of neo-Kantians like John Rawls, whose monumental *Theory of Justice* (1971) fascinates with its rigor and clarity, but (like Kant's Critiques) is dry, dry as dust—lifeless and loveless.

[39] Reflected in the ever-perceptive Heine's comment that "[w]ith Schiller, thought celebrates its orgies."

came to be used, Schiller was much more of a neo-humanist, in the spirit of Vico, Herder, and Goethe.[40] Part of this neo-humanist vision was his attempt, not to confine life to art, but *to expand art to life*. Aesthetic experience is by no means limited to the world of museums and concert halls; rather, "it can occur in any aspect of our everyday lives—whenever we take note of, or create for ourselves, new coherences that are not part of our conventionalized mode of perception or thought" (Lakoff 1980, 236).

This aspect of the aesthetic can be framed in terms of "style." The early Romantics, as well as the later Symbolists and Paterians (not to mention Nietzsche), were very much concerned with style. For Wordsworth, style is not mere dress (just as the Symbol is not mere mimicry); style is rather "the incarnation of thoughts" (Abrams 1953, 291). This is style seen,

> from the standpoint of producer and receiver, the recognizable, repeatable, preservable sign of an author who reckons with an audience. Even if the audience is as restricted as his self or as wide as the whole world, the author's style is partially a phenomenon of repetition and reception. But what makes style receivable as the signature of its author's manner is a collection of features variously called ideolect, voice, or more firmly, irreducible individuality. The paradox is that something as impersonal as a text, or a record, can nevertheless deliver an imprint or a trace of something as lively, immediate, and transitory as a "voice." (Said 1983, 163)

Voice, as the manifestation of style, signifies a rebirth of "presence," though not, perhaps, a univocal or "real" presence in the traditional sense. It is style which in Said's terms "neutralizes" if not "conceals" the silence of a depersonalized text or sign. (163) Oscar Wilde goes further: "It is style that makes us believe in a thing—nothing but style" (Wilde 1994, 989). We will explore the relation of voice, speech, and presence below.

But style is not solely a way of writing or conversing or interpreting, it is the "art of living," which, "had to be acquired as a faculty for dealing with the fact that man does

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[40] Schiller's reputation as a paradigm Romantic, outside of Germany, has been attributed to the popularization of his *Aesthetic Education* by the illustrious Madame de Stäel (later rebutted by Heine), who was not altogether clear on the distinctions within German thought and letters. On a lighter (but no less perceptive note) Wilkinson and Willoughby suggest that Schiller's sequestration in the Romantic camp may be due to phonetics and phonetics alone—Schiller, Schelling, Schlegel (x2), Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer.... (Wilkinson 1982, cxliv)

not have an environment that is arranged in categories and that can be perceived exclusively in its 'relevances' for him" (Blumenberg 1985, 7). Once again, we must follow Schiller's wariness, particularly after the "dehumanization" of twentieth-century political "stylizations." But *pace* Ortega y Gasset, who claims that the "will to style" *always* means "dehumanization,"[41] there is no necessary antithesis between "realism" and style; it is impossible to conceive of a "realistic" portrayal or expression without a particular stylization. Granted, style as mere whim or fancy, the excesses of rococo without the symmetries of baroque, is not Semblance but deception. *Schein* has a certain amount of autonomy (*AE* XXVI.7) in being unchained to mimetic representation—yet it is not entirely "disinterested." In fact it is the distance, the reflective capacity provoked or instantiated by semblance, which makes it "honest" and gives it critical function. In Letter twenty-six, Schiller says "*Schein vom Verdrenste fordern*"—which seems to call for a translation of *Schein* as "style"; and elsewhere (XXVII.7), semblance becomes "form" (Wilkinson 329). Thus does the line blur between *Schein* and another of Schiller's topoi—*Stimmung* (or *Bestimmung*)—terms with definite religious overtones, and rather difficult to translate into English, other than by the (rather lame, and too static) "disposition," or "mood."[42]

Better, because more indicative of the temporal nature of *Stimmung*, and reflective of its musical as well as its religious connotations, is the English word "attunement," its one drawback being a connotation of self-control. *Bestimmung* implies "distinction" (but in terms of present potentiality and future orientation) as well as "determination." Thus does Schiller succeed in expanding the realm and application of aesthetics, as well as provide a nuanced philosophical account of the proverbial symbol-vs-allegory debate, which ties into more contemporary debates regarding the status of "realism" and "non-realism" as representational modes, or "styles" of living, and reading the world; not

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[41] José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art* (*La Deshumanización del arte y Ideas sobre la Novela*, 1925)

[42] Falck: "[I]t is through our *moods*, which must underlie and surround all our conscious experience and conceptual formulation, that we have our most fundamental apprehensions of the nature of the reality around us" (1994, 59).

merely as perception or reception or conception, but as attunement. Before extrapolating upon the religious implications of *Schein* and *Stimmung*, we must first deal with the theory of language on which our work on symbol and myth rests.

B. Romantic Expressivism

A proper understanding of the Romantic Symbol and its effects requires an understanding of the "expressive" theory of language and mode of comprehension. Falck suggests that it may be only through such—and not by way of an "objective" or "scientific" search for laws and regulations—that we will be able to understand *reality* as a response to our "pre-subjective and pre-articulate desires, fears or aspirations" (1994, 36). It is from these desires, fears, and aspirations that arise the "imaginatively compelling patterns of meaning" which frame and sort—create[43]— the "world" around us. Thus does language, not vision, reveal our "reality," by giving coherence to the meanings and rhythms of life; language expresses the "truth" of the world as it is in our comprehension and apprehension of such, as embodied beings. In order, then, to salvage the symbol as a temporal form, we must turn briefly to the father of linguistic expressivism, Herder.

We have previously alluded to Herder's various contributions, by way of Vico and Goethe, but his most significant contribution to present-day thinking (because, unlike his "historicism," vastly underdeveloped since his death) may be his extrapolation of the root meaning of the Latin verb *ex-pressus* [from *ex-premere*="to press out"] vis-à-vis a theory of language use. "Expression" is often, in our day, conflated with "self-expression," whereas, in this earlier sense it involves not so much the expression out of a transcendent self, as the expression *of* a self—*a self that is created in the act of expression*—as well as a "pressing out" of the world through the filter of one's perception and imagination. In Suzanne Langer's terms, spoken words are quite often "expressive" both as "symptom" of existing subjective conditions, and as "symbol" of a concept "that may or may not refer

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[43] For Oscar Wilde and some radical constructivists, this "creation" refers not only to the world of our relationships and our thoughts and ideas, but even to "nature." (See "The Decay of Lying," in Wilde 1994, 986: "Things *are* because we see them...")

to factually given conditions" (Langer 1953, 180).[44] Charles Taylor states that language, for Herder,

> comes about as a new, 'reflective' stance towards things. It arises among earlier stances towards objects of desire, fear, to things which figure as obstacles, supports and the like. Our stances to these things are literally bodily attitudes or actions on or towards objects. The new state can't be in its origins entirely unconnected with bodily posture or creation. But it can't be an action just like the others, whose point is definable outside the linguistic dimension. (Taylor 1990, 15)

Rather, language has to be seen as "*expressive* action"—"one which both actualizes this stance of reflection, and also presents it to others in public space" (15). In short, language, conceived *expressively,* manifests the situation for our relation to the world *in the linguistic dimension.* Language does not merely designate, show, or point to, it reflects back upon the user, who, once she begins to speak, is no longer a "spectator" or an object among objects, but is implicated in the manifestation of a "world"—in which meaning relies as much upon bodily gestures and movements as upon the correspondence of words to things, or the structural correspondence of words to other words.

The "reflective" aspect of the expressive theory is crucial. Herder places much emphasis on *Besonnenheit*—usually defined as "level-headedness" or "calm," but for Herder the "care" or "concern" given to the thoughts and things which rush by us in the stream of time. Reflection is the "new space of attention, of distance from the immediate instinctual significance of things" (Taylor 1990, 10). Thus, Herder refrains from the nihilistic abandonment we find in late Romantics and Symbolists—the importance of the body, and extralinguistic factors in no way allows for a prioritization of instinct, or feeling over thought and reflection.

This moves Herder away from the Romanticism of synthesis, correspondence, *deréglement des senses*; away from pure presence and the cult of immediacy to the attentive present and the fleeting connection of thoughts, perception, and things, which make up our "patterns of meaning." Representation occurs, but from *within a speech-relationship,* in the *linguistic realm.* Mimesis is a two-way street: like Narcissus, one

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[44] Langer, with Charles Morris (in *Signs, Language, and Behavior*) distinguishes between "signals"—which are comprehended if they make us notice an object or situation—and "symbols"—which are understood when we conceive the idea presented. (Langer 1953, 26)

gets caught up in the river of reflection, and it loses its static quality—as photograph, an attempt to capture an essence behind the presence—and becomes temporal, a looking-glass through which we see the world and ourselves, however enigmatically. Against Walter Pater's late Romantic dictums ("Our failure is to form habits," and "Perhaps, this is success in life, to live as a hard-edged flame" from "moment to moment") Herder saw the imperative, for our sanity, health, and joy, not to mention our communicative ability, of "breaking frame"—interrupting, periodically, the impinging "ocean of sensations." For "[t]hinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad" (Benjamin 1969, 254-5). What we call "reality" may be the complex relation between these "monads" formed from self-reflection and the "horizon of expectation" which serves as our "a priori" meaning. This latter is, not a summation of facts of experience, but "a summary of things taken for granted in advance [*Präsumption*]" (Blumenberg 1983, 138). This is an important distinction—and one easy to lose sight of.

The Herderian revolution in language and poetics is based on his critique of the "designative" tradition of Hobbes, Locke, and Condillac—hegemonic, certainly in his time, and perhaps even today, for most people—where language is a tool, an instrument we use "to construct or control things" (Taylor 1990, 10); and signs are introduced to "signify" (or "stand for") objects or ideas; and where the background noise—the linguistic dimension "outside the text"—is forgotten or denied. The "background" is "incorporated" into the signs themselves, a move which "has the effect of occluding it very effectively" and thus allows for its "elision" in what Taylor calls "those modern behaviourist and semi-behaviourist theories which try to explain thought and language strictly from the standpoint of the external observer" (11-12)

For Herder, such a view denies the "holism of meaning"—the *pretext* as well as the *context* of the *text.* Whereas for Condillac, language gives us *"empire sur notre imagination,"* for Herder we are as much *made* as *makers.* As Heidegger would have it, language "speaks man," as much as vice versa. Or, perhaps, we might say that "humans

speak language speaking humans."[45] The "error" of the designative theory is thus akin to the "error" of Romanticism stuck in its first phase/face: Agency unbalanced by Contingency and Community; text and pretext unleashed from context.

C. *Sprachdenken*

> In the new thinking, the method of speech replaces the method of thinking maintained in all earlier philosophies. Thinking is timeless and wants to be timeless. With one stroke it would establish thousands of connections. It regards the last, the goal, as the first. Speech is bound to time and nourished by time, and it neither can nor wants to abandon this element.
>
> -- Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking"

Moreover, it is *speech* which brings this new stance into being.[46] Speech is not, however, a mere garb for language, its oral manifestation, it is "constitutive of reflexive, i.e., linguistic thought, of thought which deals with its objects in the linguistic domain" (Taylor 1990, 15). As Taylor rightly notes, the primacy of speech has been a foil for not only "conservative" Cartesians and their ilk but also for poststructuralists, following Derrida's graphocentric lead. The conflation of vocative priority (over scripture) and the metaphysics of presence has led most post-structuralists to reject any speech-oriented praxis, be it that of Herder, Searle, or Habermas. Charles Taylor accuses Derrida of remaining closer to Cartesian tradition than he would be willing to admit, by virtue of his "almost obsessive attempt to deny altogether any special status whatever to speech in the human language capacity" (Taylor 1990, 15, n. 24).

Even accepting the Derridean thesis of writing as *différance* (difference and deferral), one might lament the pretense of deception and disillusion in deconstructive posturing. What if speech does *not* claim a real presence (in the conventional sense), and, rather the oracular dimension is conceived as constitutive rather than revelatory? Or,

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[45] "The revolutionary idea implicit in Herder's expressivism was that the development of new modes of expression enables us to have new feelings, more powerful or more refined, and certainly more self-aware" (Taylor 1990, 20-1).

[46] See *Ideen sur Philosophie*, book IX, ch. 2, on the importance of speech for Herder.

perhaps constitutive *as well as* revelatory—these being ineluctably intertwined? Indeed, for R. G. Collingwood, a Viconian through and through, it is writing that *defers* to speech; its play of conscious elusion calls forth a voice. At a more pragmatic level, Derridean graphocentrism may reflect a northern European elitism, against the noisy/vocal/oral cisalpine style of music, dance, and Carnival.[47]

Very often the distinction is made (as by I. A. Richards)[48] between "descriptive" and "emotive" language use—one names and thereby controls the world (like prelapsarian Adam), the other expresses the emotions or feelings of the soul or self.[49] These two are parlayed as opposites, and conflated into the realist/mimetic vs romantic/emotive dichotomy, which becomes "a solvent for the perennial problems of philosophy, morals, propaganda, law, and all other forms of human discourse" (Abrams 1971, 151).[50] Yet this only perpetuates a distinction already false. *Both* of these ways of conceiving language (and reality)—the descriptive and the emotive—are based on the same presuppositions: a) individualism (the spectator's stance); b) that language is separate from the world of things "out there" (even if it is connected with "inner" realities); and, c) that the aim or function of language is the imparting or dispensing of information, with such being made the criterion for linguistic "success."

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[47] Camille Paglia makes much of this, contrasting her own brazen cisalpine character against the cold clinical quietness of the transalpine poststructuralist types.

[48] Richards (like Alexander Smith before him) grounded both his semantic and poetic theory on the opposition between the "symbolic" (or, oddly, "scientific," but more correctly, "descriptive") use of words for "the support, the organization and the communication of references," and the "emotive" use of words "to express or excite feelings and attitudes" (Abrams 1971, 15). Richards tried (disastrously, to my mind) to separate "poetic" from "scientific" truth by speaking of the "truth" of poetry (like Vico), but only as "pseudo-statements"— true if suiting a particular attitude, for example, "sincerity."

[49] This is evident in John Stuart Mill's misreading of Romantic poetry, in which symbols "are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which they exist in the poet's mind" (Abrams 1953, 25); another form of (atemporal, or even epiphanic) "correspondence," which remained strong in T. S. Eliot's "objective correlatives."

[50] For Rudolf Carnap not only poetry, but metaphysics and ethics are forms of "expressive," as opposed to "representative" language.

Herder's two main insights—the *constitutive rôle of expression* and the *holism of meaning* (Taylor 1990, 19), transform these assumptions about the connections of language of reality, and thus play a significant rôle in any attempt to get beyond conventional ideas of the implications of symbol and myth in (religious) understanding and language. Language, like history, is an inexhaustible web in which we are enmeshed, but within the expansive linguistic dimension all is not chaos, for in expression we construct and order our reality *while reflecting upon ourselves*. Language, again, like history, continues unabated, always creating new precipitate and manifesting new presences for the distillation of experience.

In sum, following Herder's lead, we can envision language as "a pattern of activity, by which we express/realize a certain way of being in the world, that which defines the linguistic dimension, but a pattern which can only be deployed against a background which we can never fully dominate" (Taylor 1990, 20). Yet just as we can never hope to control language, we are not totally prey to the whims of language, language does not "speak man" without a continual reshaping and reweaving of the linguistic dimension, in every speech-relationship that we enter. "Reshaping it without dominating it, or being able to oversee it, means that we never fully know what we are doing to it" (20)—we see, *per speculum in aenigmate.*

My aim here is to draw some parallels between the Herderian theory of language as expression and the Schillerian sense of Symbol (as *Schein* and *Stimmung*), in order to clarify the status of the Romantic Symbol as a temporal expressive form—the (e)vocation of semblance in time—from which to give basis to a re-reading of demythologization in our postmodern age. What these two paradigmatic thinkers share, is what Isiah Berlin has called the "epochal explorations of what it is to belong"—to a time, a place, and a group, and the concomitant exposition of the notion of "being at home" in a social unity or community. If, indeed, "expressive language is our centrally human way of grasping life, or of acceding to the process of meaning-creation at the human level" (Falck 1994, 99), then language must correlate strongly with our sense of contemporaneity, as well as with religious faith. For what is religion but an expression of and feeling for the "beyond" in terms of the "here and now"—the supreme acknowledgment of the Uncanny [*das Unheimlich*] in our midst [*das Daheim*].

IV. What the Lightning Said

> Here I see a poet who, like many a human being, is more attractive by virtue of his imperfections than he is by all the things that grow to completion and perfection under his hands. Indeed, he owes his advantages and fame much more to his ultimate incapacity than to his ample strength. His works never wholly express what he would like to express and what he would *like to have seen:* it seems as if he had the foretaste of a vision and never the vision itself; but a tremendous lust for this vision remains in his soul, and it is from this that he derives his equally tremendous eloquence of desire and craving. By virtue of this lust he lifts his listeners above his work and all mere "works" and lends them wings to soar as high as listeners had never soared.
>
> -- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

A. Romantic Modernism: The Attraction of Imperfection

T. E. Hulme, famous for his characterization of Romanticism as "spilt religion," spoke of literature as "a method of sudden arrangement of commonplaces" in which the *suddenness* makes us forget the commonplace (Moretti 1996, 229). We have already put into question the commonplace, in the sense of the given-ness of the world "out there"; but what of the *common place*: the socio-cultural locus of communality and mutual affection? This is, in some sense, the archetypal Modernist query. Franco Moretti speaks of Hulme's remark in relation to Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the archetypal Modernist poem, in which *futility* (in its fullest sense: a spilling, pouring or pressing out) becomes something of a virtue, or, at least, is no longer the prelude to despair. *The Waste Land* is a mosaic indeed, yet one which overlays, in Moretti's words, "a collection of colossal commonplaces"—resacralized, as it were, by the dazzling *style* of Eliot's poem (228). In the last event, it is *only* thanks to these commonplaces that *The Waste Land* acquires any "meaning" at all.

Moretti continues: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Ulysses, The Waste Land*, all the exemplary Modernist works, are decidedly "imperfect."[51] Why? Because of the recognition, by the Modernists, of the "failure" of a single-faced Faustian Romanticism. World War I destroyed the happy flights of late Romanticism in a bath of blood, causing

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[51] They are, as someone (perhaps Nietzsche) said of Goethe's *Faust*, "gorgeous failures."

would-be Romantics to either turn to the "dark" Romanticism spoken of by Mario Praz, or to question the utility of the Romantic quest and Romantic ideals in a world suddenly and horrifically come of age. Perfection was no longer the order of the day; what was required was rebuilding out of the rubble: *bricolage* and *refunctionalization.* Because,

> if literature is rarely capable of perfection, it is also true that human societies *almost never need perfection.* Better, far better, to have *bricolage* than engineering. Because *bricolage* does not dream of unattainable (and often worse) final solutions, but accepts the heterogeneity inherent in the modern world-system. A heterogeneity of historical times, first of all: non-contemporaneity again, which in the years of modernism becomes a *formal factum.* (Moretti 1996, 190-1)

The lightning rod of figuration speaks, but through the dispersal of light, not the flash of consuming fire—through *forge*, not *flame*. In a sense, structuralists like Culler and de Man are quite correct in accusing Romanticism of a longing for a world, in the structuralist's eyes, "well lost."[52] Yet what if this be the desire, not to unveil or reawaken a (mythical) essence or presence behind appearances, but rather to escape a self-imposed isolation caused by disillusionment,[53] by way of a reconfiguration of presence, in the temporal as well as the spatial sense. For de Man and most "postmodernist" theorists, we are asked to abandon all "higher" questions of truth and falsehood, self and experience, meaning and significance. The recognition (through allegory) of the "inscription of the 'similacrity' of a similacrum" [*der Schein des Scheinens*] compels us, so they argue, to throw off all delusions of extra-representational grandeur. "In the realm that is ours, where we have shed any belief in the ineffable and know the impossibility of unmediated

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[52] Richard Rorty likes to speak of the foundationalist and representationalist world as one, "well lost." The work of Georges Bataille, though often co-opted and misrepresented by poststructuralists, is an extensive commentary on the loss of the "sacred" (see his *Inner Experience*, 1988, 10), and on the "disillusionment"--what he calls, felicitously, "the self-acknowledged suffering of the disintoxicated"—of those who renounced, in renouncing fascism, "the only form of passionate life" that seemed to remain. (10) For Mircea Eliade, the new popularity of symbolism and mythology is part and parcel of the longing for the lost sacred world. Yet Bataille is not blind to the lure of disintoxication, in itself a longing for a "pre-intoxicated" innocence or ideality of origins.

[53] See above note, and Berdiaev: "The end [!] of modern history is characterized in all its spheres and achievements by a deep sense of disillusionment...; the same is true of art" (Berdiaev 1936, 177).

truth, we are indeed back in the figural; but, more specifically, in a relation to the figural where the figural is known as figural" (de Man 1983, xxxiii). Yet the linguistic realm, as we find in Herder, is not merely the space of the written word, but is the bodily, oracular, gestural dimension in which meaning itself *evolves*—the figural is also *transfigural.* What, then, is this extra-representational realm that we are to discard? It seems a straw figure. As Georges Bataille notes, we Occidentals have attempted to escape the isolation of a life deprived of "its most visible asset" in two distinct but related ways: one is *Romantic poetry*, the other is *love*. (Bataille 1988, 10) By way of these "antidotes" the distinction between the "world" and the "text" is made fluid.

The standard critique of the Romantic Symbol rests on a reading (admittedly, one not without some legitimate ground) of the symbol as *Zeichen,* rather than *Schein* or *Stimmung*. It is to read the symbol as does Georges Mounin, who in his *Introduction à la sémiologie* (1970) espouses the "univocal decoding" of signs, as if human language was a perfect cognate of traffic signs or Morse code. But this is to miss the multiform capacities of the Symbol as *Schein*—particularly its temporal, dialogical, and, moreover, *expressive* function. Mounin, to be sure, is an unrepentant heir to the so-called *metaphysics of presence*, longing "for a truth behind every sign: a moment of original plenitude when form and meaning were simultaneously present to consciousness and not to be distinguished" (Culler 1975, 19). Such nostalgia can be witnessed in the later Romantics, Symbolists, and the epiphanic Modernists (heirs of Pater): the yearning for some sort of prelapsarian harmony, for Eternal Univocity—for, not just *coherence*, but *correspondence*.

B. The Lyric as Norm: The Poetics of the Moment

> The Symbolist project was nothing more than a desperate effort to reconnect the disjointed images of the subject: to recreate a unity of self jeopardized by such disintegrating forces as dreams, unconscious impulses, psychic automotions and reflex actions, as well as the new illnesses of the soul, neuroses and hysteria.
>
> -- Jean Clair, Curator of the 1995 exhibit at the Montréal Musée des Beaux-Arts, *Paradis Perdu—Symbolist Europe*

We see this aspect of Romanticism most clearly in the Symbolist movement in European art and literature, closing the nineteenth century and paving the way for the Modernist "backlash"[54] of the new century. The Symbolists, in effect, extended Romanticism's second face, its sense of homesickness, and fairly reveled in the darkness and despair of broken dreams and unfulfilled longings; they were cognizant, unlike past humanists and many Romantics, of *Weltschmerz*: the pain of the world. Yet even *décadence* has its limits, and an attempt was made, on the part of many Symbolists, to re-establish connections not only within the disjointed subject, but also between the fractured self (*Das weite Land*[55]) and the forsaken landscape (*The Waste Land*). Thus, though, as Yves Kobry has argued, Symbolism has been long considered a "poisonous, degenerate leech of Romanticism"—a decadent execrescence—in fact it "opened an entirely new field of exploration by researching obscure areas of consciousness, by questioning the identity of a subject and his relationship to the world" (Kobry 1995, 45-6).[56]

Yet Symbolism's attempt at reconnection—at closing the gaps (unseen in their fullness by the Romantics) between self and world, and art and nature—came to rely upon a privileging of the Moment, *the lightning flash of inspiration*; in a word, Symbolism became obsessed with ecstasy and epiphany. Baudelaire's *synaesthesé* and *correspondences* gave foundation to the poetics of Symbolist epiphany, as did Pater's

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[54] Which was actually less of a backlash than a case of "anxiety of influence"—for the connections between Romanticism, Symbolism, and the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century are plain to see. In reality, the avant-garde distaste for Romanticism was a distaste for the "degenerate" Romanticism "become conventional, a pathetic mode, a taste for the sensational" (Mario Bontempelli, in Renato Poggioli's *Theory of the Avant Garde*, 1968, 47-9). See also Herbert Read's essay on "Surrealism and the Romantic Principle," in *Surrealism*, 1936, 17-96.

[55] Jean Clair speaks of Schnitzler's use of the term *Das weite land*—a distant, forever foreign land—to invoke the Symbolists reversal of the Romantic boundless landscape of the mind. "Rilke: *Jede dumpfe Umkehr der Welt hat solche Enterbte, denen das Frühere nicht und nicht das Nächste gehört.* And Kafka, "demanding from every single moment a new confirmation of [his] existence...in truth, [like Rilke] a disinherited son" (Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind*, 1952, 34).

[56] Symbolism, Kobry concludes, was "a laboratory of ideas, which created the new theories and forms that permeate our century" (45-6).

mantra of "living for the moment," and Wilde's comment that "[n]ot width but intensity is the true aim of modern art" (Wilde 1994, 936). Besides the otherwordly solipsism[57] to which Symbolism was prone, this headlong fall into the metaphysics of presence was a revocation of the Romantic Symbol, conceived in terms of Herderian expressivism and Schillerian semblance and attunement. Symbolists sought a clarity of vision not possible, and in fact potentially disastrous, as art becomes unreflecting desire for aesthetic moments of bliss, or power, and the aesthetic loses its ties to the ethical, and becomes self-sufficient, and self-justifying—*disinterested*.[58] As Novalis, a wary Romantic, said of Lessing, he "saw too sharply and in so doing lost the feeling for the unclear totality, the magical view of objects together in multiple lighting and shadow" (Novalis 70).[59] Lessing, in other words, deluded himself into a belief that his prison, in which everything was so clear, was *the world*.

What happened is this: the search for revelation became a projection of emotive feelings and desires—solipsistic sensationism.[60] The *expressive* is co-opted by the

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[57] See the Comte de Passavant's speech against Symbolist "detachment" in André Gide's *The Counterfeiters*. "[T]he great weakness of the symbolist school is that it brought nothing but an aesthetic with it; all the other great schools brought with them, besides their new styles, a new ethic, new tables, a new way of looking at things, of understanding love, of behaving oneself in life. As for the Symbolist...he didn't behave himself at all in life; he didn't attempt to understand it; he denied its existence; he turned his back on it..." (1955, 127).

[58] George Steiner: "In so far as this equation [Keats's "truth is beauty, and beauty truth"] and the Kantian concept of the special freedom of the poetic, of the disinterestedness of the fictive, help us see more clearly the authority and singularity of the aesthetic experience, they are of eminent value. At the same time, any thesis that would, either theoretically or practically, put literature and the arts beyond good and evil is spurious" (1989, 142).

[59] It may not be gratuitous to note that Novalis (Georg Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) was the first person, to the best of my knowledge, to utilize the term "magic realism" [*magischer Realismus*], while contrasting two modes of philosophy (the other being magic idealism [*magischer Idealismus*]) more than a century before Franz Roh's pioneering essay on magic realism.

[60] A term used by critics to describe the aesthetic of Walter Pater, father of the Aesthetic Movement and author of the infamous paean to "secular epiphany," his "Conclusion" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1870). In "Baroque and the Marvelous Real," Alejo Carpentier fights against this popular image of Romanticism more generally: "[T]he Romantic man was action and vigor and movement and will and declaration and violence" (BMA 97).

emotive, as the alternative to *realistic* (i.e., naturalistic, mimetic, designative) understandings of language and reality. Admittedly, even Goethe had his *Urphänomen*, a term coined to designate an irreducible phenomenon or experience that illuminates mundane experience, Rousseau his *Rêveries*,[61] and Wordsworth his "blessed moods."[62] But these do not laud an *escape* from time so much as, to use Gerard Manley Hopkins's term, an *inscape* into time—time reconfigured—and a presence, to borrow another Wordsworthian trope, "far more deeply interfused." In philosophy, as well, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and particularly with the birth of existentialism, we see a retrieval of Augustine's this-worldly reply to Paul's eschatological prediction of I Corinthians 13:12: "[I]n the thrust of a trembling glance [*in ictu trepedantis aspectus*], my mind arrived at That Which Is. Then indeed I saw clearly Your *invisible things which are understood by the things that are made*" (*Confessions* vii, xvii). Kierkegaard, picking up on Goethe's "*Der Augenblick ist Ewigkeit*" developed a theory of the *øiblikket*—"A blink [of the eye: *Øiets Blik*] is a designation of time in the fateful conflict as it is touched by eternity" (1980, 87).[63]

But it would seem as though the Epiphanics—whether Symbolist poets or existentialist philosophers—miss Augustine's threefold division of time into "a present of

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61 *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Rousseau's late book on his solitary peripatetic expeditions. Intended to be a joyous reclamation of aged serenity, it is in fact a bleak and bitter testament to the author's growing paranoia.

62 "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

63 "Only with the moment does history begin...The moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time" (Kierkegaard 1985, 52). See also Nietzsche's *Augenblick* as the crucial point of the Eternal Recurrence (*WP* [1038]) and Heidegger's own characterization of the *Augenblick* in *Sein und Zeit*, §328-30.

things past,[64] a present of things present, and a present of things future"[65] (Abrams 1971, 87). The present, even the illuminated present, is not merely the moment—*presence*—but also involves memory and eschatological hope. As a fiction of temporality, the "present" is often made static, and thus confused with spatial *presence*, as though the present were a location rather than a fleeting temporal connection. Also missed is the fact that Augustine feels this presence of eternity "in the thrust of a trembling glance"—as connection to God in-the-world, and not as self-expression. For Pater, contrariwise, experience "is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced," and every impression "is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" (Abrams 1971, 312). Our disinheritance, as such, leads to a retrenchment rather than a leap. It is in this Paterian sense that the Romantic Symbol came to be a touchstone for Symbolism, Imagism, and Modernism. As such, however, "the Romantic object is...cut off from its context in the ordinary world and in common experience and assigned an isolated existence in the self-limited and self-sufficing work of art" (Abrams 1953, 418)—"disinterestedness" taken to its extreme as *l'art pour l'art.*[66]

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[64] As typified, in Modernism, by Proust—his huge *À la rechêrche du temps perdu* (1919-1930) being an extensive reflection on the nature of the "present of things past" and the search for "lost time."

[65] In Christian terms, this can be conceived as "eschatological hope," or a sense of the apocalyptic infusing the everyday, the Now: *the Present as Portent.*

[66] Marshall Berman, in his *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, laments (like Gide's Comte) the one-sided rants of twentieth-century Modernist manifestos, such as that of the Italian Futurists, the self-styled "gay incendiaries with charred fingers" ready to engulf the past (and, in their fascistic dreams, the present and the future) in flames, while searching for "the creation of the nonhuman type in whom moral suffering, goodness of heart, affection, and love...will be abolished" As Berman wryly notes, those Futurists who did not die by the machines and the war they so loved, became hacks of Mussolini's fascist "revolution," as did, sadly, Ezra Pound. (1988, 24-5) These figures are precisely Max Weber's "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart...caught in the delusion that [they have] achieved a level of development never before attained by mankind" (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p.182). Art for art's sake, as Kandinsky (*Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, 1911) and D. H. Lawrence (contra Roger Fry in 1927) saw, forges a dissociation—a chasm too wide to be readily bridged—between art and human existence, with often disastrous results, for human existence no less than for art.

What the apotheosis of the Paterian moment involved, as a corresponding development, was the prioritization of lyric over all other literary forms—epic, dramatic or narrative—as the ultimate channel and image of expression, signification, and figuration. The seeds of Pater's motto—"All art aspires to the condition of music"—can be seen much earlier in Romanticism's shift in the identification of poetry away from painting and the visual arts towards music, where form and content are fused. Pater, commenting on Shakespeare:

> [I]f, in art generally, unity of impression is a note of what is perfect, then lyric poetry, which in spite of complex structure often preserves the unity of a single passionate ejaculation, would rank higher than dramatic poetry, where, especially to the reader, as distinguished from the spectator, there must always be a sense of the effort necessary to keep the various parts from flying asunder, a sense of imperfect continuity. (1987, 203)

Thus, if all art aspires to the condition of music, it is a univocal, or *harmonic* chorus, that is to be the condition of art; polphony and counterpoint are denied. Drama, narrative, and epic, must aspire to lyric, that is, must strive for a "vivid single impression" left on the mind of the viewer or reader—this is its call to "imaginative unity" (Pater 1987, 204).

It is precisely the *lyric*, *epiphanic*, and *emotive* (over *narrative*, *kairotic*, and *expressive*) tendencies of the Romantic legacy which call forth the ire of the structuralists. As Culler rightly suggests, the primary convention governing its "possible modes of signification" is the atemporality of the poem. This is the convention which most effects the reading of the lyric genre: the attempt, or requirement, "to read any brief descriptive lyric as a moment of epiphany" (Culler 1975, 175). The object or function of the lyric poem is a "moment of revelation in which form is grasped and surface becomes profundity" (175). As de Man notes, the longtime favouring of (lyric) poetry over (narrative) prose in Romantic theories of language and expression, and the aspirations of all art to music in the nineteenth century, seeped into modernists like Valéry and Proust, despite their attempts to demystify the nostalgic primitivism of such a legacy. The twentieth century avant-garde, throughout Europe and Russia, was, for all its anti-Romantic posturing, the bastion of lyric poets.

C. The Melody of Language

> The invention of melody is the supreme mystery of man.
>
> -- Claude Lévi-Strauss

Here a counterpoint must be raised; for music is rarely univocal, and never atemporal: its "temporality" is manifested in its *dynamic*, yet *repetitive*, character. Music—and figuration *as* music—need not *entrance*, it may *orientate*: its dictation may be *deiction*. In this regard, de Man speaks of Derrida's misreading of Rousseau, in terms of the relationship between music and language (and as a prime example of a critic's blindness *and* insight). Music, for Rousseau, is a "pure play of relationships": an "empty" or "hollow" structure, which "'means' the negation of all presence." It follows, says de Man,

> that the musical structure obeys an entirely different principle from that of structures resting on a 'full' sign, regardless of whether the sign refers to sensation or to a state of consciousness. Not being grounded in any substance, the musical sign can never have any assurance of existence. (1983, 128)

No "assurance of existence," unlike the "stable, synchronic sensation of 'painting', the paradigm of eighteenth-century aesthetics" (128). For Rousseau, the "field" of music is time, while that of painting is space (Rousseau 1966, 54). Paintings, the theory goes, have a spatial duration—a "presence" which disrupts any analogy with the diachrony of music. But music's temporality is two-sided, Janus-faced: on the one hand, it is "condemned to exist always as a moment, as a persistently frustrated intent toward meaning"; on the other hand, "this very frustration prevents it from remaining within the moment" (de Man 1983, 129). This is the crux: musical "signs" cannot coincide—"their dynamics are always oriented toward the future of their repetition, never toward the concurrence of their simultaneity" (129). Thus, for Rousseau, music, far from being a form of epiphany or spatial, synchronic presence, is rather "the diachronic version of the pattern of non-coincidence within the moment" (129). Music does not instantiate presence, but *the presentation of the non-contemporaneous present*, or, in more familiar terms, the *simultaneity of nonidenity.*

Again, Rousseau: "[I]f nature sometimes breaks down [the song into its harmonic components] in the modulated song of man or the song of birds, it does so sequentially, putting one sound after the other: it inspires song, not chords; it dictates melody, not

harmony" (Rousseau 1966, 51). What need have we of *harmonic* representation, he asks, in a world so disharmonious? Such is what Northrop Frye would call the "representational fallacy" that pervades criticism, in which *narrative* is conceived as sequential representation of events in an outside "life" and *meaning* as "reflection of some external *idea*" (Frye 1963, 14). Narrative, like melody, is contrived rhythm, and has its origin in ritual, ritual being "a temporal sequence of acts in which the conscious meaning of significance is latent" (15). Melody can be built out of chaos; harmony must pre-exist. Rousseau rejects harmony as "a mistaken illusion of consonance within the necessarily dissonant structure of the moment" (Rousseau 1966, 57). *Melody,* on the other hand, does not partake of this "mystification"; it does not offer a resolution of the dissonance but its projection on a temporal, diachronic axis." Moreover, it is melody which makes music an "imitative art"; melody is the prime vehicle of "realistic representation" (54).

Rousseau goes on to draw an equivalence of music, conceived as melody, with language; language, not as (solely) descriptive, nor fully communicative, nor epiphanic, but rather conceived structurally as a "diachronic system of relationships, the successive sequence of a narrative," or, one might add, of a colloquy. *Pace* Pater, "[t]he sequential effect of discourse, as it repeats its point again and again, conveys a much stronger emotion than the presence of the object itself, where the full meaning is revealed in one single stroke" (Rousseau 1966, 12). How does Rousseau evade the "logocentric fallacy"? His language is *literary*, and as such *already deconstructs and demystifies the priority of speech over written language*, even if, in so doing, it "remains persistently open to being misunderstood for doing the opposite" (de Man 1983, 138). Derrida, says de Man, misreads Rousseau (though not unprofitably) by underestimating the figurative and self-reflexive/rhetorical capacities of Rousseau's writing; he refuses to read Rousseau as literature or as *fiction*, and misses, in so doing, the expressive or melodic aspect of language—so crucial to Romantic style.[67]

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[67] De Man's dismissal of Derrida contra Rousseau has been challenged by Kathleen Wheeler, who suggests that de Man—in positing a "real" and "nonblinded" Rousseau, misread by Derrida—lapses into essentialism. As a poststructuralist, he should acknowledge that, while it may e true that Rousseau's words can be read rhetorically as well as declaratively, there is no "real" Rousseau whose intentions undergird his "meaning" (Wheeler, 1993, 225-6). Despite this important counter-critique, I think de Man's purpose, in pointing to the possibility that the primary texts have the ability to "deconstruct" or "re-read" their interpreters, stands.

The structural congruences of language and music are opposed by de Man to the "misleading synchronism" of visual perception, wherein a "false illusion of presence" dominates. For "reality," as with music and language, is not *synchronous*, but "a succession of discontinuous moments that create the fiction of a repetitive temporality" (de Man 1983, 131). This leads de Man back to his critique of the Rhetoric of Temporality—the Romantic Symbol's *ruse of synchronicity*.[68] Yet while de Man re-reads Rousseau in order to save him from the grasp of Derrida's critique, he is himself blind to the diversity of the Romantic concept of the Symbol, particularly as Semblance [*Schein*], and the Herderian conception of language as expression, where these connect with Rousseau's remarks on language and music. Just as "representation" does not become obsolete with the demise of "realism" conceived as the mimesis of spatial presence, Romanticism lingers long past Epiphanic Modernism has burnt its "hard-edged flame" down to the wick (setting a whole continent alight, in the process). Liminal Romantics like Herder and Schiller, caught between Romanticism, German Idealism, and Weimar classicism, were able to give evidence of an understanding of the Symbol as *presentation*, and the reception or meeting with such as *understanding in time.*

D. Janus: A Summing Up

> We come back here to our original point that poetic symbolism is language and not truth, a means of expression and not a body of doctrine, not something to look at but something to look and speak through, a dramatic mask.
>
> — Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity*

1. *Per speculum...facie ad faciem*

Charles Taylor, in his essay on Herder, notes the main problem with most influential theories of language, be they deconstructionist or otherwise. Using Donald Davidson as an example, Taylor suggests that such theories, in the tradition of Locke and Condillac,

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[68] Where "diachronic structures such as music, melody, or allegory are favoured over pseudo-synchronic structures such as painting, harmony, or mimesis because the latter mislead one into believing in a stability of meaning that does not exist" (de Man 1983, 132-3).

assume an "outsider's" perspective—a spectator's[69] or bird's eye view of language. In Davidson's case, this involves the assertion that understanding must be framed in terms of a successful application of the meaning of one's utterances *onto the features of the outside world*; a "mapping" of statements onto a world of pre-existent "truth-conditions" (Taylor 1990, 3-4). Taylor counters with several scenarios: one, of a robot who can match us, in correlations of "utterance" to "world," but may not truly *understand* anything; and, two (and more crucial for our purposes) the scenario of *exile*, where we might be able to "attribute truth-condition to parts of [a native's] utterances, and in this way co-ordinate our action with them and make valid predictions, while on a deeper level there remains a profound gap between our conceptual schemas" (4).

In short, Taylor complains that Davidson and most language theorists lack "existential" insight; that is, they lack a sense of being, not merely "in sight," but also receptive to "presence/language" as an "agent" or dialogical partner. They inadvertently play the rôle of a mute observer, content with holding a mirror up to nature, and missing their own reflection therein. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson make the same point, in *Metaphors We Live By*: the two prominent Occidental "myths"—of objectivism and subjectivism—"share a common perspective: man as separate from his environment" (229). Hulme's critique of Romanticism is a misrepresentation, because it is based in the idea of language as, essentially, a mode of communicating *visual images*. Hulme wanted to demythologize the Symbol, to preserve, that is, its analogical or "meaningful" status, while ridding it of the taint of "magic." He did not succeed. The Romantic Symbol had, under the Symbolists, already established too strong a connection to the "magic assumption" nascent in early Romanticism but now made focal: the notion "that the

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[69] The chastened Wilde, in *De Profundis*, takes his erstwhile mentor Pater (and Pater's hero and mouthpiece *Marius the Epicurean*) to task for being "little more than a spectator"; Wordsworth, as well, is blamed by Wilde for making poetry a detached (disinterested) contemplation of the world with "appropriate emotions" (Wilde 1994, 922). Interestingly, even Goethe, though praised by Novalis for his sense of "distance," is chastised by Heinrich Heine, for his belief in poetry as "a secular gospel which announces its presence by freeing us, through inner serenity and outward pleasure, from the earthly burdens that oppress us." Like a montgolfier, says Goethe, it "affords a bird's eye view of the intricate labyrinths of the earth below" (Heine 1982, 2). For Heine and the magical realists, there can be no escape from the Labyrinth.

human mind is so constituted as to be able to recognize images of which it can have no perceived knowledge" (Kermode 1957, 110).

Expressive language, both in terms of "speaker" and "spoken to"—narrator and narratee—involves being "sensitive to the rightness" of a particular style, stance, mood, or mien: being *attuned*. Conceived in terms of religion, this is the essence of prayer, of being prayerful. The prayer supposes that anything might happen; that with God nothing is impossible. "Created by the creators of the future," prayer "tells us not so much who we 'are' but rather, and far more importantly, *who we are meant to be!*" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1970, 194). Prayer may be conceived as "naming," in Roland Barthes's sense, where the Name is "a voluminous sign, a sign always pregnant and crammed full of meanings that no use can reduce or flatten" (unlike the common noun, or what the Romantics called allegory, "which never allocates more than one of its meanings for each synonym" [Moretti 1996, 220]). To "name" is to supplicate a "semantic monstrosity," which engages in what Barthes calls "hyper-semanticity" (220). To pray is neither to supplicate nor to debase, but to open up to the "as if," to the manifest possibility of God's *presence in time.*

M. H. Abrams suggests that the lyrocentrism of Romanticism was based on, or, at least, "strongly abetted by...the opinion that the poetry of the Bible was mostly lyrical" (1953, 86). But this is not an adequate representation of Biblical "poetry," which, as Vico and Herder knew, is, first and foremost, *symbolic narrative.* Very often, in the history of biblical *reading*, where character and plot, aspects of narrative, are interpreted mimetically—"realistically"—lyrical effusions are rendered either allegorical, or epiphanic; above all, lyric becomes emotive, rather than expressive-deictic. Yet, as Martin Buber says, "All living is meeting"; and Humboldt before him: "True speech [*Sprechen*] is colloquy [*Gespräch*]." The "word" is always *dialogical*; biblical "God-talk" stands on the knowledge of the "way" in which God meets us. In a meeting (giving high import to this rather denuded term) which is immediate, spiritual, physical and concrete, "God enters into the concrete actuality, the immediate physical-spiritual actuality of creation" (Rosenzweig 1970, 20). One thinks of the very human "meeting" between Yahweh and Abram, and the latter's bartering for the Cities of the Plain. This

meeting is not a one-sided supplication, but a living presence with which we also "meet" and confront God, cognizant of the "as if."

Coleridge understood the powers of narrative as an expressive mode, its capacity to "make those events, which in real or imagined History move in a *straight* line, assume to our understandings a *circular* motion" (Abrams 1971, 141). And Novalis, as well, astutely perceived that while "lyric is for heroes [...n]arrative poetry is for human beings" (Novalis 1960, 71). We have seen that the Romantic–Symbolist Moment, typified in Pater's illumination in the arrest of time, became something of a Modernist staple. Yet this did not happen without deviations; deviations which lead a path back to the earlier Romanticism based on the Symbol and Herderian expressivism. Whereas for Pater, there is only one "form" of present—*the present of the present*—Gerard Manley Hopkins, fusing the pagan Pater with his priestly *pater* Duns Scotus, developed the notion of "inscape," where the trivial is redeemed by *a single event in past time*. In other words, for Hopkins, the present is always simultaneously non-contemporaneous. Arthur Symons, whose *Symbolist Movement in Art* (1899) established the burgeoning French movement on British soil, was a chief proponent of the "magical" element of Symbolist poetics.[70] For Symons, Symbolism was a revolution against "the contemplation and rearrangement of material things" considered as normal art, and against "disinterestedness" as the mood of art reception. He cites Carlyle's notion of the Symbol as "an embodiment and revelation of the infinite," and "concealment yet revelation" (Kermode 1957, 109).

Symbolism, as transmuted into Modernism, becomes "an attempt to spiritualise literature, to evade the old bondage of rhetoric, the old bondage of exteriority...Description is banished that beautiful things may be evoked, magically" (Kermode 1957, 110). While reacting, with the Romantics, against the scientific realism or naturalism of the day, and yet moving away from the "personality-driven" late Romantics towards the heralding of epiphanic moments and the "pure art" of non-

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[70] In Kermode's eyes, Symons "did well to mention the connection between magic and symbolism early. It is an important one, by no means as isolated from the concerns of modern poetry as might appear" (Kermode 1957, 109).

discursive revelation, Symbolism, at its best, sought not so much *representational immediacy* as the *structural engendering or displacement of mood*, "giving a sense of a growing richness of meaning unlimited by denotation" (Frye 1957, 61). In T. S. Eliot, a disciple of Symons, we see a rejection of the Paterian atemporal moment. Eliot follows Augustine, and the moment is rather "*the point of intersection of the timeless with time*" (Abrams 1953, 420, my emphasis): a disruption of the present moment, by an infusion of past and future, not a flight from time into eternity.

While other Modernists sought epiphany in and through the Symbol, the later Joyce, realizing (by virtue, some would argue, of the "structural failure" of his own *Portrait*) the limits of such a path, let the details speak themselves, not as eternal presences but as having meaning in their temporal sequence. As Franco Moretti suggests, Joyce's "success" lay in *investing time into the new techniques of lyrical Modernism*, moving, in the process, from "polyphony"—the self-construction, *ex nihilo*, of the necessary sign—to "polysemy"—the refunctionalization of signs out of already existing ones: *bricolage* (1996, 89). Not a single lightning flash of a "great revelation" but rather the "little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectantly in the dark [...these were] of the nature of a revelation" (Woolf 1977, 175). Speaking of modern critical misreadings of *Ulysses*, Moretti claims that what is missed is the fact that *interaction is not coherence*; "[o]rganization and homogeneity...are by no means synonyms" (1996, 214). Moreover, the quest for such "coherence" belies a latent "Romanticism" of the lyrical sort, whether in Coleridge, I. A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, or, for that matter, in Colin Falck.[71] "In the midst of chaos," says Virginia Woolf, summing up, "there was shape" (Woolf 1977, 175).

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[71] Cleanth Brooks, in *Modern Poetry* (1939), alludes to Coleridge's yearning for "the balance of reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities." The New Critics, though in some ways fellow travellers with poststructuralists, have been soundly chastised by the latter for their "religious" leanings. Brooks also speaks of Richards's quest of "resolving the apparent discords," and in Brooks's own work, complexity relies upon homogeneity—discord is not endemic or structural, but a passing phase, a dark night to be passed through; an apparition, not a reality. And Falck suggests that, while there might be a "veil" between ourselves and "ultimate reality," "there might be special moments, or—in later literary parlance—epiphanies, in which reality could be seen as revelatory itself with special profundity and in and through the appearance of everyday life" (Falck 1994, 36).

2. *Through the Looking Glass*

According to Roland Barthes, the hyper-semanticity invoked in "naming" is present in the poetic "sign" or Symbol; both are infused with the magic of semantic richness, coupled with a strong core of situational meaning. Literature, and the Poetic Symbol more particularly, connects with religious language, and prayer, in another sense: both fall somewhere between music and painting—neither purely descriptive, nor purely epiphanic (form and content ineluctably fused)—these *speak epiphanically of the commonplaces of the world, suffused in a new sense of time.* As in a melody, *rhythm*[72] is a key component to this transfiguration; rhythm conceived as "the preparation of a new event by the ending of a previous one." Repetition is not an eternal recurrence of the same, but rather variations on a theme—an *aria*, or better, a *sonata*[73] of refunctionalization. "Rhythm is the setting up of new tensions by the resolution of former ones" (Langer 1953, 127).

Though a poststructuralist critique of the metaphysics of presence may be an appropriate appraisal of realism—conceived as pictorial *mimesis*, and linguistic *designation*; framed, that is, by coherence and harmony—the "chronic Romanticism" typified by expressivism and the Symbol as Semblance falls not so easily before this flashing sword. Nor need an alternative to mimetic/designative realism become pure emotivism, or the solipsistic sensationism of epiphanic Modernism. In short, the valorization of the Symbol at the expense of allegory does not have to coincide with the growth of an aesthetics that *refuses to distinguish between experience and the representation of such.*[74] Representation does not die with the death of mimetic realism or emotivist projectionism—representation can be reconceived, not as copy, but as

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[72] "[I]t is the essential function of literature to show us *how things are*—not by describing them in their actuality, but by revealing them in their essential forms and their essential rhythms...No Saussurean theorist has yet had anything significant to say about rhythm: and yet rhythm, both within literature and outside of it, most—through its connections with temporality—lie very close to the essence of life itself" (Falck 1994, 33).

[73] An aria being, as per *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, "a long, accompanied solo"; a sonata: "a composition for one or two instruments in several movements with one or more in sonata form "(sonata form being "a type of composition in three sections (exposition, development, and recapitulation) in which two themes (or subjects) are explored according to a set of key relationships" (*OED*, 8th ed., 1990). George MacDonald uses the sonata as an analogy for literature and God's message.

[74] This point is argued by Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method*, 1988, 174.

transfiguration. To throw out all representation with mimetic realism is to give the victory over to the central realist premise—that *representation is exhausted by realism.* As Northrop Frye says of literature: "its words form rhythms which approach a musical sequence of sounds at one of its boundaries, and form patterns which approach the hieroglyphic or pictoral image at the other" (Frye 1963, 14). The element which allows for this Janus-faced status in religious and poetic language is *myth.* Myth, rather than being some sort of "timeless" ritual, is, like music—in its diachronic repetition—temporally informing.[75] As such, myth gives archetypal significance to the moment of presence, which is otherwise open to the danger of extratemporality. *Myth is not history's foe; myth is history's keeper.*

I began this section with an invocation of "negativity": the Modernist *Waste Land.* I will end it with some more "positive" remarks on the modernist *Metamorphosis.* Though his work is by no means "theological"—in the strict sense, of being concerned with religious issues and themes—Kafka, who believed that "all writing is prayer," gave birth to several of the sacred texts of modernity. As Camus once said: "the whole of Kafka's art consists in compelling the reader to re-read him." Indeed, no other "modern" writer (save, perhaps, Joyce) demands that we redip into his words, searching for their significance. Paul de Man draws a distinction between two historical notions of reading, and of linguistic/literary expression: a) the Platonic dualist model, in which the hidden is gradually revealed behind the apparent; and b) the mystical monist model, where there is "a perfect congruence between the expression and that which is expressed" (1983, xx). What this second model accomplishes, is a certain form of *Entrealisierung*: "a tension within the language that can no longer be modeled on the subject-object relationships deriving from experiences of perception, or from theories of perception" (174). But there may be a *tertium via*, in which derealization need not mean an abandonment of "realism"; where we are not led to mistake the lightning *for what the lightning reveals*. Kafkan writing, like music, and Scripture, draws meaning forth through an invitation to the dance of diachronic repetition; and perhaps a recognition of the ruse of the simultaneous "given-ness" of presence. *Melody* replaces harmony; mimesis gives way to *Semblance*; designation and emotivism to *expression*, "critical" realism to...myth?

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[75] "The myth is the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual and archetypal narrative of the oracle" (Frye 1963, 15).

Excursus Two: Realism in the Balance

Suzanne Langer, in her opus *Feeling and Form* (1953), names six pertinent *Leitwörter* (a term coined by Buber and Rosenzweig in the process of their German translation of the Hebrew Bible, meaning guiding words that function similarly to leitmotifs in music and opera) for any discussion of aesthetics: *Taste, Emotion, Form, Representation, Immediacy*, and *Illusion*. My own discussion deals with these in reverse order of importance; that is, I will speak very little, if at all, about Taste and Emotion, a bit about Form, and very much about Representation, Immediacy, and Illusion. The last, as Langer suggests, "is generally coupled with its opposite, reality, and serves rather to raise difficulties than to solve them." Often, indeed, "it is the bête noir to be explained away" (1953, 18). No longer, Ms. Langer: It is precisely the difficult nexus of reality and illusion that forms the basis of this dissertation, involving a re-assessment of Immediacy or Presence in terms of the Romantic Symbol, the expressive theory of language, and postmodern religious understanding.

First, however, to give these issues a more comprehensive form, I must turn briefly to the so-called "problem of representation." Since as far back as Plato, at least, the capacity of the human mind and human "works" (art, drama, music, literature) to mirror the "world" has been a topic of heated debate. Despite counter-movements, such as mystical neo-Platonism and (Occamite) "nominalism," the "realistic" legacy of Plato remained, for centuries, the hegemonic paradigm for art, language, and epistemology. Representation and Realism were virtually synonymous—the closer to a mimetic depiction of reality, the closer to "Truth," "Beauty," and "the Good." In the past two centuries, the dominance of realism has been challenged, most explicitly by the Romantic movement of the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which called into question, not only the mimetic function of art, but also the designative function of language and the empiricist theory of knowledge. Representation—as a mirroring of the world "out there"—became transfused with mystical-Boehmenist, neo-Platonic, and Idealist notions, wherein the mind of the "poet," or some external force, such as Nature, came to play a vital rôle in the creation and expression of "reality." The Romantics, angered by the Unholy Trinity of Cartesian rationalism, Voltaireian materialism and skepticism, and the Lockeian *tabula rasa* of sensation, sought to rescue human creative activity from its derivative (and thereby secondary, or in Plato, tertiary) status.

Vico and Herder, as we have seen, were instrumental figures in this shift, as were, in less direct ways, Rousseau and, of course, Kant, for whom "imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself" (*CPR* A.K. 120). While the empiricists had realized the extent to which our knowledge, our concepts, are dictated by our sense-perceptions, the post-Kantians insisted that these perceptions are themselves affected (if not "created") by the "imagination"—by elements which "go beyond" language and experience. In the twentieth century, the debate between realist and non-realist modes of creation, and ultimately, of understanding, waxed strongly in the realm of critical theory—in the conversations of the so-called *Frankfurterschule* in Germany—where the

implications of representation generally, and realism in particular, in terms of politics and ideology, were heatedly discussed.

Since the Frankfurt debates, the problem of representation has been shunted aside, though, as Langer and Hilary Putnam protest, it still has "a gadfly mission" to perform in the intellectual world. Indeed, "the philosophical issue that is usually conceived in terms of image and object is really concerned with the nature of images as such and their essential difference from actualities" (Langer 1953, 46-7). In *Renewing Philosophy*, Putnam allows for the arguments (by Nelson Goodman, and the deconstructionists, among others) that the "metaphysical realism" so long the pivot of the problematique of representation has indeed "collapsed." Yet the demise of the traditional version of realism—where "the notions of an object and a property have just one philosophically serious 'meaning', and the world divides itself up into objects and properties in one definite unique way" (1992, 123)—does not, Putnam argues, abolish "representation" as a valid category or object of study. "To identify the collapse of one philosophical picture of representation with the collapse of the idea that we represent things that we did not bring into existence is, quite simply, dotty" (124).

Within the study of religion, this debate has taken longer to emerge, due perhaps to a wariness on the part of scholars of religion to delve into the realm of "fiction" and the imagination. Yet, according to John Hick, its continued marginality is a serious lacuna, given that, in his words, it "exposes the most fundamental of all issues in the philosophy of religion today" (Hick 1993, 3). Since Luther—perhaps, one might argue, since the Marburg Impasse—and particularly since the nineteenth century, religion in the West has largely followed the progressive "desupernaturalization" of the modern world; Falck is correct, in this regard. And save, perhaps, the eighteenth-century French *philosophes,* no one has spoken more forcefully of, and to, this desupernaturalization than Ludwig Feuerbach.

Yet it was precisely the "realism" of Christian believers that provoked Feuerbach's ire. The claims of religious language to description or designation, in short, to mimesis—of a God "out there"—are for him grievous errors, and ones which must be assiduously countermanded. The subtleties of the Feuerbachian analysis of religion remain of more than historical interest; like the writings of Nietzsche, they retain a provocative edge, even when ostensibly superseded (in Feuerbach's case, by Marx and Freud, and, to some extent, by Nietzsche himself). Feuerbachian criticism provides an impetus to rethink "realism" in terms of religious discourse, expression, and understanding. As Marx once remarked (in one of his more playful moods), perhaps we must walk through a river of fire [*feuer-bach*] before emerging onto the shores of truth.

Briefly, Feuerbach's argument goes like this: in religion (unlike perception) "consciousness of object and self-consciousness coincide" (Feuerbach 1959, 158). Since, according to Feuerbach's proposition, "the object of any subject is nothing else than the subject's own nature taken objectively," God becomes "the manifested inward nature" of the human being. (158) Thus, more than just the Kingdom "is within you"—*God*, far from being *totaliter aliter,* is *solus interius:* a projection of one's desires and the positive qualities of human living; and religion is "the solemn unveiling of a man's hidden treasures, the revelation of his intimate thoughts, the

open-confession of his love-secrets" (159). Yet, in case this last remark sounds too "positive," Feuerbach anticipates Freud, Marx and Foucault by suggesting further that this "confession" is anything but cathartic, for religion is not just an *illusion*, but a *delusion*, the "earliest" and most subtle and "indirect" form of such: what Freud and Lenin might call an "infantile neurosis."

Theologian John Hick, in his *Disputed Questions* (1993), has reopened the debate between realist and non-realists. In answering Feuerbach's critique of realism as internalization and anthropomorphism, Hick cites the Kantian idea of the "creative" aspect of perception. After characterizing Feuerbach's position as "non-realist," that is, interpreting religious language "not as referring to a transcendent reality or realities, but as expressing our emotions, or our basic moral insights and intentions, or our way of seeing the world, or as referring to our moral and spiritual ideals" (7), Hick proceeds to divide realism into: a) *naïve realism*, where the world is exactly as it is perceived—in religious terms "the divine reality is just as spoken about in the language of some one tradition; and b) *critical realism,* where (as according to Kant) we make "an important contribution to our perceiving, distinctively human construction arising from the impacts of a real environment upon our sense organs, but conceptualized in consciousness and language in culturally developed forms" (4).

Though he has attempted to nuance the meaning of realism in terms of the Kantian shift, Hick has, in fact, merely sidestepped the real issue—the conflation of representation and realism—by continuing to accept, naïvely, as it were, the *myth of the given:* the assumption that there exists a single, univocal reality, or world, to which our visions are but variations. It seems, in his desire to undermine "fundamentalist" (i.e., "naïve realist") ways of religious interpretation, Hick takes to beating a fallen horse: very few people, I think, accept the absolute correspondence of their senses with "reality" (however much they might agree that it makes sense to do so in the run of daily life). More important, I think, is that even fewer people are "naïve realists" when it comes to language use (and particularly poetic and religious language use), assuming a purely designative or mimetic expression. Rather, in a post-Kantian age, most people are already "critical realists" in Hick's sense; most people "see" the world with at least a modicum of a sense of the relativity of their particular (or cultural) perceptions and conceptions. Hick may be blinded, as he all but admits, by his true motive (more Herderian than Kantian): the quest, well-intentioned, to be sure, for a pluralistic religious understanding, a "universal theology of religions" based on a denuded, "reality-centric," approach to religious faith and the impending discourse between faiths.

But this plea for pluralism only takes us so far in understanding the problems of a realist conception of religion. For Hick, we "see" different "realities" because of our cultural/religious/environmental differences; we are blinded by our culture-specific veils, and can only peer, now, through a glass, darkly; only as reality-centric critical realists will come to see face to face. Of course, Hick suggests, quite pragmatically, that one can be a realist with regard to some issues, a non-realist with others. (Though, at the end of the article, he rethinks his earlier tolerance, and suggests that, in terms of religion, there can be no middle-ground—one cannot straddle the abyss of faith—in the end all variations "will fall on one or the other side of the distinction between

naturalistic and supra-naturalistic understandings of the universe" [1993, 15].) "There are in fact probably no pan-realists," he admits, "believing in the reality of fairies and snarks as well as of tables and electrons, and likewise few if any omni-non-realists, denying the objective reality of a material world and of other people as well as of gravity and God" (9).

Yes. But what does this say? Precisely that there are no "naïve" realists, but only critical realists more or less "naïve." How then, it must be asked, do we quantify "naïveté"? Is it less naïve to believe in, say, electrons than snarks, God than fairies, orcs than leprechauns, the self than the world? Are there criteria by which we might judge the validity of realism or non-realism in particular discourses? Even these discourses or "types of language"—"perceptual, ethical, aesthetic, poetic, scientific, religious"—how is it possible any longer to draw and maintain such lines, without inevitable (and necessary) slippage? Can we not be realist and non-realist within the same language game? Moreover, are these "types of language," or merely "subjects" of discourse—the "types" being but two: realist and non-realist?

Hick falls directly into Feuerbach's hands, playing Pascal to Feuerbach's anti-skeptical Luther. Hick considers all post-axial faiths cosmically optimistic and worldly pessimistic (in itself, a questionable hypothesis); moreover, the cosmic optimism of all the great faiths, he suggests, *requires a realist reading of their language.* "For it is only if this universe is the creation or expression of an overarching benign reality," he suggests, such that the "spiritual project of our existence" extends beyond this mortal coil, *that it is possible to justify our present suffering.* In the face of Ivan Karamazov, for whom God's existence is refuted by a child's tears, Hick invokes the ghost of Pascal (the infamous wager) and Kierkegaard (the leap), charging non-realists with apathy, with "abandoning hope for humankind" (1993, 13). What, he asks, do you have to lose? You have an (after-)world to win! This, like Anselm's ontological "proof", requires little in the way of rebuttal today. What is it but another, very non-subtle, form of internalization? In Hick the plea for pluralism masks the real dangers of religious realism, i.e., the assumption of the univocity of a "Real Presence" beneath the veil of language, myth, and metaphor.

Hick might have dealt with this issue with more circumspection, had he acknowledged Feuerbach's explicit avowal that religion, and the issue of religious representation, is a quite different case from that of sense perception, given that the "object" of religion has no "material" existence per se (or, acknowledging the Incarnation, does not have an "obvious" materiality now). The "out-thereness" of the religious object is denied, less because it is not perceptible than because it is not *necessary*—and may even be harmful, delusive, when used as justification for faith. The bias, common in classical aesthetics, towards (usually visual) sense perception distorts an analysis of religious symbolism, which is at least, if not more, linguistic than iconic—or perhaps, something of both: *melodic.* Feuerbach recognized this, transferring Hegel's concept of *Bildlichkeit* (used by Hegel to critique the Greek pantheon) against Christianity—that is, in Christianity, as well, we find the spiritualizing illusions which enchain, or to use a Feuerbachian concept of some repute, which "alienate" all anthropomorphizing/projecting believers. Thus, a more pertinent analogy to the problem of representation in religious language may be the problem of language, more generally; for language, like religion, has no external existence, no

(guaranteed) "out there," yet, also like religion, it somehow *connects subjects with the world*. This I have tried to show in discussing Herderian expressivism as an alternative way of conceiving language and literary/religious expression.

Feuerbach's argument is flawed, but not for want of a recognition of critical realism. Rather, Feuerbach, for one, assumes "projection" as a given, then goes on to "prove" it. A masterful piece of rhetoric, but problematic as analysis. *Pace* Feuerbach, Greek religion *did not* endow gods with the highest in morality; these deities were, as Nietzsche and Euripides (and Plato, for that matter) knew, "all-too human" in their foibles, petty jealousies, and cruel and selfish ways. Besides, the objectification of our subjective being may be "the most intimate 'Reality' that we know" (Langer 1953, 366). Moreover, Feuerbach "argues" that to know God, and yet *not oneself to be God*, "is a state of disunity, of unhappiness" which "higher beings" [*Übermenschen?*] do not share, having "no conception of what they are not" (Feuerbach 1959, 163). One might ask Feuerbach whether "happiness" can exist without a certain amount of distance, without a measure of sorrow, pain, suffering, as well as pleasure and joy—without, perhaps, a certain "naïveté"? "Another ideal runs ahead of us [...] the ideal of a spirit who plays naïvely—that is, not deliberately but from overflowing power and abundance—with all that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine" (*AC*[24]). Nietzsche attempts to "reclaim" naïveté as a pristine quality, one necessary to "forgetting" (see "The Use and Disadvantages of History for Life") and the child-like aspect of the *Übermensch*. This "overflowing abundance" affects not only the words of many Romantics, but also of Jesus' "You must become a child..."

Ultimately, both Hick and Feuerbach are "demythologizers": Hick in his "existentialist" reality-centric religious pluralism; Feuerbach in his critique of the delusions of a realist understanding of religion. Yet, while Hick (like Tolstoy and George Eliot before him) attacks the mythological substrate of particular faiths, Feuerbach takes aim at a higher foe, the "myth of the given"—not so much to reject it by interiorization (as in Berkeleyan idealism) as to render problematic its univocity: the assumption/presumption of one-to-one referentiality, in the midst of disunity. Hick claims that the "ordinary, unsophisticated religious person"—the naïve realist—understands religious language "literally," by which he means "straightforwardly, rather than as metaphor or myth" (1993, 6). Whatever the truth of this claim—which is impossible to verify—the wording is indicative. The naïve realist does not "understand" myth; does not recognize "metaphor" for what it is—a veil. Yet Hick's critical realist understands myth *as myth*, metaphor *as metaphor*, i.e., non-realistically. But without taking this further, without some commitment to work on myth and figurative language, that is, without putting into question the myth of the given that stands at the root of realism and naturalism alike, myth and metaphor—*figuration*—remains a second-order or derivative form of representation, always *comme ça*: a *re*-presentation. If critical realism is a Kantian alternative to the Scylla and Charybdis of naïve realism and non- or anti-realism, perhaps a post-Kantian appraisal of critical realism will reveal a different path, a route not so besieged, as the Kantian-Kierkegaardian one, by the spectres of internalization, where the doctrine of God becomes "an encoded set of spiritual directives" (Falck 1994, 127) and the imagination, for all its potential, is left somewhere beneath the waves.

CHAPTER TWO

Arbeit am Mythos

In so far as religions themselves—and in particular Christianity—have increasingly tended to "internalize" or "de-mythologize" themselves and to abandon their claims to be descriptive forms of truth about the world, a way is in fact conveniently open whereby our spiritual awareness can begin to be 're-mythologized' through the imaginative insights of poetry or literature. The only religious 'scriptures' that can now be authentic for us may be the poetry or literature to which our own culture gives us access.

-- Colin Falck, *Myth, Truth and Literature*

I. Understanding in Time

> Why is the truth so woefully
> Removed? To depths of secret banned?
> None understands in time! If we
> But understand betimes, how bland
> The truth would be, how fair to see!
> How near and ready to our hand!
>
> -- Goethe

A. Romanticism and Religion: *A Fearful Symmetry*

It is incumbent upon us, now that the Romantic-Symbolist aesthetic has been delineated, to draw the connection between such an understanding of art, language and literature, and a theory of myth. Myth, I will argue, is the manifestation of Semblance in history, or in time/duration. A "mythical" hermeneutic is a mode of understanding based on the expressivist principles outlined above, and one, in our day, correspondent with what has come to be called "magic realism." Falck charges religion, especially Christianity, with self-demythologization, to the point that religious language, in the West, has forsaken all claims to "description" and representation. But if "demythologization" is re-read under the auspices of a magic realist hermeneutic, then this charge founders upon the rocks. A magic or mythical realist understanding enlivens, not only the Romantic-expressivist aesthetic, but, in terms of religious understanding, opens up a *tertium via* between the twin poles of "critical" and "naïve" realism—without at the same time giving way to an "anti-realistic" stance, *à la* Feuerbach and his twentieth-century epigones. Only magic realism gives *temporality* an axial "position" in critical interpretation and epistemology—by focusing, not on the static "things" or "objects" *out there*, nor on the internal mental states or feelings which fashion the world, but on the *atmosphere of reception and the convening arena* as transfigurative loci. Mythical realism is concerned with the creation of *mood.*[76]

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[76] As a counter-reading of the Symbolist epiphany and those "blessed moods," Virginia Woolf (in *To The Lighthouse*) speaks of the "unreal" (cf. Eliot's "Unreal City") but "penetrating and exciting universe which is the world seen through the eyes of love." Woolf's heroine feels "how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which are lived one by one, became coiled and whole like a wave which bore one up

It is with the development of Modernism in aesthetics that questions of Time and Eternity, dormant for some time, arose once again, not as mere abstruse speculations along the way but as part and parcel of a larger critique of values. Amid the "inescapable flux," of "mere anarchy loos'd," Modernists wondered whether human beings could find and hold onto anything that abides. Fascism exploited this sense, and countless succumbed to its chorus, its distorted *Gesamtkunstwerk*. When the smoke cleared, a new query arose out of the rubble: Can myth be redeemed?

The connections between poetry and religion are obvious, and have a long pedigree, in the *Ramayana*, the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Psalms*, and the *Song of Songs*, to name just a few of the most sublime instances. Yet, as with the marriage of philosophy and theology, or philosophy and poetry, the relationship is not without its strains. As Northrop Frye puts it: "Between religion's 'this is' and poetry's 'but suppose *this* is', there must always be some kind of tension, until the possible and the actual meet at infinity" (1963, 278). A beautiful and apt image: poetry and religion being parallel lines, running a similar course, but never becoming a single line, until infinity, or eternity.

1. Romantic Scripture: *The Great Code*

With Goethe concocting his literary-alchemical experiments in Weimar, and Wordsworth and Coleridge still in their halcyon youths, another Englishman, unbeknownst to just about anyone, was creating his own eternity in time; writing his own scriptures. A prophet of the imagination, William Blake was perhaps the first to explore the Bible as a "Great Code" of art—as the source of, not only Truth and Goodness, but Beauty. As with Coleridge, for Blake "its contents present to us the stream of time continuous as life and a symbol of eternity, inasmuch as the past and the future are virtually contained in the present" (Coleridge 1839, 437). Like Goethe and Coleridge, Blake sees allegory—"art the meaning of which points away from itself toward something else which is not art" (Frye 1967, 118)—as a "profane abomination." He disdained the kind of symbolism found in the simile as a "correspondence of abstraction," which arises only out of our laziness—our inability or unwillingness to keep our eye on the image itself—the result being our regarding qualities—moral or intellectual—as more real than living things.

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with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach" (1977, 24). See below on the relations of love and transfiguration.

The Bible for Blake is "not Allegory, but Eternal Vision or Imagination of All that Exists" (Frye 1969, 116). The allegorical tale (such as those of Aesop) which is merely a set of moral doctrines or historical facts, ornamented to be made easier for simple minds, is neither amenable to morality, religion, or art, save, perhaps, in their "degenerate" forms. The "truth" of religion can be presented only in its essential form, which is that of *imaginative vision*—it can only "show'" itself through a "poetic recreation" of the original myths. Colin Falck lauds the Blakeian conception of religion as Imaginative Vision: "In this and other ideas," he says, Blake "leaves most of modern theology trailing behind him, although there are affinities between his ideas and those of his near-contemporary Schleiermacher" (Falck 1994, 197).

Friedrich Schleiermacher is, of course, often considered the father of modern theology; yet his *Speeches to the Cultured Despisers of Religion* (1800) is a Romantic manifesto, evoking, in its lack of systematic rigour, a freshness and richness forfeited by his later works like the *Doctrine of Faith* (*Glaubenslehre*, 1822). Though known for his conception of absolute dependence on God, in his early work Schleiermacher is less concerned with this than he is with his attempt to show (not prove, or justify) that if one experienced the world in a state of deep emotion (Goethe's "living way"), as intuition and feeling—one would experience the world *as it is* (Blake—"infinite and holy"); and if one were profoundly affected ("awed") by one's relation to the particularities of creation, such an affective state, or *attunement*, is worth more than knowledge and action put together: it connects and transcends both. An immanentist like Blake and Goethe, the "goal of the religious life" is for Schleiermacher

> not the immortality that is outside of time, behind it, or rather after it, and which still is in time. It is the immortality which we can now have in this temporal life; it is the problem in the solution of which we are ever to be engaged. In the midst of finitude to be one with the Infinite and in every moment to be eternal is the immortality of religion. (Schleiermacher 1987, 101)[77]

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[77] This is connected in Schleiermacher with a deeply "pluralistic" (Herderian, we might say) ethical sense: "[R]eligion does not, even once, desire to bring those who believe and feel to one belief and one feeling...because each seer is a new priest, a new mediator, a new organ, he flees with repugnance the cold uniformity which would again destroy this divine abundance" (1987, 55). Rather shockingly, Schleiermacher goes on to suggest that he prefers Heathen Rome in many instances to Christian Rome—on account of the former's "boundless mixture of religions," and the latter's "godlessness," exemplified in its

What Blake and Schleiermacher alert us to is the potential connection between Romantic aesthetics (the Symbol in particular) and a "truer" religious apprehension. Though Romanticism is usually connected with the birth of so-called Liberal Theology, the connections between these two movements, though indubitably present, are not as causal as they are often made to seem. The Romantics—those, at any rate, concerned with the fate of the Christian faith—search for a way of "reading" the world and the Scriptures in a *symbolic* sense, where we are not left grasping after hidden correspondences and Realities behind the appearances, but where the appearances, the images themselves, situate us into a mode of reception and awareness. As we have noted, in his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant gives some indication of what it means to apprehend the divine in terms of the symbolic: "If a mere way of presenting [something] may ever be called cognition"—which Kant thinks it may; if "this cognition is a principle not for determining the object theoretically, as to what it is in itself, but for determining it practically, as to what the idea of the object ought to become for us and for our purposive employment of it"—then "all our cognition of God is...symbolic" (*COJ* A.K. 353).[78] In short, our religious apprehension involves the presentation of God, in relation to us. Thus, "religious reading" is akin to conversation (apprehension, attunement, response): to an exchange of embodies voices (*e-vocation*).

2. Deictics: Diction of the Deity?

It is not, however, a simple conversation that is hinted at here, it is an *engagement in transfigurative cognition*; a "momentous" event. The term normally used, in poetics, to describe the affective phenomenon of words and symbols is *deictics* [from Greek *deiktikos*, from *deiktos*=capable of proof, verbal form *deiknynai*=to show: showing or pointing out directly]. The deictic capacity of symbols and expressive language is the capacity (latent, presumably, in the word, or the linguistic "act") to transfigure the

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inhuman treatment of heretics. A true Romantic, Schleiermacher could not abide the inhuman, even (or, *especially*) when done in the name of God or "Truth."

[78] Kant goes on to suggest that "[w]hoever regards it as schematic—while including in it the properties of understanding, will, etc., whose objective reality is proved only in worldly beings—falls into anthropomorphism, just as anyone who omits everything intuitive falls into deism, which allows us to cognize nothing whatsoever, not even from a practical point of view" (*COJ* A.K. 353).

reader/hearer in the act of reading or hearing. For our purposes, a more useful term may be the lesser-known *elenctic* [from Greek *elegkhos*: pointing out or refuting a position indirectly, often by a short question and answer]. In reading elenctically, we appeal not to the linguistic act itself, but to the *semblance* of the linguistic act; "we appeal to models of human personality and human behaviour in order to construct referents for the pronouns, but we are aware that our interest...depends on the fact that it is something other than the record of an empirical speech act." Deictics and elenctics are "orientational" features of language "which relate to the situation of utterance" (Culler 1975, 165).

According to Culler, the verb tense which applies here is the *non-timeless present.* Deictics and elenctics, both direct and indirect forms of "refutation" refer not to "context" but to "pretext"—they force us to construct a fictional situation of utterance, "to bring into being a voice and a force addressed" (1975, 165). As with the invocational-prophetic mode of religious utterance (familiar to Blake, who makes a strong correlation between "the Poetic and the Prophetic"), these poetic forms *place actual discourse in a temporal present.*

Ultimately, deictics and elenctics are plurivocal—"the plethora of deictics prevents us from constructing a discourse situation and determining which are its prime constituents" (Culler 1975, 169); that is, we must never assume a stasis of situation, in place or time. Ultimately, deictics,

> provoke a more rewarding exploration of one's modes of ordering than is usual, and of course such exploration would not begin were it not for the initial conventions that enable us to construct fictive personae to satisfy the demands of internal coherence and relevance. (170)

This analysis presents a challenge to the poststructuralist proclamations about the death of the author or subject. Deictics and elenctics reveal that it may be more fruitful to speak of "the meaning that is produced by the attempt to construct a fictional persona"[79] than to drone on about the death of the subject. Semblance acts a mirror which reflects back upon the reader/subject, and calls forth an equally "fictitious" response, in the form of a

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[79] So argues Henri Meschonnic, in a critique of Julia Kristeva. Foucault, in his last works, seemed to be heading towards a "reappraisal" of his earlier proclamations about the "death of man"—in *The History of Sexuality* (especially Volume Three: *The Care of the Self* [1984]) and his essay of "Technologies of the Self," (1982) the concept of subjectivity becomes of critical concern.

persona, the semblance of a reading subject. The "self" is constructed in the speech-relationship, but it is a "self" subject to the situation itself, without any transcendent "reality" beyond the situation.[80] Deictics and elenctics serve to indicate a certain "displacement" of identity and meaning;[81] and one effective deictic or elenctic "tool" is *propinquity*: the bringing together of things usually disparate, into *Anknüpfungspunkten*: points of contact.

B. Myth and History

> Perhaps universal history is the history of the diverse intonation of a few metaphors.
>
> -- Jorge Luis Borges

This stance, and the corresponding work on myth I am proposing, goes hand in hand with an anti-foundationalist philosophical anthropology, whereby the "meaning" or "definition" of the human being lies not in some (hidden or revealed) essence, but rather in the "work" she does in order to come to terms with the "problem" of what she is. That is to say, the human being is neither *zoon politikon* (Aristotle), nor *homo ludens* (Huizinga), nor *animal symbolicum* (Cassirer)—these too readily hypostasize humanity.[82] Essences inevitably throw a backward glance to some distanced ideality of origins; questions of what the human being "is" will always speak of what he "was" once upon a time. At the same time, with regard to myth, origins are presumed to be "historical," a lost "history" upon which, for whatever reason, has developed a mythological "substrate"—obscuring the forgotten "truth."

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[80] Perhaps we can think of this, *mutatis mutandis*, as the resurrection of the old notion of the "soul," which Falck longs for, to combat the "lack" of "a notion of the subject which defines it in its relationship to apprehensible truth or reality" (Falck 1994, 29).

[81] "The importance of such deictics as technical devices in poetry can scarcely be overestimated, and in our willingness to speak of a poetic persona we recognize from the outset that such deictics are not determined by an actual situation of utterance but operate at a certain distance from it...A whole poetic tradition uses spatial, temporal and personal deictics in order to force the reader to construct a meditative persona" (Culler 1975, 165-167).

[82] Hans Blumenberg, in *On Myth* (*Arbeit am Mythos*, 1985) concurs, bracketing out the question of the foundations, whether in terms of philosophical anthropology or the origin of myths (see the "Introduction" by Robert M. Wallace, pp. xvi-xvii).

1. *Kairos* and *Chronos*

The search for origins, or temporal foundation, rests upon the assumption of chronological time. But myth, being "semblance in time," works in time conceived non-chronologically—time as *kairos*, where the stream of time appears at once "discontinuous" and as a "symbol" (semblance) of eternity, "inasmuch as the past and the future are *virtually contained in the present*" (Coleridge 1839, 437, my emphasis). The present, conceived *kairotically*, is a "virtual" reality—in that the "present" moment contains the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things future. Thus, every act, every thought, has immediate cross-temporal implications and ramifications. In the Scriptures, says Coleridge, "both facts and persons must of necessity have a twofold significance, a past and a future, a temporary and a perpetual, a particular and a universal application. *They must be at once portents and ideals*" (437, my emphasis).

Gerard Manley Hopkins, following Hamann and Wordsworth, saw the Incarnation—the *skandalon* of the "incredible condescension" of the Ideal made Real—as the Event which, for Christians, at any rate, refigures time, doing away, in the process, with the "trivialness of life" in its chronological (continually escaping) aspect. Such an event acts as a *déreglement du têmps perdu.* Yet *kairotic* time need not rest upon the Incarnation or the Resurrection, or the *Hijrah*, for that matter; it involves a "reading" of the present such that chronological time does not allow for. A *kairotic* reading of the historical Now "opens the horizon for past as well as for future" (Löwith 1949, 185). It renders the indifferent instant of chronological time "significant"; but *narratively significant*, that is, as part of a larger story or frame.[83]

For Aquinas it is the *aevum*,[84] the time of the angels, which stands betwixt the temporal and the eternal as a "third order of duration" in which the Absolute is *implicated*

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[83] Karl Löwith: "The significant now of the *kairos* qualifies the retrospect on the past and the prospect upon the future, uniting the past as preparation with the future as consummation" (Löwith 1949, 185).

[84] St. Thomas defines the *aevum* as "*mediam inter aeternitatem et tempus, utroque participans*" (Brabant 1937, 75). Frank Kermode, in *The Sense of an Ending*, notes the connection between Aquinas's *aevum*, Spinoza's *Duree*, and Bergson's *Durée*, the latter of which was instrumental in the development of the modernist aesthetic, Proust's especially.

in, but does not *exhaust* or *co-opt*, the Contingent, as is the case in most understandings of Epiphany (whether religious or "secular-modernist") or Ecstasy (again, whether divine, erotic, or both). Angels, for the Angelic Doctor, are liminal creatures: "they have an unchangeable being as far as concerns their nature and they have the possibility of change as regards their choice, their acts of intelligence, their affections and local movements" (Brabant 1937, 75). Thus the "time" of angels cannot be measured as "time" (i.e., chronologically) because it is not "subject to," nor does it "consist in" change; rather, it has "change joined with it, either actually or as a possibility" (75).[85] *Chronos* has a before and an after; *kairos* has no before and after, though these can be coadjunated with it. This does not mean that angels exist in an eternal present, but they are not bound by the ruthless causal and "progressive" line of past-present-future.

In the period leading up to, and immediately following, the Second World War, the issue of time became all the rage in theological thinking. Several works dealt specifically with the "problem" of time in Christianity, and with the meaning of *kairotic* time in particular. One such work is that of Frank Herbert Brabant, entitled *Time and Eternity in Christian Thought* (1937). Herein, Brabant discusses the *aevum* and *kairos*, but provides a necessary caveat: While, he suggests,

> [i]t is usual to repeat such phrases as 'The eternal as seen *in* the temporal,' 'God as known *in* the world' [,] I think such words must be used very cautiously; as we have seen, a great deal of this immanentist language comes from the Romantic movement and is excellent poetry, if not always good philosophy. (16)

Forgetting, for the moment, Brabant's (questionable) distinction between "good poetry" and "good philosophy" and corresponding judgment as to which is more useful to religious thinking, his point is well taken, and reflects back upon the warnings of Romantics like Goethe, Coleridge, and Schiller; i.e., that we must be wary of the slippery slope from incarnationalism to pure immanentism, where fusion is atemporal, ecstatic,

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[85] Jacques Maritain, in his study of Descartes (*Trois Réformations*, II: "L'Incarnation de l'Ange") charges Descartes with forgetting the limitations of the human mind, and applying Aquinas's angelic aspects to such. Brabant concurs, suggesting several differences between angelic and human time. We can "demythologize" this by accepting the *aevum* and kairotic time, not as *verum* of some "real" angelic sphere, but as an alternative sense of religious experience, including religious reading and language.

epiphanic, but perhaps not transfigurative. For Brabant, we do not need "a God in [or of] the gaps," that is, a transcendent Ideal which glues together those fragmentations of our worldly reality: "A normal Christian consciousness has always felt the mystery of what is known as well as the assurance of what is not known. It has had moods of strangeness and exile in the midst of what is familiar as well as the sense of being at home in the spiritual world beyond" (14). Symbols, myths, kairotic time; none of these are to be balms for present uncertainties, escapes from uncertainty, mystery, or even from burgeoning "reality." Rather, they act as figurative (and thus, as descriptive) and transfigurative elements, providing a mode of perception or of vision, an *attunement*, rather than a mode of explanation or *verification*.

2. Myth as Symbolic History

Myth may be re-conceived, not as deficient history (just as poetry is not deficient philosophy), nor as "anti-history," forsaking all claims to "descriptive truth about the world," but rather as the expressive revelation of historical semblance: history conceived as symbol (*Schein* and *Stimmung*), in which chronological procession (or progression) is subverted by *kairos*. In myth, we are not led to wonder about origins, or the temporal distance between past and present, but are rather enjoined to contemplate our own non-contemporaneity, our distance from a "real" present that is continually impinging upon us. Above all, myth is concrete, "realistic" in the sense that it is not embodied in abstract philosophical syllogisms or rationalistic logic, nor in mystical effusions of epiphany, but in "fictional stories" of concrete personalities actively confronting the problems of what they are.[86] These stories must be read *kairotically*, whereby there is a radical tension between the present and future—between the "already" and the "not-yet"—latent in the

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[86] Nicolai Berdiaev is "inclined to believe that the mysteries of the divine as well as of the human and world life, with all their complexity of historical destiny, admit of solution only through concrete mythology. The knowledge of the divine life is not attainable by means of abstract philosophical thought based upon the principles of formalist or rationalistic logic, but only by means of a concrete myth which conceives the divine life as a passionate destiny of concrete and active persons, the divine Hypostases" (Berdiaev 1936, 52).

stories themselves; coupled with a tension between the "past" of the story and the "present" of the reader's reception of the story. Or, even more concretely, this tension is played out in ritual, which is the active principle that "affirms the social body and gives to each individual within it a sense of being in which social and individual reality are one" (Richardson 1994, 77). Ritual is the "space" in which history gains "reality"—in Faust's words, where "heritage" becomes "task" (§ 682-3).

In (Catholic) Christian terms, the Real Presence of the Eucharist points to the cross-temporal connection of the believer's experience (individual and communal) with the historical events which constitute his or her redemption. The Eucharist is thus, as for Zwingli and Oecolampadius at Marburg, a "symbol," but not in the sense that they (in Luther's more mystical/proto-Romantic eyes, at any rate) seemed to assume. It is a ritual, like all rituals, whereby "the past event is itself manifested in the present act" (Marsh 1952, 149). Perhaps Luther was the only one who truly understood the significance, and importance of such: Real Presence being not ineffable mystery to be left aside as such, nor simple (signatory) allegory, but Symbol in the most concrete, *embodied* sense.[87]

John Marsh, in his work *The Fulness of Time* (1952), addends Brabant's distinction between *kairotic* and *chronatic* time, by suggesting that the *kairotic* rendering is *realistic*: the Scriptures, though virtually bereft of *chronatic* renderings of temporality, abound in "realistic" ones—"Times, that is to say, are known and distinguished not so much by their place in some temporal sequence as by their content; i.e., they are known realistically rather than chronologically" (21). That is to say, chronatic or chronological understandings of time do not do justice to "reality," which is never so stratified, in the human conception, as in such a processive rendering. *Chronos* is, like *kairos*, an ordering

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[87] Hans-Georg Gadamer, in "The Relevance of the Beautiful," sides with Luther at Marburg, and suggests that "if we really want to think about the experience of art, we can, indeed must, think along these lines: the work of art does not just refer to something, because what it refers to is actually there" (1986, 35). Father John Hardon, in a recent publication of *The Canadian Catholic News*, insists that no less than "[t]he future of the western world depends on the restoration of faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist"; only as such, he argues, can Christians recall the Hereness of Jesus Christ. One might wonder where non-Christians (or non-Catholics) fit here, but that may be to miss Father Hardon's point.

principle, but one which allows for much less latitude in terms of the "meaning" of events (as events are always "leading" to other events).[88] In *chronatic* time, the "content" of the events themselves has significance only in a linear temporal fashion, and can have little forward (and no backward) effect. Mythological, or *kairotic* time, being connected with ritual, is based of the biblical adage that "to every thing there is a season" (Marsh 1952, 20).[89] Thus, history (as myth) may be thought of "as made up of a number of *kairoi*—the opportunities offered to men, and of men's response (or lack of response) to them" (Marsh 118). But the concept of "seasonal" history must not be confused with history as "impermanence," because in the Christian understanding of history, the eternal itself, in becoming incarnate, gave permanence to all contingent events, reconceived *kairotically*. Moreover, we make a mistake in assuming that the temporal-eternal relationship is a temporal one, in itself; eternity neither succeeds nor precedes time, nor is it contemporaneous nor contained within it. Rather, the temporal gains "real" temporality, a "fulness of time," which projects backwards upon the past, and forward to the future.

The demonstration that a myth is not "historical" does not imply that the happening whose account it preserves is not "temporal" (Cullman)—or, to take this a step further, it is not to say that it is not "real" or "concrete"; and that it may be, in fact, more "realistic" than "history" as usually conceived (as Aristotle, and Oscar Wilde, say of "fiction" more generally). Yet myth is not to be opposed to history. As Coleridge asked, with Augustine before him: Why not both?

> Why not at once symbol and history? Or rather how should it be otherwise? Must not of necessity the first man be a symbol of mankind in the fullest force of the word symbol, rightly defined;—a sign included in the idea which it represents;—that is, an actual part chosen to represent the whole? (Coleridge 1905, 270)

Myth is *fictive*,[90] a semblance of history; or rather, it is *semblance in time.*

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[88] Chiron in *Faust*: "*[D]en Poeten bindet keine Zeit*" ("The poet is not bound by chronology") (§ 7426-33).

[89] The Greek *kairos* means "season," or more specifically, "*due* season."

[90] Fiction: from Latin *fictio, –onis*, from *fingere*=to form, to fashion. Synonyms: 1. tale, romance, fable; 2. fabrication, figment; 3. falsehood, fib. (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged*; note the progressively "negative" connotations.)

Kairotic or mythical time is also concrete in the sense that we have discussed above, regarding Schillerian Semblance. There is no call, in *kairos*, to escape the ravages of impermanence, the restless drift of contingency, by distancing oneself from all sensible particulars and temporal realities. On the contrary, thanks to the "content" of the transfigurative event, it is only through the things of the world, of time and sense, that we can have experience of the eternal. For the Christian, "[t]he historical order is that within which the eternal has revealed itself and in which it may be entered" (Marsh 1952, 145).

3. The Melody of History

"In a sense," says Inkling Charles Williams, "history is itself a myth, to the imaginative [person], engaged in considering these things, all is equally myth" (Manlove 235). The distinction between "history" and "myth" is a fluid one, at best; all history, even the most "objective" account of past events, will be "symbolic" in some fashion—will be, in other words, a semblance, or refiguration of the "reality" of a certain moment. For Berdiaev, all history is myth, and myth is a "reality," though a reality of a different sort than "empirical fact": "Myth is the story preserved in popular memory of a past event and transcends the limits of the external objective world, revealing an ideal world, a subject-object world of facts"—it is also, he suggests: "an expression of the primordial confusion of celestial and terrestrial," and thus, the primary mode of (the expression of) *incarnation*. (Berdiaev 1936, 21; 25) Myth (often in ritual) makes history a part of the everyday—in Nietzsche's terms, it is *Existenz* in the midst of history; the past, present, and future become part and parcel of the self, even constructing the self.

The German language has two distinct words for the English "history": *Geschichte* meaning a particular realm of being, historical existence; and *Historie* being the "scientific" study of the past. Given our postmodern skepticism regarding "scientific" claims to historical study, the former appears a much more useful term, applying, perhaps, to the study of history conceived in symbolic, or mythical terms, as well as to "the sphere of reality...in which we take part" (Grant 1995, 8-9). Perhaps, as George

Grant suggests: "What is fundamental about all human behaviour (including our understanding of it itself as a behaviour) is its *historicity*" (xvi, my emphasis).

Similarly, for theologian Rudolf Bultmann, the decisions made by the human being towards "authentic existence" can be made "*only* as a consequence of an encounter which takes place at the level of a man's own personal history" (Perrin 1969, 44). What is "merely" *historical* has to become *historic* in order to confront the human with the necessity for decision; for action. Bultmann distinguishes between history as *Historie*, with the corresponding adverb *historisch*, and history as "story,"[91] or *Geschichte* (along with its adverb *geschichtlich*). This distinction is crucial to an understanding of Bultmann's *Entmythologisierung*, and must be fleshed out further. *Historie*, as the "objective study of the past," even if such were possible, would be inadequate to any investigation of faith; no matter how well documented, *Historie* cannot serve as a basis for faith. Besides the fact that historical knowledge is always somewhat ambiguous[92] and relative, "factual" history cannot account for the irruption of *kairos*. Even Nietzsche[93] had, as an "antidote" for a surplus of the historical sense, what he termed the "suprahistorical," defined (in his essay on "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for

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[91] "History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us. There was a pattern, a plan, a movement, expansion, the march of democracy; it is a tapestry, a flow of events, a complex narrative, connected, explicable...The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries and then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections" (Barnes 1989, 240).

[92] Salman Rushdie, commenting on "Unreliable Narration in [his novel] *Midnight's Children*," says: "History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge. The reading of Saleem's unreliable narration might be, I believed, a useful analogy for the way in which we all, every day, attempt to 'read the world'" (Rushdie 1991, 25).

[93] Nietzsche, the pastor's son from Röcken, wrote his first work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), in an attempt to evoke what he saw as the true spirit of Goethe—the tempering of Dionysian revelry and spirit with Apollonian form and ordered grace. In Nietzsche's young eyes, the "carnival of gods and myths" concocted by the Romantics was dangerous and in need of repudiation. Whereas this first work focused on the function of myth, two years later an essay "On the Use and Disadvantages of History for Life" discussed the function of history. These were not mere abstruse speculations, but play a pivotal role in Nietzsche's critique of values—the main concern of his life's work, from the effusions of *Tragedy* to the rants of the autobiographical summa *Ecce Homo*.

Life") as "the powers which lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and stable" (UDH 43). The eternal and stable: this is the legacy of Apollo, ordering, stabilizing, circumscribing the Dionysian chaos of "pure" events and meaninglessness.[94]

Art and religion, along with all *figurative* phenomena, are suprahistorical not in being "universal," eternal, beyond duration and time, or "true" in the traditional sense, but in their ability to focus our perspective, giving style to the events of time, being the loom, as it were, upon which the reweaving of past events is accomplished. Perhaps history can be best approached through a "certain spiritual relation to the 'historical' within the sphere of historical knowledge which, as a result, becomes unworldly transfigured and transformed" (Berdiaev 1936, 38). But does history, as Berdiaev insists, really "demand faith"? If so, faithless, and therefore timeless is the dwarf who pesters Zarathustra and sees only two infinite paths leading from the "moment"—one extending into the past, the other into the future; he fails to see their *Zusammenstoss* in the moment. As Augustine would suggest, there are not three "times"—past, present, and future—but rather, three "presences": the present of the past ("memory"); the present of the present ("intuition"); and the present of the future ("expectancy"). (*Confessions* XI.20) Heidegger comments that it is only "he who does not remain an observer," but rather "*himself* is the moment [*selbst der Augenblick ist*], who acts into the future and thereby does not allow the past to fall away, but rather at the same time overtakes and affirms it" (Heidegger 1962, §329)—only for him, Janus, do past and future run against one another [*gegeneinander*].

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[94] Nietzsche seeks pathways which do not lead us back to the dead arbiters of morals (God, Reason) nor to a "weak nihilism" where, just because the center has not held, mere anarchy is loos'd (Yeats), and everything is permitted (Dostoevsky) ("Against 'meaninglessness' on the one hand, against moral value judgments on the other..."). De Man does some disservice to Nietzsche by suggesting that his concept of "ruthless forgetting"—"the blindness with which he throws himself into an action lightened of all previous experience"—"captures the authentic spirit of modernity." *Das Leben* is, for Nietzsche, "a temporal experience of human mutability, historical in the deepest sense of the term in that it implies the necessary experience of any present as a *passing* experience that makes the past irrevocable and unforgettable, because it is inseparable form any present or future" (de Man 1983, 148-9).

II. Partial Magic

A. Myth, Metaphor, Meaning

> The metaphor is perhaps one of man's most fruitful potentialities. Its efficacy verges on magic, and it seems a tool for creation which God forgot inside one of His creatures when He made him.
>
> -- José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art*

In symbolic terms, Franz Rosenzweig gives the corresponding formula for the circular process of the world as B=A, which is an equation of two unequals: "The content of the world and its form" (Rosenzweig 1970, 50). Importantly, this backwards-looking formula asserts the passivity of form and the activity of content; "to the concept it attributes a self-evident character, but the thing appears to it as a miracle." Thereby the world becomes self-contained in it, "a vessel filled to saturation, a cosmos abounding in configurations" (50). We can conceive of metaphor, in similar fashion, as a "unit of relationship" making a statement of "B is A" or, as Frye suggests—in order to evoke the hypothetical aspect of metaphor—"let x be y." This is contrary to ordinary "logical" common-sense or "descriptive" reasoning, where "A is B" (or "B is A") is a statement of *identity*. Contrariwise, in the metaphor "two things are identified while each retains its own form" (Frye 1963, 123). The identification *with* is as crucial as the identification *as*. This is metaphor in its original, "nonallegorical sense" of *metapherein*: "to transfer" (related to the originary meaning of symbol [*symbolon*: a token of exchange]). "The *essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing* in terms *of another*" (Lakoff 1980, 5). We are back to *Schein*, but now *Schein* has become *Dasein*, or *in-die-Welt-Sein* ["being-there; being-with-the-world].

There is an irreducible connection between metaphor and myth. The latter can be described as a structuration, over time, of compressed meanings. That is, any myth, or mythological tale, can bear manifold readings, "because the peoples who have lived and used the story have, over time, joined all those meanings into it" (Rushdie 1991, 48). We can say that it is the wealth or surplus of meaning that is the secret of the power of myth, and is what distinguishes myth from "dogma":

> Against the dogmatic mode of thought, with its claim to homogeneous validity in universal space and universal time – in other words, with precisely what Platonism had invented, by virtue of its introduction of the 'Ideas' as timeless and placeless validities, and as the imitation of which, as far as the claim to rigorous truth is concerned, one can regard the dogmatic mode of thought – against this mode of thought, the characteristic differentiation of the mythical 'significances' stands out as a structuring that is opposed to the intolerable indifference of space and time. (Blumenberg, 1985, 97)

Of course, like history, myths can be and have been interpreted dogmatically, and often allegorically, but either way by referring to a single voice or truth "behind the veil." Frye counters traditional work on myth, suggesting that "because myths are stories,

> what they 'mean' is inside them, in the implications of their incidents. No rendering of any myth into conceptual language can serve as a full equivalent of its meaning. A myth may be told and retold: it may be modified or elaborated, or different patterns may be discovered in it; and its life is always the poetic life of a story, not the homiletic life of some illustrated truism. (1957, 32)

Frye's concept of "displacement" helps us to rethink the "meaning of myth" in terms of metaphor, fiction, and figuration more generally. Aristotle defined *mythos* as *dianoia* in movement, and, correspondingly, *dianoia* as *mythos* in stasis. *Dianoia* is "the secondary imitation of thought," or a *mimesis logou*, concerned with *typical thought*—"with the images, metaphors, diagrams, and verbal ambiguities out of which specific ideas develop" (Frye 1963, 83). Thus, what Vico might call "poetic truth" is *dianoetic*. Myth takes *dianoia* into the river of time, but this aspect is often missed, leading to a focus on the (static) meaning of a myth or symbol, rather than the meaning of a "*moving* body of imagery" (83). In "Mimesis and Representation," Paul Ricouer (1991) musters up the polysemic resources of mimesis in a full-scale critique of the "anti-representational" turn of the present day. Focusing particularly on the connotations of "creative imitation" (what he calls $mimesis_2$), Ricouer connects mimesis with *mythos*—a pre-Platonic term used by Aristotle to refer to the act of bringing together the incidents into a unique and complete action: *synthesis tôn pragmâton*.[95]

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[95] This relates not only to the magic realist trope of *propinquity*, but also to Victor Turner's Borgesian definition of metaphor as "a mode of effecting instantaneous fusion of two separated realms of experience into one illuminating, iconic, encapsulating image" (Turner 1967, 25).

Frye uses the term "displacement" to refer to the devices used in coming to terms with "the presence of a mythical structure in realistic fiction" (Frye 1963, 136)—or, to transpose, in *reading history in terms of semblance*. According to Frye's typology, myth and naturalism are extremes of literary design; they can be bridged only through what he calls "romance"—meaning, not so much the historical mode, as "the tendency to displace myth in a human direction"; a tendency that can be found in love as well as Romantic poetry. Yet, in contrast to "realism," which seeks to overcome "myth" *in toto*, the "romantic" tendency, while displacing the structure of myth, "conventionalizes content in an idealized direction." In displacement, allegorization and dogmatization give way to analogy, "significant association," and "incidental accompanying imagery" (137). Salman Rushdie speaks of metaphor in terms of *migration*, again hearkening back to its Greek root as a mode of "transference" or "bearing across": metaphors bespeak migration, the crossing of frontiers, where the view is, as Coleridge intuited, anything but clear. (Rushdie 1991, 278-9)[96]

Symbolists and Modernists know of this "tendency," the *metaphysics* (Poggioli) *or algebra* (Ortega) *of the metaphor*, where the metaphor involves a *new image*: metaphor, image, and symbol being "synonymous concepts" (Poggioli 1968, 196). The analogy upon which it is based "is a hermetic and occult affinity [...in which] every interior link is eliminated by means of a fantastic process tending to confound dimensions and categories." In the course of this process, the image aims at making itself "an emblem or hieroglyphic, cipher or seal [... it] tends to divorce the idea and the figure, to annul in the last-mentioned any reference to a reality other than its own self." (This is to destroy, in some fashion, Plato's water-jug, so diligently balanced on our heads for so long.) Rimbaud, in praise of Quixote, the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, says: "I have habituated myself to simple hallucination; I have clearly seen a mosque in place of a gasworks," while Mallarmé "cancel[s] the word 'like' from the dictionary." Russian Imagist Vadim Shershenevich: "the image ought to devour meaning"; in the overturning of the word, "there ought to gush forth new imagery." Renato Poggioli sums up these effusions: "Ideas like this come from a metaphorical conception of language, considered

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96 "Migration," says Rushdie, "offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age...Migrants—borne-across humans—are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples" (1991, 278-9).

not as the *figuration*, but as the *transfiguration*, of the real" (197, my emphasis). Furthermore, the search for new (or *transrational*) languages, "especially for a speech which aspires to make itself the verbal equivalent of music, which attempts to elevate metaphor to symbol and myth, is perhaps the most striking inheritance left to modern poetry by French symbolism and its numerous offshoots" (198).

But Poggioli and company may have overstated the effect of this rupture, thereby reaffirming the designative function of language and poetry. For metaphors create worlds—they are as *constructive* as *disruptive*—by virtue of the fact that, rather than being mere accretions or deviant aspects of language,[97] they are "omnipresent principle and constitutive form" (I. A. Richards), and primary elements of structuration: they structure our conceptual system(s) itself, which in turn feeds back into, or transfers,[98] our old metaphors, reconfiguring them. Though metaphors-as-words may not change reality, metaphors-as-conceptual-buttresses and catalysts do change *what is real for us*, affecting *"how we perceive the world and act upon those perception"* (Lakoff 1980, 145-6).

The "magic" of the metaphor is what might be called a "partial magic"; it does not involve "simultaneous" transfiguration; the "meaning" of metaphors is always a temporal, fluid meaning, one which, with the passage of time, serves to enlarge logical and imaginative space within language games and social discourses.[99] Metaphors can be *lyrical*, but they need not be interpreted on a lyrical basis; in fact, a lyrical, or synchronic-

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[97] "The idea that metaphor is just a matter of language and can at best only describe reality stems from the view that what is real is wholly external to, and independent of how human beings conceptualize the world—as if the study of reality were just the study of the physical world. Such a view of reality—so-called objective reality—leaves out human aspects of reality, in particular the real perceptions, conceptualizations, motivations, and actions that constitute most of what we experience. But the human aspects of reality are what matters to us [they are most *frag-würdigste*], since different cultures have different conceptual systems" (Lakoff 1980, 146). This seems a provisional statement towards a "true" pluralism, contra the "reality-centric" universalism of Hick and others.

[98] I. A. Richards, an early battler against anti-metaphorical biases in criticism and theory (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1936), equates metaphors with psychological "transference"—so that a command of metaphor will go deep into "the control of the world that we make for ourselves to live in" (1936, 135).

[99] Rorty: "On a Davidsonian view of language, metaphors do not have meanings. That is to say that they have no place in the language-game which has been played prior to their production. But they may, and indeed do, have a crucial role in the language-games which are played afterwards. For, by being literalized, becoming 'dead' metaphors, they enlarge logical pace" (1991a, 124).

epiphanic reading of metaphor does not uncover the potential power of such. Rather, metaphors can be seen as *existential* or *phenomenological*. As such, imagery expressed does not aspire to (visual) similitude of a presence, but to existential evocation of an event, or rather, a situation.[100] Accepting metaphor as a vital source of "belief" is to abandon the point of view of the distanced "spectator," as well as the ideal of the mimetic mirror; to break *speculum* as well as *specula*. As in myth, in metaphor we are confronted with "unreal" images, new configurations, and diverse intonations, which point away from "correspondence" with the world "as it is," but do not just gesture "meaninglessly." Rather, myths—metaphors become ritual stories—subvert the designative assumption of language, and invoke particular instances as having potential universal (or "typical") significance. Myths are not, as they are often conceived, preliminary movements towards a lost unity or harmony; myths act as melody, reconfiguring our rigidified concepts about the world. Their temporal aspect is kairotic and repetitive, not organic and progressive. There is no longing for an "ending" in myth; myth revels in the disclosure of the "imminence of a revelation not yet produced"—which is what Borges has called *the* "aesthetic reality." (Borges 1988, 5) "Meaning" is *deferred* in metaphor, and in myth (as in music); static closure gives way to unconcealment—not as a progressive disrobing of truth, but through a continually varying repetition[101]—of a reconfigured sense of reality. Thus is the assumed reality brought into question: *mythologized.*

Paul de Man reads in allegory and irony a "common demystification of an organic world postulated in a symbolic mode of analogical correspondences or in a mimetic mode of representation in which fiction and reality could coincide" (de Man 1983, 222). But this is to miss the (partial) "magic" of the metaphor, and of myth. As in the Romantic Symbol, the myth/metaphor *is the message.* This does not mean that

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[100] See Milan Kundera's essay on Kafka's use of "Metaphor as Phenomenological Definition" (1995).

[101] Blumenberg: "Myths are stories that are distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core and by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation. These two characteristic make myths transmissible by tradition: Their constancy produces the attraction of recognizing them in artistic or ritual representation as well [as in recital], and their variability produces the attraction of trying out new and personal means of presenting them. It is the relationship of 'themes and variation,' whose attractiveness for both composers and listeners is familiar from music. So myths are not like 'holy texts', which cannot be altered by one iota" (1985, 34).

"conceptual" thought is to be eschewed, as for Heidegger and sundry poststructuralist thinkers. Though the Platonic legacy has placed an inordinate amount of importance on the concept *vis-à-vis* metaphor, conceptualization is an inevitable aspect of the "hardening" of metaphors into meaning, and cannot be done away with. As Sarah Kofman writes, "It seems to me more Nietzschean [i.e., better, or more philosophically perspicuous] to write conceptually in the knowledge that a concept has no greater value than a metaphor and is itself a condensate of metaphors...than to write metaphorically while denigrating the concept and proposing metaphor as the norm" (Kofman 1993, 3). Heidegger erred in making Nietzsche a precursor in terms of the "overcoming of conceptual thinking." Concepts may be simplistic, and often useless, but they can, as hardened metaphors, contribute to life[102] (just as "history" can contribute to *das Leben*). Concepts are "symbols [not *Schein* but *Bildzeichen*] for impressions that often recur and arise when people live a long time under similar conditions [i.e., within specific language games]" (Winchester 1994, 44). They may not be "true," but we should not therefore seek some "truer" (prelapsarian) "preconceptual thinking," as does Heidegger. The falsity of truth and conceptual representation (i.e., mimetic or designative representation) does not mean the collapse of conceptual meaning (or metaphorical "magic"). For "reality can have metaphorical content; that does not make it less real" (Rushdie 1978, 240); nor less open to "conceptualization." Some, such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, have argued that the very conceptual systems by which we live (and by which our lives are made "meaningful") are, in fact, largely metaphorical. According to Rorty's reading of Donald Davidson's view of language, it is precisely the condensation, the cooling and hardening of fluid metaphors, which allows for the enlarging of logical space.[103]

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[102] "Words are sounds designating concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite images designating frequently recurring and associated sensations, groups of sensations" (*BGE* [268]).

[103] "[M]etaphor is an essential instrument in the process of reweaving our beliefs and desires; without it, there would be no such thing as a scientific revolution or cultural breakthrough, but merely the process of altering the truth-values of statements formulated in a forever unchanging vocabulary" (Rorty 1991a, 124). Natural historian Stephen Jay Gould concurs: "When we are caught in conceptual traps, the best exit is often a change in metaphor—not because the new guideline will be truer to nature (for neither the old nor the new metaphor lies 'out there' in the woods), but because we need a shift to more fruitful perspectives, and metaphor is often the best agent of conceptual transition" (Gould 264).

B. Supreme Fictions: *The Truth of Masks*

> There is, in fact, a world of poetry indistinguishable from the world in which we live, or I ought to say, no doubt, from the world in which we shall come to live, since what makes the poet the potent figure that he is, or was, or ought to be, is that he creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and that he gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it.
>
> -- Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*

According to the American poet Wallace Stevens, the central problem of poetry, and of all art, is *the problem of reality.* (Stevens 1951, 115) The fragility of *Weltbilder*, or world-pictures, reflects an unsurety about the "truth"; or rather, an uncertainty as to *the links between the imagination and what we often call "reality."* For Stevens, their interdependence is essential: "It is not only that the imagination adheres to reality, but, also, that reality adheres to the imagination" (33). As we know (and as Rushdie's Saleem Sinai informs us): "[w]hat's real and what's true aren't necessarily the same." In fact, perhaps the "truth" of art lies, not in its capacity for reflection or mimesis, but precisely in its power to break the monopoly of established reality. Not to *reflect*, but to *define* what is *real.*[104] The "disappearance" of reality, so lamented by many of our century, is perhaps rather a maladjustment to the decline of a mode of representation, whereby imagination is, at best, a "second-order" reality (and even as such, in our post-Freudian era, is imagination considered "mimetic" of a second-order reality, i.e., a "mental" or "psychological" reality).

Rather, with Oscar Wilde, may we speak of "the truth of masks"—or, to avoid confusion, the "reality" of masks. Art, particularly Occidental figuration, revels in the

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[104] "In the rupture, which is the achievement of the aesthetic form, the fictitious world of art appears as true reality" (Marcuse). Tolstoy, in *War and Peace*, creates a virtual history; he is not interested in an exact account of the events of the Napoleonic invasion of Russia, nor even in the evolution of particular characters and their rôles, but is rather interested in history as a dimension of human existence. (Kundera 238) Frye, in *Fables of Identity*, speaks of Stevens's conception of the transfigurative capacities of poetry: "A nature is created in what it says" (1963, 240). And Albert Thibaudet: "The genius of the novel makes the possible come to life; it does not revive the real" (*Reflexions sur le roman*, 1938); André Gide, in the "Journal to *The Counterfeiters*," approves.

reality of masks: "To give the imaginary the formal guarantee of the real, while leaving this sign [or symbol] the ambiguity of a double object, at once verisimilar and false, is a constant operation in all Western art" (Barthes 1973, 51).[105] This process, which relates to the so-called "anagogic perspective" in literature, occurs when the speaker or poet attempts to speak from the circumference rather than from the center of reality. (Frye 1963, 122) Anagogic criticism is the *dianoia* of figuration breaking away from the *mimesis logou* and to *Logos*, the "shaping word" (or words) which is both "descriptive" reason and "creative act"—the work of *supreme fictions*. It "is usually found in direct connection with religion, and is to be discovered chiefly in the more uninhibited utterances of poets themselves" (120). Transforming the philosopher Vaihinger's "reunion with reality," Kermode calls this process, if not "making reality," then quite simply "making sense," or "making human sense" (Kermode 1967, 41).[106]

Though we may not want to go so far as Santayana, when he proclaims that, in fact, "[p]oetry raised to its highest power is then identical with religion grasped in its inmost truth" (Falck 1994, 115),[107] the parallels should, by this time, be obvious enough to allow for a fruitful interchange between the two often disparate realms. That is to say

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[105] "In the West...there is no art that does not point a finger to its own mask" (Barthes 1973, 51).

[106] It is true that Kermode warns that we must, at all times, "remember the status of fictions," however "supreme," and goes on to posit a distinction between *fiction* and *myth*, the former being, it would seem apolitical: "you neither rearrange the world to suit them, nor test them by experiment, for instance in gas-chambers" (1967, 41). While the wariness is well-taken, the distinction seems to me to be rather facile, and naïve, in the sense that fictions *are* political, and, being akin to metaphor, have great effect upon our creation of the worlds in which we dwell, even when we know of them as "fictive." Kermode also suggests that "myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional consent. Myths make sense in terms of a lost order of time [*illud tempus*]; fictions, if successful, make sense of the here and now [*hoc tempus*]" (39). But, after the temporal investigations of Modernism, how can we sustain such a distinction?

[107] Or the later Nietzsche, who, attacking from the other side, suggests the same congruence, even while intending something quite different than Santayana: The world of Christianity, Nietzsche declaims, is "a purely fictional world [and] neither its morality nor religion has any point of contact with reality" (*AC* [15]). Earlier in his writings, before his increasingly bitter turn against religion (and fiction) this would be a justification, perhaps for both (see *WP* [616]; for he did once say, contra the above: "What can be thought must certainly be a fiction."

that, following Stevens's notion of "supreme fictions," we may begin to apply particular hermeneutical tools and strategies, normally reserved to aesthetics or poetics, to an investigation of the "meaning" and "truth" of religious language; and the problem of "religious realism" in particular If myth *is* indeed a structuration of history—"the unconceptualized undertrussing or complement supporting bodies of human statement and conveyed in them precisely in so far as this undertrussing remains an unconceptualized but somehow intrinsically coherent whole" (Ong 1962, 134)—and is, at the same time (by way of illusion) the structural element in literature, "literature as a whole [being] a 'displaced' mythology'" (Frye 1963, 1)—then we can say that *any attempt to disconnect myth from "historical reality" is a denial of the displacement already taken place in the language of myth and symbol, and thus takes myth away from the world of human being and into an ideality of origins without human significance.*

Colin Falck concurs, but privileges less particular modes of reading and reception than particular "works" themselves, and those which we deem to be "idealistically credible or real," rather than "those which our better judgement enables us to see to be superficial, sentimental, frivolous or fantastic" (1994, 143). Kermode, in *The Sense of an Ending*, finds it incredible that no-one has thus far attempted to relate a theory of literary fictions to a theory of "fictions" in a more general sense. This is particularly odd, given the Nietzschean development of certain Kantian premises and Romantic insights, and the former's "aesthetics of truth," by which we (post-)moderns are left saying, with Wallace Stevens, that "the final belief must be in a fiction" (Kermode 1967, 36). Of course, there is danger inherent in any attempt to disengage "truth" from "reality" per se; but then, what is required is an investigation of the meaning of "fiction" in terms of language and belief, what is required is *work on myth.* In the following section, I will briefly discuss the tenets of one particular literary style—and its capacity as epistemological theory and hermeneutical tool—which has risen alongside of (though out of a greatly dissimilar context to) poststructuralist and deconstructionist temporizing on the collapse of "reality" and "truth" in a world of fading Modernist dreams.

III. A Magic of the Quotidian

> There is a necessary relation between the fictions by which we order our world and the increasing complexity of what we take to be the 'real' history of that world. It is worth remembering that the rise of what we call literary fiction happened at a time when the revealed, authenticated account of the beginning was losing its authority.
>
> -- Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*

A. *The Alchemist in the City*[108]

Mary Hesse has written about the "worlds" of metaphor: "imaginative symbolic worlds that have relations with natural reality other than those of predictive interest...utopias, fictional exposés of the moral features of the world by caricature and other means, and all kinds of myths symbolic of our understandings of nature, society and the gods" (Hesse 1966, 39). We act on metaphors (and, certainly, on myths) as much, if not more, than we act on "concepts": both structure our beliefs and conceptions (and perceptions), and thus create—or, perhaps, *crystallize*[109]—our *reality*. Metaphors and myths are thus quite "literal," in the sense that they are very much *in and of the world.*

At the same time, as I have tried to suggest above, there is a "magic" to symbols and metaphors which cannot be gainsaid; and which is, in fact, the basis of the power of myth and symbol to capture our attention and imagination. The "poet as magician" has a long pedigree in literature and poetics; Goethe's Faust praises the "bold magician" who "seeks out others; with open-handed generosity he enables all of them to see whatever miracles they wish" (§ 6436-8). Pater speaks of the "romantic spirit" in terms of the necessary "strangeness" of creation, and the Romantic "desire...for a beauty born of unlikely elements, by a profound alchemy, by a difficult initiation, by the charm which

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[108] An early poem (1865) by Hopkins. Since Plato's banishment of the artists from his ideal *Republic*, "the Poet and the City" has come to signify the tension between aesthetics and ethics, or poetry and philosophy, or poetry and politics. Goethe let the Poet return to the City, but under the guise of the magus, or alchemist; with the progressive "objectification" of natural science (and its consequent sundering from religion) language—the poetic word—became the material of the Romantic alchemist.

[109] "The true 'creation of the world' [*Weltwerdung*] is not a secularization ('becoming worldly') in the sense of the transformation of something pre-existing but rather, as it were, the primary crystallization of a hitherto unknown reality" (Blumenberg, 1985, 47).

wrings it even out of terrible things; and a trace of distortion, of the grotesque, may perhaps linger, as an additional element of expression, about its ultimate grace" (Pater 1987, 247-8); and Hopkins praises the response to all that is "counter, original, spare, strange."

Alchemy is indeed a useful image, as it hearkens to an age before the final sundering of magic from reality, and of religion from science and rationality. The word "magic" itself derives from the Old Persian *magus*: a priest or "priest-scientist." For a priest-scientist like Paracelsus, magic is above all a method for gaining insight into heavenly and earthly things, not by way of sorcery but by an intuitive or extralinguistic knowledge gained by the grace of God and the results of concentrated contemplation, revealing "the great hidden inter-relationships between God, the world, and man" (Paracelsus 1979, 256). Faust becomes disillusioned with his purely rational attempts at supreme knowledge. His disillusionment, and corresponding lament ("Nature, filled with mystery even in the light of day, will not let her veil be snatched away" [§672-3]) is what sets the plot of Goethe's epic drama in motion. Faust wants to snatch the veil of *maya* (illusion) from the world, in order to "get an insight into many a mystery" (§377-9).

Faust's failure is the failure of epiphanic Romanticism, soaked through with Enlightenment hubris: mystery, myth, and illusion become veils which may (or must) be "snatched away" to uncover a Real Presence, a piece of Eternity in Time. "Magic" is thus, like science, but of a second-order status, a mode of conquering mystery, of deconstructing illusion; *magic, so conceived, is the balm for disillusion*. But what if "magic" is a more effective mode of apprehending "reality"—not by virtue of drawing back the veil, but by presenting a multiplicity of veils, so that we are not beguiled by the ruse of a single Real Presence, but focus rather on the relativity of the reality we perceive and create, in the act of perceiving. Magic as, not just an adjective, but also an action, directing, or crystallizing reality. Suchwise, to be magical is not merely to be mysterious—it is the creation of a new reality from the diachronic conjoining of disparate elements.[110] Magic is not intrinsic *within* reality, but is the "work" on the world, through the art of vertiginous combinations; the recognition of infinite ambiguities in every word, phrase and line of text, and all this in temporal perspective.

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[110] The alchemical term for this process is *égrégare*.

1. The Worldliness of Texts

Paul de Man, together with many contemporary critics, laments the "decline" of the novel, from the days of Cervantes, Rabelais, Sterne and Swift to the (degenerate) "realism" of the nineteenth century. But what these critics miss is that, whereas writers like James and Conrad excluded the supernatural from their works because such would be a denial of the marvelousness of the everyday, the tack of early "realists" like Cervantes was quite different. Cervantes' was a *partial* magic, a critical magic, as it were. The *Quixote* is a supremely *realistic* work, but it is also a work full of *irrealism*—a subtle and insinuated (elenctic, one might say) distortion of reality.[111] In the *Quixote* we are faced with a disillusioned world, emerging from the "comfort" of chivalry and myths, in which a "mad" knight does battle against a dying era, gaining at once our laughter and our tears. Cervantes engages in *partial* magic, whereby the text, by impinging on, and disrupting (extratextual) categories—of the poetic and the real, the reader and the read, fiction and life—*acts very much upon the world in which it is unleashed.*

Descending from the *Quixote*,[112] magic realism places the alchemist squarely within the walls of the City: the *worldliness of texts* is a guiding principle of the magic realist aesthetic. If Surrealism was the last gasp, the hangover as it were, of Romanticism (Herbert Read) then magic realism is Surrealism with a human (or Third World, or "post-colonial") face.[113] Though Breton tried to move his movement away from the "happy

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[111] "Cervantes sought to set right the balance between the imagination and reality. As we come closer to our own times in *Don Quixote* and as we are drawn together by the intelligence common to the two periods, we may derive so much satisfaction from the restoration of reality as to become wholly prejudiced against the imagination. This is to reach a conclusion prematurely, let alone that it may reach a conclusion in respect to something as to which no conclusion is possible or desirable" (Frye 1963, 9-10). It is, in fact, to forget the tragedy of disillusionment that, for Dostoevsky, Heine, and Kafka, among others, is the key to an understanding of the *Quixote*.

[112] It is surely not incidental that magic realism was birthed in Latin America, given the inescapable effect of the *Quixote* on Iberian conceptualization, criticism, and literature.

[113] "For the first time in modern history, the centre of gravity of formal creation leaves Europe, and a truly worldwide literary system—the *Weltliteratur* dreamed of by the aged Goethe—replaces the narrower European circuit" (Moretti 233). As Carlos Fuentes puts it: "The Empire writes back!" (From a lecture on "The Imagination and Historical Change," given at McGill University, April 5, 1995).

nihilism" of Tristan Tzara's Dada, Surrealists remained uncompromisingly European (French, even), and, with few exceptions, were quite unconcerned with the migrancy of displaced, colonized, or so-called "developing" peoples. The Shock of the New may have been revelatory to jaded Europeans, but to those already shattered by centuries of imposed "newness," it can provide little, either by way of disruption or comfort. Akin to Romanticism, magic realism is not a poetics so much as a "state of affairs": an attempt to describe a reality already disrupted—already *maravilloso*—rather than an attempt, through art, to disrupt a stable "reality."

To proclaim the "worldliness" of texts is to temper the hermeticism, not only of European Surrealists, but also of postmodern alchemists who assume, and seem to want to uphold, a dramatic opposition between speech and text, a distinction which, in Edward Said's view, is "misleading and grossly simplified" (Said 1983, 165).[114] Rather, "[t]exts have ways of existing, both theoretical and practical, that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstances, time, place, and society—in short, they are in the world, and hence are worldly" (165). Said wonders whether it is not possible to grapple with the problems of literary language without cutting such off from "the more plainly urgent [problems] of everyday worldly language?" (166) Is it possible, in other words, to heal the "great divide" (Adorno) opened up in our century between a modernist aesthetic and mass culture, while remaining "worldly" enough to sustain a critical capacity in the face of both? Said's approach is thoroughly Wittgensteinian: language, even written language, is regulated by its "wordly use," not by "abstract prescription" or "speculative freedom" (169). Above all, he concludes,

> language stands between man and a vast indefiniteness; if the world is a gigantic system of correspondences, then it is verbal form—language in actual grammatical use—that allows us to isolate from among these correspondences the denominated object. (170)

Like memory, language becomes at once an *aesthesis* and an *askesis*, a limiting and ordering phenomenon; thus truly "expressive" in the Herderian sense.

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[114] It must be noted that this criticism hardly applies to Derrida; but the "sins" of the children must always reflect back upon the father. Said cites, in particular, Michael Riffaterre's "The Self-Sufficient Text" (1983, 166). See Rushdie, "The Location of *Brazil*" (1991, 118); Steiner, *Real Presences* (1989); and, of course, the diatribes of Camille Paglia, *Sex, Art, and American Culture* (1992) and *Vamps and Tramps* (1994).

Texts themselves, particularly in times of political or socio-cultural unrest, never appear in a vacuum: "the way they operate in a society can be cannot be separated from politics, from history" (Rushdie 1991, 92). Indeed, for every text, there is not only a *pretext*, but a *context*. Wallace Stevens again: "Reality is life and life is society and the imagination and reality; that is to say, the imagination and society are inseparable" (Stevens 1951, 28). Said points to the Zaharite theory of the mediaeval Muslim scholar Ibn Hazm as one "considerably articulated thesis" on dealing with a text as an event in the world—as a significant form in which "worldliness, circumstantiality..., sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are incorporated *in the text*, and are an infrangible part of its capacity for conveying and producing meaning" (Said 1983, 171, my emphasis). Signification exists, not below or behind the text, as a mystery, but takes place at the level of the textual object—*the significant form*—itself. The text's *reality* (what Said calls its "situation") *is the placing of itself in the world*, with the corresponding interplay of speech and reception, and between verbality and textuality; in short, in the essential tension between truth and fiction/semblance.

2. Magic Mirrors: Strange Presences and Imaginative Truths

In speaking of his "recreation" of India from a distance—his own *imaginary homeland*—Salman Rushdie says that he tried to make it as "imaginatively true" as possible, knowing that "imaginative truth" is "simultaneously honourable and suspect" (1991, 10-11). Rushdie's theory of fiction is based on a trope of broken mirrors—of *fragmentation*—in which it is the shards themselves which best reflect our situation in the world. This conclusion is based on a correlation between virtual or imaginative history (fiction) and human memory, whose fragments acquire greater status *precisely because they are remains*: "fragmentation [makes] trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane [acquire] numerous qualities" (12).

But Rushdie prompts us further, for the broken glass functions not merely as a vanity mirror, like the unbroken one, for purposes of nostalgia and winsome reminiscence: it is also a "useful tool with which to work in the present" (1991, 12). We do not need a mirror to "reflect" our world(s) back to us. We do not need "clear sight." We do not need "harmony"; for we, as human beings, do not "receive things whole." We are "not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured

perceptions" (12). *Per speculum in aenigmate.* We are "partial beings," in all the senses this term connotes (i.e., fractured as well as "non-objective" or "politicized" or ideologically motivated).

> Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to the death. (Rushdie 1991, 12)

Pace Marx—who insisted that philosophers have been intent on *interpreting the world*, when the point is *to change it*—description, interpretation, or representation *is itself a political act*; and, as any ideologist or imagologist knows, a necessary first step towards changing the world. One route this redescription takes is in the disconfirmation of our sense of time and history, as *chronos*—a progressive and causal succession of discrete events. Fiction's task, and myth's bounty, is the representation of a "strange present."[115] In fiction, as figuration, the narration of the present appears at times grotesque, as it *is* a fragmentation of a larger (diachronic, or kairotic) reality.

Jens Kruse found in Goethe's *Faust* a present in which "past and future participate simultaneously"—a present (like the *pressant* of *Finnegan's Wake*) that is compressed, and always on the verge of disintegration. Ernst Bloch, who defended the expressionist and post-expressionist aesthetic against Georg Lukács in the Frankfurt School debates, developed a thesis regarding a similar phenomenon, what he called the *non-contemporaneity* [*Ungleichzeitigkeit*] of certain moments, certain presences—in which the distance between peoples and the subsequent rift in communication is based on a different sense of the present moment or season (*kairos*). Bloch's thesis provides for the possibility of situations of non-contemporaneous or non-synchronous present, where in Foucault's words, "the masks of previous epochs return": a present made more *real* through dilation, distillation, diachrony. "Not all people exist in the same Now" (Bloch 4), even if, and increasingly so, they are living in the same Here.

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[115] Rushdie evokes this instance with another metaphor, this time of a movie screen (or a Rivera or Izquierdo mural, perhaps), where the closer one gets to the screen "reality," the more fragmented and disunified one's vision becomes: "tiny details assume grotesque proportions [until] it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality" (1991, 13). Proximity begets, not clarity, but *approximation*.

B. *Kairotic* Love

> Love...is intermediate between the divine and the mortal...and interprets between gods and man, conveying and taking across [*metapherein*] to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, to men the commands [*kerygma*] and replies of the gods; [Love] is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them.
>
> -- Diotima to Socrates, in Plato's *Symposium*

The "power" in texts resides not so much in authorial authority as in the fact that texts "compel attention away from the world," (Said 1983, 178) while drawing attention to the gap the text creates, in the act of this sundering. That is to say, the rhetoric of semblance undoes, or subverts the divide between *retention* and *representation*, confusing the two, and thus playing them off against one another. *Verum et factum convertuntur.*

"Fiction" is the primary mode of the transformation of *chronos* to *kairos*; of mere successiveness, to what has been described by various writers as a state similar to the experience of *love*: "the erotic consciousness which makes divinely satisfactory sense out of the commonplace person" (Kermode 1967, 46). *Kairos* "establishes concord" not only with the past, with "origins," but also with the future, with "end." The connection of fiction with love is not a gratuitous one, but is based on a particular understanding of art, where care [*Sorge*] and *cortesia* play a significant rôle.[116] For Falck, all art, and particularly, in our present context, literature, can be defined by its capacity to hold our attentiveness "for its expressive qualities alone" (Falck 1994, 72). As Walter Benjamin once said of Kafka, even if he did not pray, "he still possessed in the highest degree what Malebranche called 'the natural prayer of the soul': attentiveness" (Benjamin 1969, 134). And for Heidegger, as we have seen, that which is most questionable [*fragwürdigste*] may be just what is most worthy of thought and careful attention [*frag-würdigste*].

Falck laments religion's tendency to emphasize the negatives—the world-denying and joyless, renunciatory, *ascetic*, aspect of *Sorge* [concern] over the more positive, and alacritic aspect of awareness, wonder, and awe (care), which "has no difficulty in

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[116] *Sorge*, as I have been using it in this dissertation, refers to Heidegger's emphasis on "concern," "care," "attention," which is picked up by Falck (see below). See George Steiner's *Real Presences* for an extended discussion of art and *cortesia*.

accommodating the notion of play [an element that] has been noticeably absent from almost all traditional religions" (1994, 103). He posits literature as a counterpoise to this negativism; fictional "awareness" disturbs those practical "fixities and definites" [dogmas] which by their "solidification" open up gaps for new awareness. (Coleridge: "imagination dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create.") Fiction is the primary mode of expressive language, and is not exhausted by "literature."[117] Yet Falck falls into the trap that beguiles so many post and neo-Romantics—he privileges the *lyric* over the epic or novel. Following the lead of Frye and Langer, but bypassing the insights of magic realism, Falck sees in lyric poetry "the most essential of our linguistic modes of apprehension of reality" (1994, 61). The novel, he proclaims, smacks of didacticism—like religion, perhaps, it is for him *too political*, or *too realistic*.[118]

But it is the novel that is concerned with the expression of *kairos*, and thence is intrinsically connected with love; and love, as feminists have called to our attention, even the most personal, *is always political*. It is in the novel, primarily, not the lyric poem, that love, in its temporality and communality, is most effectively disclosed/revealed. Indeed, if in so-called "primitive" culture, the Word is *magical*—exerting substantial power over the physical world; and in the biblical tradition, *sacred*—instinct with unfathomable divine meaning; in the novelistic tradition "the Word simultaneously resonates with its old magical quality and turns back on itself, exposing its own emptiness as an arbitrary or conventional construct" (Alter 1975, 11). What Marthe Robert has called, more specifically—in deference to what many consider the first novel—"the quixotic Word [*la verbe donquichottesque*]," is at once "invocation and critique, conjuration and radical probing both one and the other with their risks and perils" (Robert 1977, 21). The *Quixote*, as the prototypical self-conscious fictional text, flaunts "naïve" narrative devices and styles—"rescuing their usability by exposing their contrivance [or semblance], working them into a highly patterned narration which reminds us that all representations of reality are, necessarily, stylizations" (Alter 1979, 30).

Fiction—figuration, to speak more generally—is, like love, always face-to-face; it is always tempted by an impossibility (of union). In fiction, this is the temptation and

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[117] GKC: "Literature is a luxury, fiction a necessity."

[118] See Falck 1994, p. 62.

impossibility of *mimesis*. Just as, in love, we the lover need to occupy all points in space and time occupied by the beloved, in past, present and future,[119] fiction, in creating/describing—in *presenting*—a world or worlds, also attempts to occupy all points in space and time. Fiction and love are realms of over-ambition and subversion, not of "success."[120]

> Through love we steal from the time that kills us a few hours which we turn now into paradise and now into hell. In both ways time expands and arises to be a measure...it does not give us eternity but life, that second in which the doors of time and space open just a crack: here is there and now is always. (Paz 160)

Love, through *kairos*, confronts history (as *chronos*), and the martial inevitability of successive time. Though, as Julian Barnes admits, love, or myth, or *kairos*, might not "change the history of the world," it may do something more important: it may "teach us to stand up to history, to ignore its chin-out strut" (Barnes 1989, 238). Love is more akin to a human (i.e., *partial*, not objective, incomplete) "truth," because it involves imaginative sympathy: the attempt to see the world from another point-of-view, from another point on the circumference of reality, perhaps non-contemporaneous with our own. Barnes dismisses contemporary religion, like Falck:[121] but he also goes so far as to disown art itself. Art, he suggests, "picking up confidence from the decline of religion, announces its transcendence of the world...but this announcement isn't accessible to all,

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[119] Proust, *À la rechêrche du têmps perdu*, III, p.100 (*Cities of the Plain*, 1981, 95). Also see Sartre, who lamented the unbridgeable "distance" between lover and beloved; and between Self and Other. (Perhaps it is Sartre's recognition of this gap leads to the dictum that "hell is other people"—hell being the pain of an imperfectible love.) Love, for Octavio Paz, is itself a gift of Romanticism, coming from the chivalric traditions of the Provençal poets and *Minnesänger*: "The Romantics taught us how to live, die, dream, and above all, how to love" (Paz 1995, 168-9).

[120] Calvino: "Literature remains alive only if we set ourselves immeasurable goals, far beyond all hope of achievement. Only if poets and writers set themselves tasks that no one else dares imagine will literature continue to have a function. Since science has begun to distrust general explanations and solutions that are not sectorial or specialized, the grand challenge for literature is to be capable of weaving together the various branches of knowledge, the various 'codes', into a manifold and multifaceted vision of the world" (Calvino 1995, 112).

[121] It "has become either wimpishly workaday, or terminally crazy, or merely businesslike—conflating spirituality with charitable donation" (Barnes 1989, 242).

or where accessible isn't always inspiring or welcome" (242). As such, Barnes concludes, both religion and art must yield to the claims of love: only love gives us our humanity *and* our mysticism.

Though I like Barnes's argument, particularly for the *reductio* it performs on Falck, it is not unproblematic. In order to set up his own ideal of love, the novelist must caricature religion (either wishy-washy or fanatical) as well as art (snooty highbrow stuff or kitsch); only love remains unsullied—"unblinded" as it were. But is not the aesthetic root of love—its uncertainty, its radical energization, its transfiguration by way of *kairos*—also, in some fundamental way, the root of figuration, and perhaps of the religious impulse? Barnes, with Kundera and other love-apologists, considers it epiphanically: love as, first and foremost as *ecstasy*, or *intensity*. But what if love,

> is not altogether a Delirium [though] it has many points in common therewith. I call it rather a discerning of the Infinite in the Finite, of the Ideal made Real; which discerning again may be either true or false, either seraphic or demoniac, Inspiration or Insanity. But in the former case, too, as in common Madness, it is Fantasy that superadds itself to Sight: on the so petty domain of the Actual, plants its Archimede-lever, whereby to move at will the infinite Spiritual. (Carlyle 1987, 110-1)

Though, as Falck (and Kermode) suggests, literary fictions may be our most useful "concord-fictions"—that is, the most effective avenues by which we "find out about the changing world on our behalf" and "arrange our complementarities [and our commonplaces]"—though this might be the case, because of the failings of religion, we must also be conscious of the similar failings of art, and even, I would submit, of love, when treated in isolation. All of these modes of meaning-creation, of coming to terms with "reality" and our present/presence in the world, manifest problematic particularities. Thus, the way to understand their development is not to treat each in isolation, privileging one or the other, but rather "to see how they are related to those other fictional systems" (Kermode 1967, 64). Theories of fiction may have greater implications than such have been traditionally granted; implications beyond pure aesthetics, extending to epistemology and belief.

C. Magic Realism: A Third Face

> 'Realism' contains within itself the seeds of its own dissolution[; if it draws] some strength from using life as rough material, it [draws] all its weakness from using life as an artistic method...Art finds her own perfection within, and not outside of, herself. She is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance. She is a veil, rather than a mirror.
>
> -- Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist"

The incoherent and delusive nature of realism, as it comes through these Romantic and Modernist streams, is a founding principle of postmodernist criticism. However, as Falck suggests, what this premise obscures is "the fact that a genuine realism of the imagination has always been a defining characteristic of literature whether before, during, or after the modernist period" (Falck 1994, 151). That is to say, within the Western literary tradition—and particularly the novelistic tradition since *Don Quixote*—*realism* has been undermined, not by its opposite, but by itself, not least by its tendency toward pseudo-objectivity against a more "human" reality. For Falck, a "true postmodernism" can now be defined "only in terms of a head-on rejection of the nihilism which would reduce literature to the status of a game with itself or with language, on the illusory ground that there is 'nothing outside the text' for it to relate to" (151). A "false" postmodernism of the deconstructionist sort, railing against the so-called "metaphysics of presence," fails in its non-recognition of the necessity of "presence" (even if "strange" or "non-contemporaneous") for experiencing the world; and in its failure to provide us with an account of language and signs (or symbol) in which "presence" is even a possibility. It fails by neglecting the insights of both realism and Romanticism, particularly their convergent aspects.

Though Falck recognizes the "necessity of realism" (1994, 160), he makes little mention of *magic realism*,[122] which, it can be argued, is the "postmodern" embodiment

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[122] Since Franz Roh, in his 1925 essay, Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism [*Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten Europäischen Malerei*], did not give *Magischer Realismus* a prefix (*der magischer Realismus*=magical realism), the term is best translated as *magic* realism, though it is more commonly given as *magical* realism. Though the former seems, at first, a bit cumbersome, it points, more effectively I think, to the propinquitous element of the aesthetic: the chance encounter of two things or events, usually dissociated, without turning "magic" into a mere qualifying adjective of "realism." Irene Guenther, in her article "Magic Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts during the Weimar Republic," concurs: "The juxtaposition of 'magic' and 'realism' reflects the monstrous and marvelous *Unheimlichkeit*

of the Romantic realism he lionizes. This is not surprising; until very recently there has been a critical lacuna vis-à-vis the kind of literary work which, while "aware" of its status as semblance, seeks, by virtue of artifice, "ways of going beyond words to the experiences words seek to indicate" (Alter 1975, ix)—experiences like religious awareness and love. Magic realism is not the creation of Alejo Carpentier[123] or Gabriel García Márquez, or even of Franz Roh. From Cervantes through Gogol,[124] Kafka,[125] Bely, Bulgakov and Borges, from Renaissance Spain to postcolonial Nigeria, writers have complicated and qualified the realistic enterprise without abandoning its premises, or concern for extra-textual "reality" or presence.[126]

In *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), Julian Barnes calls magic realism "a Latin American disease" of "package-tour baroque and heavy irony"—"the propinquity of cheap life and expensive principles..., surprising beauty and random cruelty"[127] (Zamora 1995b, 1). Yet Barnes underestimates the scope—aesthetic as well as geographical[128]—of magic

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within human beings and inherent in the technological surroundings of which both Freud and de Chirico wrote" (Guenther 1995, 63, n. 52).

[123] The Cuban novelist brought magic realism to Latin America, with his "On The Marvelous Real in America [*Lo real maravilloso americano*]" (1949) and, a quarter century later, "Baroque and the Marvelous Real [*Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso*]" (1975).

[124] In stories like "Nevsky Prospekt," "The Overcoat," "The Nose," and "The Portrait," Gogol "seems to be inventing the twentieth century out of his head" (Berman 1988, 198).

[125] Márquez to Kundera: "It was Kafka who showed me that it's possible to write *another way*," breaking through the plausibility barrier, "[n]ot in order to escape the real world (the way the romantics did) but to apprehend it better" (Kundera 1995, 52-3). And Rushdie, echoing Berman on Gogol, says: "Our sense of the modern world is as much the creation of Kafka, with his unexplained trials and unapproachable castles and giant bugs, as it is of Freud, Marx, or Einstein" (Rushdie 1991, 123).

[126] One could certainly extend this to the visual arts, extending back as far as Giotto, whose work conveys "a keener sense of reality, of life-likeness than the objects themselves"—*more than the Things ever dreamed of existing*, one is tempted to addend (Rilke's *Neunte Duino Elegie*). The comment on Giotto is Berenson's, quoted in Roger Fry's *Vision and Design* (1920).

[127] These words could apply, quite nicely, to most of the world's religious texts, especially the Judaeo-Christian Bible.

[128] Magic realism is no longer a "Latin American phenomenon": "Almost as a return on capitalism's hegemonic investment in its colonies, magical realism is especially alive and well in postcolonial contexts, and is now achieving a compensatory extension of its market worldwide" (Zamora 1995b, 2).

realism, to which he is himself obviously indebted, in *Flaubert's Parrot* and *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters,* works which move "back and forth...between the disparate worlds of what we might call the historical and the imaginary" (Zamora 1995b, 1). The latter novel is where Barnes develops his thesis on the tension and "battle" between history and love, accepting, in so doing, the epiphanic atemporal vision of love (eros as *ek-stasis*), which magic realism explicitly and implicitly deconstructs.

The most important aspect of magic realism is *propinquity*, a term, coming from the Latin *propinquitat* [kinship, proximity] which signifies: 1) nearness of blood: kinship; 2a) nearness in place: proximity; 2b) nearness in time; 3) *archaic*: closeness in nature, disposition, or interests.[129] In the face of New Critics like Cleanth Brooks or William Empson, magic realists seek "a whole that is formed *in* extreme contrasts, rather than in their resolution...Interaction here is *polarization*: a productive conflict of the contradictory elements" (Moretti 1996, 214). For complexity requires, not homogeneity (harmony, the elimination of discord) but rather interaction (melody).[130]

Magic realist propinquity involves the "fusion of dream and reality" so praised by the Surrealists, or what Kundera calls the "density of imagination, density of unexpected encounters" (Kundera 50); aspects of reality are brought together, not only in space, but in time, which no longer obeys the hegemony of chronology. Yet, for all this, the magic realist aesthetic attempts to re-establish contact with the literary "realism" prior to the mimetic constraints of the nineteenth-century novel; where nineteenth-century realism intends its vision as a singular one—"the way things are," magic realism, without relinquishing ideology (an impossibility), shuns dogma; its program is not "centralizing" but "eccentric" (or, to re-evoke an earlier image, circumferential): it "creates space for interactions of diversity." In magic realist texts, "ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruptions: magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation" (Zamora 1995b, 3).

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129 *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged.*

130 "Just think," says Franco Moretti, "about the stream of consciousness, and about polyphony: the language of the individual, and those of society" (1996, 215).

D. Magic Realism as Work on Myth

> Before, people were not at all devoted to the object: they took the exterior world which art molds and shapes for granted. In making what was formerly accepted as obvious into a "problem" for the first time, we enter a much deeper realm, even though some of the results may seem inadequate to us. This calm admiration of the magic of being, of the discovery that things already have their own faces, means that the ground in which the most diverse ideas in the world can take root has been reconquered—albeit in new ways.
>
> -- Franz Roh, "Magical Realism: Post-expressionism"

"'Magical realism'? As if we did not know that contradictions in terms are quite meaningless" (Moretti 1996, 8). Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, in their compendium *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995), question the term "magical realism"; it creates, they suggest, a greater dichotomy between the magic or marvelous and the "real" than exists in the texts, which might more properly be called "metaphoric" or "mythic" realism. One could argue—especially if one follows Irene Guenther's diagnosis[131]—that the "magic" works *upon* realism; that is, it is the active force upon which the "really" real is revealed/disclosed. At any rate, it is undeniable that magical realist texts have as their "primary narrative investment," myths, legends, stories, rituals: that is, "collective (sometimes oral[132] and performative, as well as written) practices that bind communities together" (Zamora 1995b, 3-4).[133]

Magic realism is thus "high-carat work on myth" (to use Blumenberg's terms); it is a mode which facilitates "the fusion, or coexistence of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction" (Blumenberg 1985, 5-6). In its assault on the basic structures of realism and rationalism—extending beyond the "merely" aesthetic realm, to our ontological, epistemological, linguistic, and existential understandings—magic realism encourages resistance to "monologic political and cultural structures" (Zamora 1995b, 6). Moreover, it is the *kairotic* dimension of magic realism

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[131] See above, page 103, note 122.

[132] "Thanks to the protean medium of oral communication...signs become emancipated from Gadamer's 'firm traditions' and allow different individuals to think in different ways" (Moretti 1996, 87).

[133] "In such cases, magical realist works remind us that the novel began as a popular form, with communal imperatives that continue to operate in many parts of the world" (Zamora 1995b, 3-4).

which justifies its kinship to myth and metaphor. "History is inscribed, often in detail, but in such a way that actual events and existing institutions are not always privileged and are not limiting: historical narrative is no longer chronicle but clairvoyance" (6). Seeking the roads not taken—the diverted paths, as it were, of history—it is thus the most complex form of non-contemporaneity, being where "Bloch's paradox invades the actual figurative texture of the work, and forces *meanings from different epochs* to cohabit in the same sign" (Moretti 1996, 89). Like myths, melody,[134] and metaphor, magic realism (re-) constructs alterior reality at the same time as it deconstructs the certainties of what we hold to be the case. *It is at once discursive askesis and non-discursive affect.* As Franz Roh puts it:

> The clash of true reality and apparent reality [semblance] has always had an elemental attraction. This enchantment is enjoyed now in a new way. Such a juxtaposition of reality and appearance was not possible until the recuperation of the objective world, which was largely lacking in Expressionism. (Roh 1995, 20)

Magic, or *mythic*, or *metaphoric* realism thus provides an instance of what the alchemists call *egrégare*—a third term distilled from two apparent (but not actual) contradictory elements: "truth" and "fiction." As an hermeneutic, a style of reading, interpreting, and understanding, magic realism enjoins a person who "without losing anything of his constructivist ideals, nonetheless knows how to reconcile that desire with a greater respect for reality, with a closer knowledge of what exists, of the objects he transforms and exults" (Roh 1995, 123).[135]

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[134] George Steiner: "Music could have initiated the sensation and later the controlled experience, of the multiple existence within space and time in the psyche of different levels of energy, of different and even conflicting currents of self-consciousness. Metaphor in language—the prime mover—and relations between chromatic values and spaces which are the matter of the arts, would, thus, be an evolutionary modulation or translation into more semantic, representational codes of the arc of melody" (1989, 182).

[135] "This kind of man, " says Roh, "is neither the 'empirical' Machiavellian politician nor the apolitical man who listens only to the voice of an ethical ideal, but a man at once political *and* ethical, in whom both characteristics are equally prominent. The new position, if it survives, will exist on a middle ground not through weakness but, on the contrary, through energy and an awareness of its strength. It will be a sharp edge, a narrow ledge between two chasms on the right and the left" (1995, 23).

As Rushdie says, the "damage" done to reality in Ibero-America, and most postcolonial contexts, is at least as much political as cultural. That is to say, "truth has been controlled to the point at which it has ceased to be possible to find out what it is"[136] (1991, 301); and "fiction has spread and contaminated [or illuminated] everything: history, religion, poetry, science, art, speeches, journalism, and the daily habits of people" (Vargas Llosa 1990, 5). Magic realism is a way of reading or apprehending reality which attempts to re-unite Romanticism with its realist roots, with its *political roots*; as I have termed it before, it is, in some respect, the democratization[137] of post-Romantic Modernism: *Surrealism with a Third World face*.[138]

Unlike "fantasy literature," magic realist texts do not exhibit closed, bound and self-referential universes; they exist with the extra-textual world, acting upon such, by virtue of their re-readings of the world at large—this is their "magic." Alejo Carpentier's vision does not imply a conscious assault on conventionally depicted reality so much as "an amplification of perceived reality required by and inherent in Latin American nature and culture [where] the fantastic...inheres in the natural and human realities of time and place" (MRA 75). Thus, it is by a "faithful" depiction of the absurd and horrific disjuncture of social, cultural, and political reality in specific communities that the magic realist writer and reader apprehend the situation at hand, bearing witness, at the same time, to the stultifying effects of the mask of objectivity, rationalism, and realism. Magic realism is literary, linguistic, and political iconoclasm: *fiction as critique*.[139]

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[136] "The only truth," Rushdie adds ruefully, "is that you are being lied to all the time" (1991, 301).

[137] John Barth says that postmodern literature is and/or strives for a literature more democratic in appeal, more broad-based or worldly than did Modernism. (Anderson 1995, 152) Perhaps it is Goethe's *Weltliteratur* ideal reborn.

[138] Carpentier sought to distance his *lo real maravilloso americana* from Roh's post-Expressionism and French Surrealism (with which he had been involved, and whose work he had, by 1949, come to consider affected, jaded, and "boring," merely substituting "the tricks of the magician for the worn out phrases of academics or the eschatological glee of certain existentialists" [MRA 86]).

[139] Which is what Rushdie calls Barnes's *History of the World*. The Nazis, who conflated misomusy with genocide, declared magic realism (and expressionism) "degenerate art" [*Entartete Kunst*]; and Franz Roh—a "cultural bolshevist"—was imprisoned, for a period, at Dachau.

> The propensity of magical realist texts to admit a plurality of worlds means that they often situate themselves in liminal territory between or among those worlds—in phenomenal and spiritual region where transformation, metamorphosis, dissolution are common, where magic is a branch of naturalism or pragmatism. So magical realism may be considered an extension of realism in its concern with the nature of reality, and its representation, at the same time that it resists the basic assumption of post-Enlightenment rationalism and literary realism. (Zamora 1995b, 6)

Though Marx may have erred in assuming that "interpreting" or "describing" the world and transforming—*changing it*—are different things, he recognized that the cognitive function of art is more than representational reflection (*showing that*); it is always also a *showing how*: the mirror as well as the lamp, the reflector as well as reflection. Such, for Marx—as for Schiller and Nietzsche—involves a return to the "naïve" (versus the "sentimental,"[140] which is merely nostalgic, or the "critical," which tends to be atemporal). The cursory dismissal of the naïve over the critical reflects a very modern (and no less postmodern) inability or unwillingness to see in fiction, even in "non-realist" fiction, anything other than "comment" (or, to speak po-mo: "gloss"). But "[t]he use of that model has obscured the most distinctive characteristic of art—that its import is not separable form the form that expresses it" (Langer 1953, 344). Figuration, whether in myth, literature, or religion, is not merely, or even primarily, an art of *saying*, as much as of *showing*; showing the appearance of human existence "in a perceptible symbolic projection" (344). "The effect of this symbolization is to offer the beholder a way of conceiving emotion; and that is something more elemental than making judgments about it"—the disclosure/revelation of the world seen from a circumferential perspective. Through the looking-glass: art is reflection in every sense of the term—a mirroring as well as a re-thinking.

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[140] Cf. Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795), a work which apparently converted Friedrich Schlegel to Romanticism. In this work "naïve" poetry, characteristic of the ancients, is an immediate, detailed and particularized representation of the sensuous surface of life, thus "realistic"; "sentimental" poetry, for Schiller, tends to substitute an ideal for the given reality; the "sentimental" poet "can suffer no impression without immediately attending to its own part in the performance, and by reflection, projecting outside and opposite itself that which it has in itself" (Abrams 1953, 238). Shakespeare, whose apparent "coldness" is his greatest merit, his naïveté, partakes of this appropriate vulnerability—"the object possesses him entirely" (238).

IV. *Entmythologisierung*

> We must...retain the documentary veracity, the precision of detail, the compact and sinewy language of realism, but we must also dig down into the soul and cease trying to explain mystery in terms of our sick senses.
>
> -- Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Là-bas*

A. Euhemeros Redux

Oscar Wilde, one hundred years ago, in an essay on "The Rise of Historical Criticism," spoke of one reaction to the *Aufklärung* of the Greek Classical period (6th-4th centuries B.C.E). Euhemerism, says Wilde, under the auspices of a certain Euhemeros, claimed that the gods and heroes of ancient Greece were "mere ordinary mortals, whose achievements had been a good deal misrepresented" (Wilde 1994, 1108). The task of Euhemerism was "to rationalize the incredible, and to present the plausible residuum or actual truth" (1108). Wilde's response:

> Now that under the glamour of myth and legend some substratum of historical fact may lie, is a proposition rendered extremely probable by the modern investigations into the workings of the mythopoetic spirit in post-Christian times, [and yet] to rob a mythical narrative of its kernel of supernatural elements, and to present the dry husk thus obtained as a historical fact, is, as has been well said, to mistake entirely the true method of investigation and to identify plausibility with truth. (1109)

In short, "between a poet's deliberate creation and historical accuracy, there is a wide field of the mythopoetic faculty" (1109). Euhemerism is thus an early, and, according to Wilde, prominent mode of demythologization, which characterized ancient thinking about mythology up to Augustine and Mincius Felix, who wielded it against the dying flame of paganism. Ironically, with the European Enlightenment, it was Christianity which was pushed to the defense, against very similar charges: "The Enlightenment, which did not want to be the Renaissance again and considered the contest between ancient and modern to have been decided, did not forgive myth its frivolities any more than it forgave Christian theology the seriousness of its dogmatism" (Blumenberg 1983, 18).

The question to be raised: Does a magical or mythic/metaphoric realism, applied to religious texts and the language of religion more generally, deny the twentieth century theological program, instigated by Rudolf Bultmann, of demythologization?[141] In this final section, it will be my task to show that the Bultmannian project, while limited somewhat by its connection with the hegemonic existentialist philosophy and rhetoric of the day, remains a valuable method and mode of understanding the use and abuse of myth in postmodern religion, and in "post-Christian" Christianity more particularly. It is my contention that, rather than subverting demythologization, magic realism helps us towards a better understanding of the Bultmannian project, and of the place of myth, symbol, and metaphor in Western religious understanding.

In *Myth, Truth and Literature*, Colin Falck laments the turn, taken by modern theology and the study (and practice) of religion more generally, away from Schleiermacher (who "opened a more aesthetic road") and towards the religious existentialism of Kierkegaard, which begat the "internalization" and "demythologization" of religion. Falck selects Don Cupitt as a primary foil for his attacks: Cupitt's post-Kierkegaardian emphasis on the "doctrine of God" as "an encoded set of spiritual directives," and on fundamental religious reality as "a ceaseless struggle after self-transcendence" may have some value as "a corrective to worldly possessiveness or manipulativeness," but "to construe it as the very essence of religious awareness itself can only be to confuse spiritual means with spiritual meanings" (Falck 1994, 127). Which is to say, that "[i]t is in the meanings of aesthetically significant ["supreme"] fictions that the essence of religion lies—as well as of course in the ways in which such meanings may be 'applied' to practical life" (128).

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[141] At one point in my research, I was intending this very question to be the starting point of the present investigation; since I have realized that much groundwork needed to be laid, particularly in terms of the roots of magic realism in Romantic and Modernist poetics. The question thus provides a working hypothesis which, though touched upon here, needs to be further developed in future research.

B. Demystification

> Today, in so far as this message [of God's salvation] is set forth in mythological phraseology, it has become incredible to the man of our time, since he is convinced that this way of looking at the world is obsolete.
>
> -- Rudolf Bultmann, "The New Testament and Mythology"

Before delving into Bultmann, let us set the context of his work. Like Barth, Bonhoeffer, Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, and others, Rudolf Bultmann lived and wrote in a Germany of furious tensions and political uncertainties, uncertainties which infiltrated all aspects of life, even (or especially) within the ivory towers of scholarship. The Nazi regime experimented with myths and selective cultural memories, instigating a vast programme of "antidotes" to secular humanist disillusionment, and in moving, within a few short years, (as Heine had foreseen) from book-burning to genocide, perpetuated the greatest "forgetting of being" the world has perhaps yet known.

Bultmann, like Nietzsche before him, was suspicious of cosmologies; he realized that Christianity, in his day, was holding on to forms which were no longer "tasteful," no longer "relevant" to modern humans, and sought, by "demythologizing," to re-interpret the Christian faith for a modern era. Bultmann put into question what, in his day, was the questionable use/abuse of myths, history, and symbols in the name of politics, religion, and philosophy. Much has changed since Bultmann's era, and his project of demythologization rings somewhat false in our postmodern ears, as another attempt at Euhemerism: "modernizing" the primitive world of myth and symbol and clearing the decks for a rational, ethical, humanist faith. But this was never Bultmann's intent; and his work, to this day, has relevance for a Christian epistemology and aesthetics of reception.

It was in 1941, at the highpoint of Nazi success, that Bultmann published his "Neues Testament und Mythologie" in a volume entitled *Revelation and the Event of Redemption.* His "problem" was not just a bookish fancy, but had great "practical" concern for Bultmann, involving not only the care of souls but the contact between Christianity and culture; and, moreover, the *responsibility* of Christian faith in relation to the world at large.[142] Although he steadfastly rejected "cosmological" visions, what

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[142] A responsibility sometimes forgotten in the nominally socialist "dialectical theology," despite Barth's *bon mot* about the newspaper and Bible, and his "Nein!" to the Nazis and the German Christian movement.

Bultmann seeks is a new (existential) cosmology—a new Christian *Weltbild* (or *Weltbilder*), not as a totalizing world-view (*Weltanschauung*) but rather as a lens, a filter, a frame with which to come to terms with one's existence and the impinging (religious) reality—as meeting (Buber) and response (Rosenzweig). For Bultmann, the "purpose" of myth is not to provide an objective picture of the world but to give expression to "man's understanding of his own being in the world." It is in myth that human beings confront the "uncanny" [*unheimlich*] powers which are at once the "source" and "limit" of the known and tangible reality.[143]

Colin Falck fears in demythologization an iconoclastic (anti-aesthetic) puritanism, done up in existentialist dress; a program which, for all its use against the secularizing tendencies of post-Schleiermachian Liberal Theology, does injustice to the mythopoetic roots of religion, roots which cannot be exhumed without doing grave damage to religion's "truth." Bultmann, in Falck's eyes, instigated "a renunciation not merely of worldly desires or possessions but also of the greater part of worldly experience itself—in a way which might precisely help to equip us for living in an actual (as opposed to merely a metaphorical) desert landscape" (Falck 1994, 128). This is demythologization as *de-allegorization*: the search for some sort of extractable core, or essence—one that is pristine yet separately expressible, and usually "moral"—behind the texts and words of religious utterance. But this is to misread the true nature of myth, which, as I have tried to show, is akin to the Romantic Symbol, metaphor, and melody, and not a form of allegory to be "interpreted" or explained away. Falck posits a choice facing religionists (both theologians and lay believers): either religious faith must a) *de-mystify* itself completely, and be "reborn" as ethics (a trend that has been going on in the mainline churches for some time now); or b) abandon all claims to a descriptive relationship vis-à-vis reality, re-envisioning itself in terms of a "symbolic-revelatory" relationship with reality instead.[144] Falck's own leanings are clear; given, he concludes, the ineradicable transcendence in our lives, we must choose door number two.

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[143] Of course, term "being-in-the world" [*in-die-Welt-Sein*] hearkens once again to Heidegger, whose work had significant influence on Bultmann (and vice versa); the concept of the Uncanny [*das Unheimlich*] was a Freudian trope, and perhaps filtered into Bultmann's language.

[144] Falck adds: "It will then be obliged to look for whatever support [in Supreme Fictions of literature, for example] it can find among the *actually revealed spiritual meanings of the world*" (1994, 133).

C. Re: Demythologization

> Does it facilitate the sense of truth if one expects to possess only a little truth? Is conceptual thought [*der Begriff*] equal to the task of rooting out the stocks of images, or is it only the monopoly of the management of images that must be attacked, and the indestructible need-'position' reoccupied by something else, by humanized myth? Or is every offer of myth finally drawn into the vortex of the vague needs of a self-definition that was conceived at some time, and unhesitatingly placed in the service of the corresponding renunciations? (Blumenberg 1985, 230)

Against demythologization Falck posits a *remythologization* of our "spiritual landscape," whereby we might well discover, with the help of anthropology, history, and psychology, exactly "*which* myths do in fact have a hold on our imagination" (1994, 135). Yet Falck's proposed work on myth does myth some injustice; while it is true that "the great absolute myths" may have caused much harm, by way of their dogmatic claims and univocal interpretations, this could be the result of a *misreading* of myth and symbol, rather than something which is inherent in the so-called "mythic mode." Indeed, the structural and figurative capacity of myth is its foremost critical component; a mythical realist hermeneutic provides a counter-structure, a counter-narrative, to the solidified structures of the (mimetic and designative) realism which remains the hegemonic mode of understanding, interpreting—reading—the world. Demythologization may be a way of pushing enshrined myths—including the myth of the given, central to mimetic realism—off the pedestals of dogma without wiping away the "mythological substrate"; a means of establishing new patterns of meaning, of retrieving myths and allowing their kairotic and transfigurative aspects to dislodge our conceptions of history, time, and present/ce.

Bultmann uses a very Nietzschean (with Christianity) or Marxian (with capitalism) trick—he turns myth against itself: the "special aim" of myth, which is "to speak of a transcendent power to which the world and man alike are subject" is impeded and clouded, blurred by the "character and the imagery it uses" (Bultmann 1948, 22-3). In other words, there is a form and content within myth itself—the former being the dusty jacket (or many-coloured cloak, depending on your perspective) which hides, and at the same time lures, the "truth" of myth. It is not myth itself which hides a non-mythical

("real") truth, but rather, certain myths, if they are disconnected from communal understanding, serve as inadequate devices of structuration. Granted, for Bultmann there *does* exist an "existential core" to the Christian faith, but since this "core" is, in terms of logic and rationality, a "fiction," a recognition of such does not undermine the connection of demythologization and magic realism, which offers us "the image of something ...minutely formed, opposing it to our eternally fragmented and ragged lives as an archetype of integral structuring, down to the smallest detail" (Roh 1995, 30).

Bultmann utilized the distinction in German between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, which can be translated, with some loss, into English as "history" and "story"—or, as George Grant suggests, the "study of history" and "that particular realm of being, historical existence" (Grant 1995, 8).[145] For Bultmann, these two terms have particular qualitative overtones: *historisch* describing the things that merely happen and lie buried in the past; *geschichtlich* referring to that which both happens and is "significant"[146] or *worthy of questioning*. Therefore, what is *historisch* is, in the sense of the English slang, "history," and that which is *geschichtlich*, eternally present—*contemporaneous*. Bultmann's argument, in short, is that, while Christian faith is, as the phrase has it, a mystery wrapped in an enigma, it is not "above" or "beyond" reason, and its representation is not *non*-realistic; rather its reality and its reason are only perceivable and understood in terms of the call of God: the *kerygma*.[147]

The importance of this particular term for Bultmann cannot be overstated: a Greek word, whose simple meaning of "communication" belies its imperative and notificatory element, *kerygma* connotes a *communiqué*. As such, it acts in similar fashion with the Romantic Symbol, as *deictic*, or *elenctic* signification—fully expressive in being

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[145] Stephen Niell translates these as "mere" (*Historie*) and "real" (*Geschichte*) history, but this is confusing, and bespeaks an (unfeigned) value judgment.

[146] Cf. George Herbert Mead's "significant symbol."

[147] The question arises as to whether the *kerygma* itself may be an obsolete metaphor for the Call of God. Given the status of (what's left of) the world's monarchies, the imperative voice of a King or Queen hardly gives us hope, or even fear, let alone respect. Perhaps the Qur'anic *Iqra'* gives a fuller and more adequate conception of *kerygma*. A single word command, it connotes not merely "Proclaim!" but also "Read!", "Recite!", and "Rehearse!" (Surah 96).

both discursive and affective. For Bultmann *kerygma* is not epiphanic, a pure event or pure presence; in fact it is for him a fundamental theological principle "that God's word or revelation never appears in a pure or direct form" (Johnson 1987, 29). Moreover, and this is the crux for our discussion: "We can know such a word or revelation *only* through the mediation of human language, and that language, in turn, is always shaped by the thought forms and imagery of a particular culture" (29); including, it would seem, a particular culture's understanding of myth, truth, and representation.

In our days, Bultmann argues in his writings, the *kerygma* is somewhat muffled, if not entirely drowned out, by an obsolete mythology; but this does not mean that we must strip the Christian religion of all "myth," even if such were possible. What is the problem with our inherited mythology? Not its ambiguity, or its plenitude, but rather the opposite—its "objectifying" aspect. Indeed, Bultmann admitted that by demythologization what he really meant was "de-objectification"—the attempt to eliminate the univocal and static pictures which our myths, *vis-à-vis their traditional interpretation*, have engrained in our psyches. As a particular way of thinking about the world—what Ernst Cassirer calls "mythological consciousness"—mythology frequently aspires to science, and offers us pseudo-scientific explanations of the events of history. One hears, in this judgment, an echo: I. A. Richards's infamous remark about the "pseudo-statements" of poetry. The equivalence is significant: both interpretations miss the *magic realist* capabilities of figuration—myth and the poetic word as metaphor and symbol. These are neither second-rate attempts at designation nor purely affective or "emotive." Bultmann's failure was not in the intent of his program, but in his misunderstanding of myth and religious representation.[148] He criticizes mythology for what is precisely its most "useful" feature, *vis-à-vis* religious expression: *the confusion of the earthly with the spiritual*. If this confusion, according to incarnationalist Christians or avataristic Hindus, is not beneath God, why should it be beneath humanity?

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[148] Norman Perrin, in his otherwise adulatory *The Promise of Bultmann* (1969), admits that Bultmann's understanding of myth may be dated, but suggests that the theologian "is not attempting to make a contribution to the study of myth and symbol; he is attempting to make the proclamation of the New Testament and of the Church intelligible to man" (77). But this, given the significance of representation to understanding, and of an adequate theory of myth and symbol—of aesthetics and epistemology—to theology and the study of religion, is a rather lame apology.

D. Rethinking the Coy "de"

> Christ has been demythified and secularized into a very human Jesus
> while institutional Christianity is regarded with suspicious hostility.
>
> -- Goethe

Bultmann, like Kierkegaard and Pascal before him, sought to rid institutional, cultural Christianity of its "impurities," and did so by discoursing upon the existential aspect of faith over the doctrinal or "mythical" aspects. Perhaps, as Giovanni Miegge suggests, it is only the *frankness* of Bultmann that is new; perhaps we should accept his claim to be fulfilling the work of Luther. On the face of things, given his "existential" focus (I avoid, with Bultmann, the term "existentialism"), Luther is truly a forebear to *Entmythologisierung*. Yet the connection, and the disparity, as I see it, goes further than this: Luther's "mystical" sensibility, however much it may have hampered his ability to confront the dawning modern world, opened him up to a mode of understanding, a style of knowing, which baffled many of his peers; and which may very well have baffled Bultmann in his most anti-mystical moments. Luther's phrase "it stands written" [*Es stehet geschrieben*]—used frequently in his translation of the New Testament as a variation on the biblical phrase "it is written"—applies to a particular kind of speech, and speech-reception, that Gadamer calls a "pledge" [*Zusage*]. A pledge "is more than just a communication: it is rather a binding word that presupposes mutual validity" (Gadamer 1994, 109); and as such it is somewhat different from a "proclamation" [*Ansage*], which is how *kerygma* is usually understood.

It is just this "mystical" element—as it emerges in the sense of the "pledge" of what Gadamer calls "privileged texts" but we might term "supreme fictions"—that "corrects" demythologization. The magic realist aesthetic, prefigured in the birth of the novel in the century after Luther, and remaining an undercurrent, a sublated mysticism, as it were, since Romanticism, gives a different look to the project of Bultmann. Bultmann himself touches upon this when he speaks of *love*. To speak of love—and to speak of God or friendship—is, he suggests, not the same as the *attunement* that is

greater than mere "saying."[149] But Bultmann extends this disjunction further, so that it collapses. Love and faith are not entirely kataphatic: "[O]ne cannot speak *about* love at all *unless* the speaking about it is itself an act of love" (WDM 80). Speech as creative-response, as, to use Searle's term "performative utterance," or, to use the term we have been using, *attunement*, may have more worth than Bultmann is willing to allow, despite his caveat. Again, Bultmann acknowledges, but ultimately underestimates the transfigurative capacity of speech, image, melody.

A way to move towards this re-interpretation is to re-translate the prefix "de", that nasty English negative, into the German *Ent–*, which can mean the more subtle "dis," or, by adding an "e" to get *Ente*: duck, hoax, false report, decoy. *Ent–*mythologization is not a giving way to rationalism, empiricism, or objectivity, but a re-examination of symbols and myths, away from a neo-Platonic and essentialist to a more constructivist and existential conception of understanding and reality. *De-*mythologization is actually not a proper name for this process: such implies the denial of mythology in favour of something else, presumably "history" or "authenticity" of some sort, perhaps even "truth." Yet, as Oscar Cullmann has argued against Bultmann, the latter's concession of the oneness of the "historical" events of Jesus of Nazareth and the "nonhistorical" accounts of primal beginnings and eschatological end-times implies, not that Christianity possesses no historical sense, but that it contains "a positive theological [or, one might say, aesthetic] outlook which transcends the contrast between history and myth" (Cullmann 1951, 96). History in the New Testament is not simply history, but *Geschichte*: *history viewed from the prophetic or oracular point-of-view*; and myth is always to be related to *the historical process of redemptive, or kairotic time.* In short, prophecy is the catalyst which subsumes myth and history.[150] The grotesque reality of particular events works with the larger mythical structure of reality; and these are connected by prophecy, which is, in some sense, *kairotic speech.*

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[149] Of course, this is not new with Bultmann. Eliza Doolittle sang the same song: "Don't talk of love, show me!"

[150] "The prophetic element in the sacred historical books thus manifests itself on the one side in the total prophetic interpretation of the entire reported history, and on the other side in the inclusion of purely individual features which support the total interpretation" (Cullmann 1951, 100).

Ent–mythologisierung, reconceived as both de- and re-mythologization, points toward a mythic understanding of reality, which is itself, in our fractured postmodern and post-colonial worlds, largely *mythical*. It also hints at a more "realistic" understanding of myth and symbolism, falling neither into the interpretation of myth and symbol as second-order forms of designation/mimesis, nor into the other extreme of denying the discursive and "political" impact of mythical stories, texts, and ideas. *Emtmythologisierung* can act as a disruption of the standard sense of myth, symbol, illusion, truth, meaning; a project of accepting the lure of language, as conceived expressively, in religious and poetic discourse, in order to question the reality of the "lure" in terms of a single source and/or voice. Paraphrasing Derrida, it is truly an attempt to "think the decoy;" not only the decoy of "myth" but also of the "awakening" from myth—the decoy, that is, of *disillusion*. (For to think the *decoy* also means to rethink the *coy "de"* in deconstruction.)

The term demythologization, it might be argued, could just as well be dropped, as having outlived its usefulness. Yet I think there is a specific power in the "appropriation" of terms which have been used either derisively or as labels for a package of ideas no longer widely accepted, if subliminally acknowledged. The reconceptualization of powerful terms can perhaps channel that power into other (even contrary) directions. And, as is the case here, "appropriation" of terms is not always a complete reversal, but an opening up of possible alternatives latent in concepts. Demythologization does not mean "exposing" myths as false history, as veils of a naked concept behind, which can and must be sought. Rather it must mean a questioning of the historical effects—*the use and abuse of particular myths and metaphors*—and the concepts into which these have become solidified, in our times; and a reweaving of these, a re-distillation of concepts into metaphors, without necessarily privileging the latter over the former. In short, a re-creation of reality out of the myths and metaphors embedded and peripheral to our cultural and religious traditions. A new version of reality; a religious aesthetics which is not betrayed by the decoys of realism or the disillusion of anti-realism, but is lured by the temptations of melody, metaphor, myth.

CONCLUSION

It is indicative of the stylistic and intellectual climate now predominant, of the era of theory, that the personal phenomenality of the encounter with music, literature and the arts is left largely inarticulate...There are motives for this analytic and descriptive avoidance of what is, palpably, the central issue. The histrionic bathos of much Romantic and post-Romantic testimony as to the sublimity or terror of the lyric, pictorial and musical experience, has left a dubious taste. We rightly suspect the eloquence of writing about literature and the arts from say, Schiller and Shelley to Ruskin and Pater.

– George Steiner, *Real Presences*

In these waning pages I will briefly summarize the main points of my argument, setting these out under the auspices of three particular themes or motifs, which have effectively guided my remarks throughout this dissertation. These are: a) *The War Over the Nature of Reality*; b) *The Lure of Disillusion*; and c) *Home-making.*

The War Over the Nature of Reality: Imagination and Imagoguery

> Waking as well as sleeping, our response to the world is essentially *imaginative*: that is, picture-making. We live in our pictures, our ideas. I mean this literally. We first construct pictures of the world and then we step inside the frames. We come to equate the picture with the world, so that, in certain circumstances, we will even go to war because we find someone else's pictures less pleasing than our own.
>
> -- Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

The most frequently-recurring theme of this paper has been my attempt to underscore the significance of a theory of representation and understanding to ethics and religious faith. Not exactly "epistemology," and certainly not "ontology"—a theory of understanding borrows as much from aesthetics and poetics as from philosophy or theology. It has been my contention, developed, in Chapter One, with respect to the formative literary and critical ideas of our modern age, that there is much to be gained in exhuming early (if not originary) instances of particular ideas, such as those of Romanticism, that have been either neglected, buried under misreadings and emendations, or absorbed into our cultural and intellectual atmosphere so as to be virtually invisible.

Colin Falck, in *Myth, Truth and Literature*, takes up the sword of Romanticism against the so-called "poststructuralists" of our belated times. In doing so, he provides a necessary counterweight to this paradigm of interpretation and criticism, once so radical but of late become almost conventional. Yet Falck's blade is double-edged, and he is blinded, in his rage against the post-Saussurean machine, to the failings of Romantic and neo-Romantic visions of the world—particularly the Faustian tendency of a Romanticism negligent of its *realistic* face. I would suggest, contra Falck, that there might be a *tertium via*, a third door between these two options he sets forth (Romanticism or poststructuralism); and that this third option is not a new discovery but has its roots in the

Romantic aesthetic of the symbol, in the expressive theory of language, and even in Rudolf Bultmann's theological program of demythologization. When Falck dismisses religious faith, except where it is virtually identical with poetic affect, he neglects the propinquitous element of religion—*its confusion of earthly and the terrestrial*—and the power which is latent in this tension. Religion, in terms of representation, calls for a magic or mythic reading; one that steers clear of either the purely referential or the purely epiphanic/ineffable. It is precisely the mythical or mythological element in religious faith which sustains its claims to description at the same time as being symbolic/revelatory.

The War over the Nature of Reality is essentially a battle over the status of the Image—it is a renewal of submerged Iconoclastic Controversies that once beleaguered our Occidental landscape. Erasmus, the first European, set down the gauntlet against the already encroaching rationalists—those who were to burn Don Quixote's library, and eventually wake him from his "mad" slumber—by warning that "[h]e who takes the imagery out of life deprives it of its highest pleasure...we often discern more in images than we conceive from the written word" (Huizinga 1957, 167-8). Though at all times a dedicated Christian, Erasmus was unwilling to let the imminent crackdowns in religious observance threaten the image-making element—the *aesthetic*—of his faith. It was, and is, much more than a question of saving a few paintings from the bonfires of the Cromwellians or the Inquisitors. "Through images we seek to comprehend our world," says Rushdie (1991, 146); and Hegel: "Indeed, far from mere appearances being purely illusory, the forms of art comprise more reality and truth than the phenomenal existences of the real world" (*Aesthetics*). Faith has always utilized imagery and symbolism in order to disclose itself, and to maintain its liminal aspect. As Chesterton would have it, religion is "perpetual revolution"—and its critical capacity is fixed in this tension between what happened, and what should, may have, or will happen, under the transfigurative power of a particular event or call.

Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht understood that "realism" is not really an aesthetic concept—a set of rules to write, paint, or sculpt by. Conceived as such, it becomes mimetic naturalism (which John Berger calls "a thoughtless, superficial

goggling at appearances"), and thus a beast of quite a different sort, easily susceptible to dogma and "political" control (Lima). Perhaps the gravest problem associated with realism-as-naturalism is the fact that, as such, images lose their explosive and symbolic aspects, and become purely "visual"—static and univocal. (Rushdie warns us that as well as being tools for understanding our world, "through images we sometimes seek to subjugate and dominate others" [1991, 147].) This is the basis of what I would like to call "imagoguery": the use of images (or myths, or symbols) in a dogmatic fashion, as ineluctably fused with an atemporal (and universal) singularity of *presence*, in order to compel obedience or submission, even if in the more subtle form of controlling the imagination by way of a dominant theory of understanding. "Premodern people," Walter Truett Anderson notes, "knew there was a profound connection between a word and its referent. *That was what made magic possible.*" And "visual symbols had the same kind of power. *That was what made idolatry possible*" (Anderson 1995, 3). The trick, whether for "pre" or "post" moderns, is (as Reinhold Niebuhr would have it) having the grace or the ability tell the one from the other.

John Berger posits an alternative form of realism, such as I have tried to limn in the preceding pages: it is an attempt to respond as *fully as possible to the circumstances of the world at the present time.* Realism, in this sense, is a concerted effort to manifest "presence"—but, given the often fractured and fragmented "reality" we encounter daily, it is perhaps the task of a "full" or "human" realism to reveal, not congruency and synchrony, but rather, diachrony, dissolution, *non-contemporaneity*; and always with an acknowledgment of the Romantic-structuralist ethos of *bricolage* and refunctionalization. For "picture-making, imagining, can also be a process of celebration, even of liberation. New images can chase out the old" (Rushdie 1991, 147). But only if we recognize that imaging and imagining are fluid categories. For though "(i)t can now be admitted that words are not pictures, that words behave differently from things...it might be argued that we now study the secret lives of words as though they were dreams, and restore to our theories of communication the essential Romantic magic" (Kermode 1957, 162).

The Lure of Disillusion: Hermes, Son of Maya

> In the Dionysian dithyramb man is incited to the greatest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties; something never before experienced struggles for utterance—annihilation of the veil of *maya*, oneness as the soul of the race and of nature itself.
>
> Against 'meaninglessness' on the one hand, against moral value judgments on the other...
>
> -- Friedrich Nietzsche

Above I have cited Erasmus as the "first European" thinker. I have borrowed the title of this dissertation, *The Lure of Disillusion*, from a man who has been called the "last European thinker": E. M. Cioran. Cioran's *bon mot* is manifest with allusion, and limns the thesis of the present investigation. Most importantly, what this phrase alerts us to is the temptation towards despair that seems to be rather prevalent in academe (and popular culture) as we approach the third millennium. Disillusion may be the result of many things, but it quite certainly is connected with the disruption, in the past several centuries, and particularly in our own, of religion (and myth) from "reality" (whether by such is meant the world of "reason" and "common sense" or the world of everyday personal and social existence).

A parallel can be drawn, between the radical disinvestment of language and poetics after Mallarmé—who effectively made the break between poetic language and "the world"—and the similar dissociation perpetrated by sundry god and myth-killers of the past century and a half. This break, in much of Symbolist and Modernist poetry, became the cause for despair, decadence and nihilism; but it also, by its very decisiveness, cleared the path for new deviations and insinuations, culled out of the broken mirrors and slashed cords. As George Steiner argues, regarding the Mallarméan "revolution," it is *only* by way of such "total disinvestment" that the "magical energies" of words can be restored—waking within them "the lost potential for benediction or anathema, for incantation and discovery." In short: "Only so radical a break of what was a philosophically mendacious and utilitarian contract can recuperate for human discourse the 'aura', the unlimited creativity of metaphor which is inherent in the origins of all

speech" (Steiner 1989, 98). Perhaps the same can be said for religion and its "break" with "reality."

Perhaps we should rethink our commitment to disillusionment. In doing so, we might re-examine the entire category of illusion and falsity, *vis-à-vis* religious faith, looking to the study of illusion in art and aesthetics. Seventy years ago, following on the heels of nineteenth-century deicides Feuerbach and Marx, Freud called religion, Christianity more particularly, an "illusion" without a reasonable future among reasonable modern human beings. *Illusions*, says the father of psychoanalysis, are not quite *errors* but rather, being "derived from men's wishes," mutate "reality" through the lens of desire. Whereas a *delusion* involves a blatant opposition to "reality," illusions may in fact be possibilities, though they are, for Freud, decisively on the side of the unlikely (the Resurrection is his example of an illusion on the far side of unlikelihood). Whatever the status of illusion for science,

> [t]he function of artistic illusion is not 'make-believe' as many philosophers and psychologists assume, but the very opposite, disengagement from belief—[...t]he knowledge that what is before us has no practical significance in the world is what enables us to give attention [*Sorge*] to its appearance [*Schein*] as such. (Langer 1953, 49)

Illusion is part of all human thinking, and expression; illusion has a place, and important place, within cognition. "Thinking," according to Gilles Deleuze, "requires the release of a phantasm in the mime that produces it at a single stroke; it makes the event indefinite so that it repeats itself as a singular universal" (Foucault 1977, 178). And this idea is not merely a postmodernist fancy, it has been stated, in varying fashion, by Aristotle, Hegel, and Flaubert, the last of whom proclaimed that he believed in the eternity of one thing only: "of *illusion*...which is the real truth [*la vraie vérité*]. All the others are merely relative" (Flaubert 1973, 429). Freudian illusions are *fictions*—metaphorical or mythical "statements" which perform as models to be acted upon as "factum" in spite of their possible "falsity"—in order, according to Suzanne Langer's Schillerian addendum, to *disconnect*, or *displace content in a human direction.* Schiller distinguishes between the "logical illusion" which can be "delusion," (i.e., furnish us with "false" information) and "aesthetic illusion," which being metaphorical and fluid, lays no

claims to either truth or falsity. (*AE* XXVI.5) In a telling statement, Freud asserts that it is "merely illusion" (that is, *not* "delusion") to expect anything from religious experience, since such can give us "nothing but particulars...[and] never information about the questions that are so lightly answered by the doctrines of religion" (Freud 1949, 24). As the Romantics have shown us, however, it may be in these "particulars" that the doctrines of religion can be glimpsed.

Whether this rethinking of illusion will cure our disillusionment is, at this point, a questionable proposition. However, it might do us well to note that, besides the fact that the "illusory" nature of religious faith, in terms of mimesis, explanation, and designation, can be a liberating aspect of faith, the lure towards disillusionment is merely the flipside of the same "realist" coin. As Stanley Cavell would have it, "the pretense that there is a grand metaphysical solution to all of our problems and sceptical or relativistic or nihilistic escape are symptoms of the same disease," namely: the inability to accept the world and other people "without the guarantees" (Putnam 1992, 178). Indeed, as James Nelson has said, "[s]ometimes illusion is the midwife of reality, and paralysis from the fear of illusion may mean that reality will forever escape us" (Nelson 1988, 91). Take, for instance, the great tragedy that is the final disillusionment of Don Quixote, who wakes from his chivalric dream a battered and spent old man; no longer Don Quixote de La Mancha but Alonso Quixano the Good, destined to die quietly in his bed, a "good Christian," denouncing his mad chivalric misadventures. Whatever his follies, the Hidalgo (along with Russian writer Iurii Olesha) warns us that our enemies don't always turn out to be windmills; occasionally what we would very much like to take for a windmill will turn out to be an enemy after all—and that our illusioned glance is, in some cases, actually the more propitious one. If being alienated is part of our inescapable contemporary persona(e), the "solution" lies in learning "to live with both alienation and acknowledgment" (Cavell, in Putnam 1992, 178).

Maya is a Sanskrit term meaning "illusion," and plays a significant (usually anathematized) rôle in Hinduism and Buddhism, as the veil that hangs before our limited mortal eyes and prevents us from seeing reality or the divine *facie ad faciem*. As such we

mistake the illusion, our wor(l)d-pictures, for reality. But, if we may be permitted a bit of free cultural borrowing for the purposes of rhetoric, the Occidental pantheon also has a *Maia*, the Greek (and Roman) goddess of nature, growth, and ability. Perhaps these two are the same deity, transmuted into univocal remnants of a once-splendid pluriform nature. The Indologist Hiriyanna notes that, indeed, *maya* may have a positive connotation, "in the sense that it gives rise to a misapprehension, making us see the manifold world where there is Brahman and only Brahman" (Hiriyanna 1985, 25). Whatever the case, connecting the Eastern *maya* with the Western *Maia*, we may come to see in illusion, not a distortion or cover, but a refraction which alters our standard sense of vision and understanding. *Maia*, after all, gave birth to a son by Zeus, and called him Hermes—*the patron saint of hermeneutics and interpretation*.

Home-making, habituation, contemporaneity

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth
> to heaven,
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
>
> -- Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Ernst Cassirer, perhaps the foremost name in the study of myth in our century, developed a theory of the so-called "mythic consciousness" which determines the form of language and the whole structure of reality in which a people dwell. As time passes, the mythic mode becomes supported by the language it has formed, and "the progressive articulation and sharpening of the supreme instrument ultimately breaks the mythic mold" (Langer 1953, 189). A new mode of thought, the "scientific consciousness" supersedes the mythic, to a greater or lesser extent, in the "common sense" of a cultural group. Along with Owen Barfield (Falck's mentor), Cassirer's work was instrumental in challenging Max Müller's theory that myth is a "disease of language." Yet Barfield and Cassirer fall into a trap, even as they "rescue" myth from the designative tradition of Locke and Müller. For it is an error to think that all myths do is hint, vaguely, at something beyond

or behind the veil of illusion; and that, as such, the "sharpening" of language works against the vague mysticism of myth and symbol. To assume that myths only have significance in a culture where the mythological consciousness is hegemonic is to underestimate the power of myth, metaphor and symbol—of fiction and figuration—to shape our world, even (or especially) in so-called "scientific" times.

What these interpreters, with Colin Falck, miss is the *structuring* as well as the *cognitive* function of myths: myths are not just fancy tales, they are also—and, with Franco Moretti, Dan Sperber, and Hans Blumenberg, I have suggested *mainly—interpretive tools*, allowing for the *distillation* or *condensation* of the shards of the broken mirror of human history; converting the "vast multiplicity of its connections" into "images easy to comprehend" (Moretti 1996, 111). Myths, *pace* those intent on "demythologization" in the conventional sense, are not so much flawed descriptions of reality as alternative responses to reality, responses based on certain (usually communal) principles and purposes, which act to transform all who participate in the "myth." (Rushdie 1991, 265) In Eliot's *Waste Land*, it is not the *narrative content* of the myth(s) that is essential, but rather *its capacity for symbolic condensation*: "Myth's task is not to put *an end* to the futility and anarchy that is contemporary history, but to give them 'a shape and significance'" (Eliot, in Moretti 1996, 140). To create, in short, a *perceptual* or semblance of order, not a real (dogmatic, univocal) order or presence. Myth is frame for history; at its best a counter-frame to the "*unendliche Melodie*" of chronatic time. Myth tames polyphony, without destroying, by objectifying, the chorus of events.

As such, myth becomes a sort of "worldly corrective"—which works upon our vision, individual as well as collective, of the world around us. Demythologization, conceived in the (David) Straussian sense of the abandonment of "myth" as a mode of understanding and expression the variegations of reality, is the foremost result, and spur, to the Lure of Disillusion, which, even as it proclaims the end-times, revels in its sense of comfortable "disinheritance." Demythologization, *reconceived* according to Bultmann's "de-objectifying" imperative, his sense of the transfigurative *kerygma*, and addended by a Lutheran-Romantic sense of "realism," serves as a formidable tool for *bricolage*—for rebuilding or, perhaps, re-habituating ourselves to the political, cultural and religious climate. As such it parallels Hans Blumenberg's own project, his "work on myth," which, in the process of "making myth manifest," may involve the reduction of credibility in the

veracity or accuracy of myth. Most importantly, "[w]hat pushes myth along is not the effort of explanation but the relation to a scenario" (Blumenberg 1985, 130).

It is not so much a "remythologization" that is needed, in terms of the creation or appropriation of myths, but rather a "recosmologization," which was the *Leitmotif* of post-Romantic Modernism: "the attempt by modern man to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it" (Berman 1988, 5). Postmodernists like to speak of the floating signifier, as if symbols, metaphors, and myths, like (allegorical) signs, can float freely—like dandelion seeds in the wind—without and connection at all with the "signified" to which they point, or once pointed. It is true, and it has always been true, that is every sign and symbol there is "an oscillation between a fairly well-defined semantic core and a vague, jagged periphery" (Moretti 1996, 222). Yet the postmodern reaction to the realist vacuum, the denial of any oscillating wind, and the resulting one-sided concentration on the "openness" of the sign, redresses the balance with a hurricane, destroying any sort of representation, even the *presentation* of the symbol as semblance, and the myth as structural critique.

Home-making can never be definitive or settled, for all that is solid, as Marx well knew, will melt into air, especially in our fluid postmodern situation, where, as the public expands, it shatters into a Babel of "incommensurable private languages," and "the idea of modernity, conceived in numerous fragmentary ways, loses much of its vividness, resonance and depth, and loses its capacity to organize or give meaning to people's lives" (Berman 1988, 17). Chesterton once referred to "the main problem of philosophers"—the apparent irreconcilability of adventure and comfort—as the problem of *welcome and wonder.* "How," asks GKC, "can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world [naïve] and at home in it [critical]?" (1990, 10) His answer? "That mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar which Christendom has rightly named romance" (10). Home-making requires some sense of (re-)presentation, even if such is non-mimetic—*magical* perhaps. "It is not that we are connoisseurs of chaos, but that we are surrounded by it, and equipped for co-existence with it only by our fictive powers" (Kermode 1957, 64). As if this were not enough.

Where, then, are we going? Always to our home.

Magical thinking does not allow for basic conceptual distinctions between things and persons, inanimate and animate; between objects that can be manipulated and agents to whom we ascribe actions and linguistic utterances. Only demythologization dispels this enchantment, which appears to us to be a confusion between nature and culture.

- Jürgen Habermas, "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment"

* * * * * * * * * * *

Unless--the world being a perpetual flux of things--appearance on the contrary were to be all that is truest, and illusion the one true reality.

- Satan, in Flaubert's Temptations of Saint Antony

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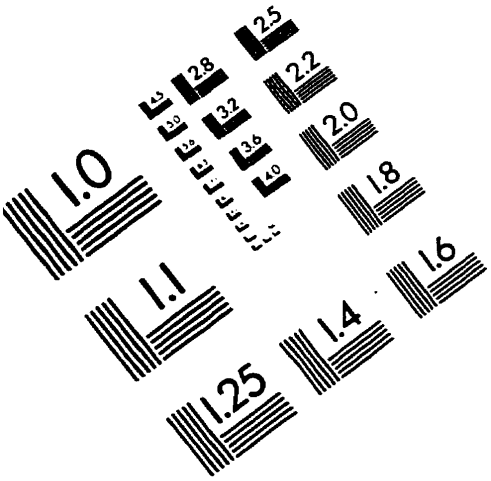
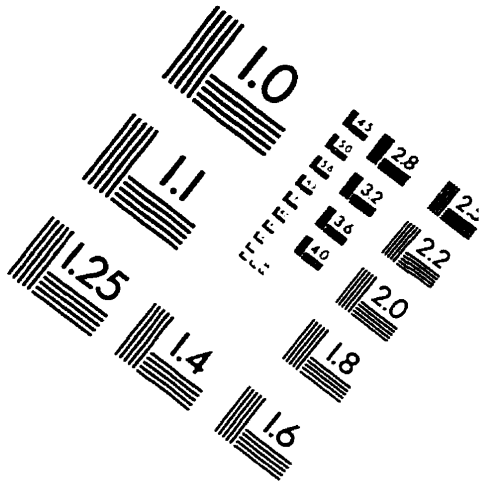
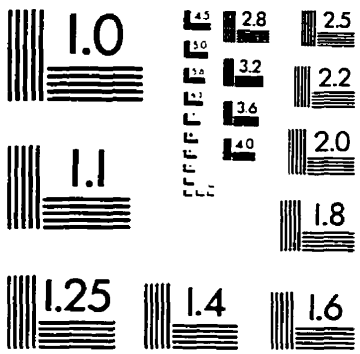
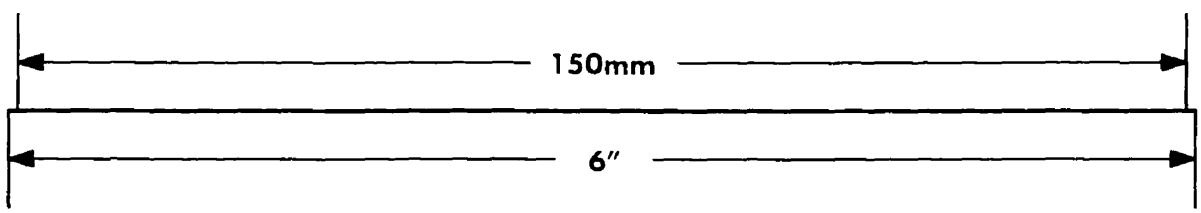
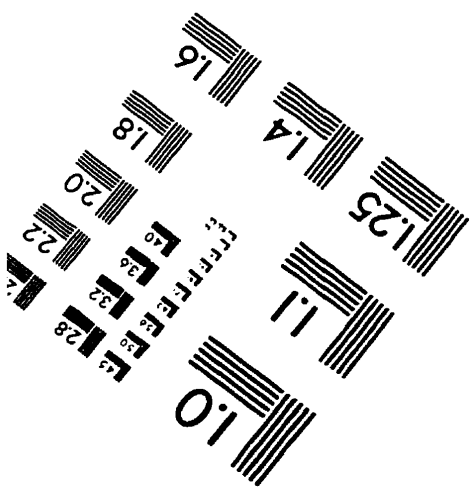
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

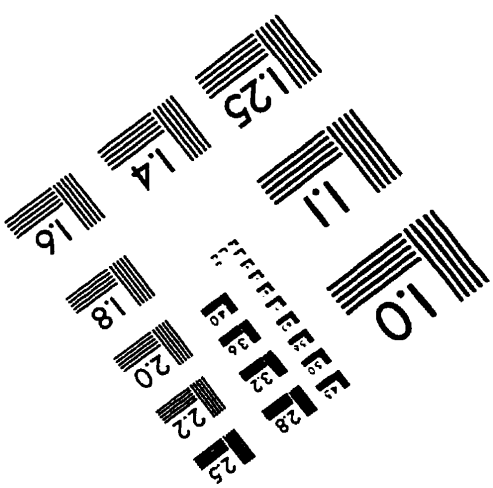












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